

Good morning, it is great to be with you today. As Kurt said, I am Jeff Fritsche, the lead pastor at White Rock Fellowship, just down the road East of here - on NWHWY.

We were a church plant of Fellowship Dallas...10 years ago, we came to restart it and since then have planted another church in Lakewood and we continue to carry on the legacy of Fellowship as hope to continue planting churches in East Dallas.

It is great to be a part of the Fellowship Family - and it is great to be with you today.

When my daughter who is now 15, was 3 or so, I took her on a daddy daughter date and we had ice cream.

As we were leaving, we walked out and they were playing music outside in front of the restaurant next door.

My daughter started dancing. I sat down on the bench and enjoyed watching her dance for a bit.

Then she said - dad - get up and dance with me!

How could I resist? Except there is a big window for all the people in the restaurant right where she is dancing.

But oh well, I am dancing with my daughter. I am getting my moves on!

I thought, why do I care so much what people think?

My daughter never once looked at the window - what did she look at?

She just looked up at me. She was completely free because of her identity as my daughter.

That is all she cared about was her daddy in the moment.

I thought what a great metaphor for the spiritual life and the identity we have in Christ.

Just keep your eyes up on the Lord and be free from all that is happening here.....

Right about then, I look over again and realize that there is a chair rail and the window actually starts about here!

Meaning that the people in the restaurant couldn't see the cute 3 year old dancing outside.

All they could see was the creepy grown man dancing in front of restaurant window.

Forget the spiritual metaphor, quick, lets go honey!

Why do I care so much?

Because these earthly identities matter to me.

Her eyes were fixed up to me! Her identity as my daughter caused her to not care about what was happening around her.

Over the last couple of weeks, you have been walking through Paul's letter to the Colossians... where he beautifully describes who we are in Christ.

We have a new identity, we are filled in Him. We have been buried with him in baptism and we are raised with Him through faith.

We were dead in our sins but God has made us alive together and has forgiven us.

This identity is secure and firm.

Today as we get into chapter 3, Paul reiterates this again, lets look at it.

Colossians 3:1-4

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³ For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Just like my daughter whose eyes were set up on me...

He says - seek the things that are above... set your mind on things that are above, not what is on earth.

Why?

Because you have died, and been raised with Christ, your life is hidden with christ in God and one day when Christ returns, you will appear with him in glory.

Our identity is inextricably and completely tied together with Jesus - all the earthly identities cease to be our primary identity.

From that place of identity, Paul continues in chapter 3 to say - this changes everything!

(Slide) Who we are shapes how we live

The rest of the book gets really practical because the grace of Jesus doesn't leave us at the place where we can simply know this theoretically.

And stop there.

The gospel is not designed to stay as simply an opinion, or a mental assent to a few truths.

The gospel is designed to flow into our ethical and practical vision of life.

It impacts everything.

Honestly, I think that is what the world is aching for.

The church, Christians, true believers in the gospel of Jesus – to live it.

To live with integrity, with peace, with the kindness, and the love that comes from a new identity that truly shapes and marks what we do.

It is all connected to our identity in Christ.

Paul wants us to understand...

The gospel is not try harder, do better...

The gospel is you are made new – now live it.

How do we live like this new life?

We do not need a pep talk, we don't need a guilt trip...

What we need is a new gospel identity...

And that shapes all earthly identities - and it gives us a moral and ethical vision that Paul lays out in the rest of the book of Colossians.

Who we are shapes what we do.

Paul starts with specific parts of our earthly identities that die because of our new identity...

Colossians 3:5-9

⁵ Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. ⁶ On account of these the wrath of God is coming. ⁷ In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. ⁸ But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. ⁹ Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices

Paul keeps with this earthly and heavenly metaphor but also when Paul describes this, he switches into new metaphor.

Put off the old self...the language is like taking off an article of clothing.

He says because of your new identity, you have a new wardrobe, the old wardrobe no longer fits.

So what he is saying -

Slide: Take off the old wardrobe

Wear the clothes that fit you now that you have a new identity

To do that - you have to start by taking off what no longer fits with this new identity

My wife, Mandy, and I will be married 20 years in June - but I remember when we first started dating.

We had been dating for a short while and were hanging out at my place one day and she walked into my closet...

She started pulling shirts out and throwing them on my bed. What are you doing?

I'm helping you...

I was like umm. What are you doing with my sweet multi-colored rugby shirt from the early 90s?

Some of you remember these. Blocked primary colors - man they were cool... in the early 90s

She said, you need some help with your wardrobe. I am taking out shirts that you can't wear any more.

Lets just say, she took out more shirts than she left in!

She was "helping" me - but what she was really saying...she would never say this outloud...

If I am going to be seen with you, as your girlfriend - 90s multi-colored rugby shirts are out.

Now that you are my boyfriend, you need to wear clothes that fit that identity of being her boyfriend.

Paul is saying, now that you have a new identity in Christ - take off the things that no longer are appropriate with your new identity.

And what are those things?

He gives two lists of things that we take off - as a part of our new identity.

The first list: in vs 5 sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desire, covetousness, idolatry.

These are the old wardrobe.

Why would Paul pick these things to bring up?

He could have chosen so many things to describe our old wardrobe.

I think part of the reason was the culture they were living in

I think our tendency is to think of bible times like we think of little house on the prairie.

Simpler, pure, no issues, nothing like 2022 in America.

That is simply not the case.

The cultural norm around the earliest Christians was a very sexually permissive culture.

One secular historian, Kyle Harper, says...

“The central Christian prohibition on (sexual immorality) *porneia* collided with deeply entrenched patterns of sexual permissiveness” (11)

He notes just how revolutionary and out-of-step this new sexual ideology was:

This idea of sex reserved for marriage between one man and one woman was incredibly countercultural at the time.

These historians found that the early church stood out from the rest of society not only because of what they claimed to be true of God,

but also because of the distinctive set of behaviors they adopted in all areas and specifically in regard to sexuality.

Paul is not randomly coming up with a list - These are cultural issues that the earliest Christians are having to navigate.

This old wardrobe was the wardrobe of the culture they lived in - and it was no longer fitting for the new identity.

So the earliest Christians did not simply adopt the cultural view of sexuality but instead had to navigate how to live in a sexual permissive culture while holding to a unique, biblical sexual ethic.

Just like us - having to navigate a culture obsessed with sex, sexuality, sexual identity - while holding to a biblical sexual ethic.

When Paul says - take off the “old wardrobe” of sexual permissiveness - that was just as a countercultural statement then as it is now.

What is really interesting is that Paul uses these words and summarizes them by saying - "that is idolatry."

Just like today, sex in the 1st Century was seen as the highest good, it was worshiped and revered.

Not only did they worship sex – but they also used sex as part of their worship in pagan fertility cults...

So we wonder sometimes why was this biblical sexual ethic such a big deal then and now?

Because it is an attack on the highest value of the culture.

Or to put it another way - it is an attack on the idol that we worship.

And People don't like it when you mess with their idols.

So the first list for Paul of the Old Wardrobe is (Slide:) Old Wardrobe: Idolatry

Our new identity shapes first and foremost who we worship!

All other identities, all other idols fade away as we set our minds on things above!

Idolatry is the root of all sin - it is why, as Paul says, that the wrath of God is coming - it is because of idolatry and sin.

Because of our new identity in Christ, we take off all other idols and identities and we no longer submit to them.

The second list of the old wardrobe of which we need to take off is vs 8

Vs 8 But now you must put them all away, anger, wrath, malice, slander, obscene talk from your mouth, do not lie to one another...

What is interesting about these - these are all about how you treat one another.

The only Christianity that Paul knows is communal.

Why mention this list? Because they have the potential of killing community, hurting unity, and they do damage to the very community that God came to create.

Later in vs 11, He describes the new community as... there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.

He says, your primary identity is not as a Greek or a Jew, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free...

But your identity is in Christ and therefore you are united in Christ.

One thing I think we are tempted to forget about the earliest church is that these people hated each other out in the real world.

They were bitter enemies, but in the church, they are one!

Can you imagine living in a world that is so divided out there and can't agree on anything and then having to come to church and be unified?

This is just as much our time as it was theirs!

Paul brings these up because this was the old wardrobe of the culture - to hate based upon the divisions of the culture.

This old wardrobe was the wardrobe of the culture they lived in - and it was no longer fitting for the new identity.

Again, I think this is so relevant for America in 2020

Our new identity shapes how we treat each other.

Unity is essential for Paul and this list of practices chip away at the Unity we have in Christ.

So the second list of the old Wardrobe is Destructive Practices. (Slide) Old Wardrobe: Destructive Practices

Things that will destroy community and destroy us in the process.

Anger, wrath, malice...

Some of us get angry over the right things - injustice, people treating others wrong, anger at sin in us and done to others.

But the anger that most of us struggle with, the anger that leads to sin...

is the anger that starts to look like wrath and malice - rage and hatred.

Paul says to put that off...

Anger that has gone unchecked. Anger over things we feel like we are entitled to. Anger over the way circumstances have fallen.

Anger over things that divide us out there!

Some of us have some deep hurt that plays itself out in rage.

Often, that kind of rage means that there is something that you are deeply sad about - and anger or rage is just an easier emotion to show.

Anger is often a secondary emotion to sadness.

It may be worth asking the question – what am I really sad about?

Some of our anger is so deep seeded – because it has gone unchecked for years and decades.

We need to deal with it, talk about it, try to find healing.

We need to take action in taking this old wardrobe off.

Paul in Ephesians says that anger can give an opportunity to the enemy.

The word “opportunity” is the word *Topos* – from which we get words like topography.

It is a land term.

If you were going to launch an invasion or start a settlement – you need to get that first track of land.

So that you can build your settlement from there.

When anger gets in – the enemy gets a track of land.

From this vantage point, the enemy can start building his settlement or launching his invasion in your heart.

He says, now that I have this track of anger – now what – how about I add a little jealousy.

From this vantage point of anger – the enemy can then start to fill us with rage, malice, slander, - all the things that Paul mentions here that destroy us and destroy community.

The stakes are high. It is a spiritual battle.

If you are struggling with anger, rage, malice, or wrath..

We don't have to give land to the enemy.

We have a new identity and those clothes don't fit anymore.

We take that off... that means we deal with it. We do whatever it takes to take that ground back.

He says to put off anger, wrath, malice...

He also says to put off slander and obscene talk or lying to each other

The Bible seems to take sins of the tongue seriously. Our speech is meant to build one another up, encourage one another.

As those who seek the things that are above - we put off all slander, obscene talk and lying to one another.

That is not an appropriate wardrobe or an appropriate ethical vision for those who are hidden in Christ.

Instead, we speak edification, we speak with purity and we speak the truth.

I was speaking on this topic of what we take off in our new identity at a family camp one time - and I had small kids come up and put on my jackets...as a metaphor for wearing clothes that don't fit...

They swallowed the kids, some of them were barely able to stand up and wear the jacket.

Then I told them take it off...and one of the kids was wearing this very long jacket that I own so it heavy and it was dragging the floor and when I told him to take it off - in dramatic fashion - threw off the jacket and ran back to his seat.

I don't know if that was because he was nervous to be standing up there or because it was heavy - but it made for a great metaphor.

We throw it off - we don't dabble, we don't try and keep the old wardrobe.

We throw it off.

We do everything in our power to find healing for our anger, to not give the enemy a foothold, to rid ourselves of obscene talk and lies.

We take this list seriously because of who we are.

The old wardrobe doesn't fit. Take it off!

Yet, all of us have a tendency to try and go put that old wardrobe back on.

Go grab that 90s multi-colored rugby shirt and wear it again...

Put on a little anger - because it feels like we can control it.

Put on a little obscene slander - because it feels good to say that about this person

Put on a little idolatry or lust...

Ultimately, why do we that?

Because our old wardrobe is sometimes an identity that we are afraid to give up.

If I don't wear these things, then who am I?

I think this passage lends itself to a true introspection and reflection that leads to confession.

What do I need to take off?

We acknowledge that, confess that to the Lord and live back into our new identity as those who are in Christ!

Part of how we take those things off is by putting on the new wardrobe...

Paul then turns to the new wardrobe...

What do we put on?

Col 3:10-15

¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. ¹¹ Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all. ¹² Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³ bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴ And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.

(slide) Put on the New Wardrobe

It is new

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved...remember this is all about a new identity.

As those whom God has set His love on - chosen by God.

For those who believe in Jesus, what is true of us - is that we have been declared righteous and holy.

That doesn't mean we are perfect, but now Jesus' perfect holiness and righteousness has been laid upon us so when God sees us, He sees Jesus' holiness.

Because of that new identity... we have a new way of doing life

To put on the new wardrobe...

Notice the ethical vision also impacts how we treat one another..

We put on the wardrobe of...

compassion- it is a word that means guts, your deepest emotions - the kind of love that hurts for others, that cares less about yourself and more about one another

Kindness - merciful, gracious, kind

Humility - putting others interests above your own. recognize His deity, recognize we are all equal at the foot of the Cross

Meekness - a gentleness that is not weak, but settled and kind.

Patience - what a word - to be patient in how we treat one another -

bearing with one another - I love this - literally - put up with one another - sometimes that is reality - we put up with their quirks, their faults, we love them within it.

Remember they were just as divided out there as we are...they bear with each other..

We bear with each other, we seek to understand one another and when there is conflict...he says...

forgiving one another - perhaps one of the highest characteristics of how we know if we understand the gospel and live in this gospel identity.

Are we willing to forgive as we have been forgiven?

We put on forgiveness...that may be one of the hardest things for many of us.

Maybe we have taken off anger and malice toward someone...but putting on forgiveness is another level.

This is not easy, but Paul says this is critical to who we are as holy and dearly loved children of God.

We forgive... Just as God, in Christ, as forgiven us.

I think sometimes - we don't fully understand forgiveness.

It is not just a simple " -its ok, don't worry about it."

Forgiveness does not condone the behavior of family, friends, or enemies, nor does it give them permission to do it again.

Forgiveness does not make us a doormat.

Forgiveness takes into account the hurt, the sin - it is honest about it... it doesn't minimize it.

We are all shocked by stories of forgiveness... The parents who forgive their child's murderer...

Why do those shock us?

Because it is so incredibly merciful - they deserve the worst kind of hatred and instead they receive mercy, grace, forgiveness.

Forgiveness is radical, it is counterintuitive and countercultural...

As those who have experienced forgiveness - we know how redemptive and life-changing it is.

But also as the ones who forgive - it actually gives us freedom too.

The famous quote - that I can't quite figure out who said it first -

"Unforgiveness or holding grudge... is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to die."

Its strange - we think by not forgiving, by harboring bitterness - that we are hurting them.

But we aren't...

Its more damaging to us.

We forgive as a part of our new identity in Christ...

Paul says...

Above all (as a summary of these other attributes) put on love - which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

God's love, the kind of love that is a fruit of the Holy Spirit - that is different than our world's definition of love.

It is a covenant keeping love, it is sacrificial love that lives out all of these virtues.

Notice something he said in vs 10 and have *put on the new self*, which is being renewed in knowledge *after the image of its creator*.

All of these attributes are perfectly lived out in Jesus!

His compassion, His kindness, His humility, His meekness, His patience with us, His bearing with us, His all-encompassing forgiveness, And His sacrificial, covenant-keeping love.

It is because of Him living these out perfectly that we can be called "holy and beloved, God's chosen ones!"

His life, His death and His resurrection perfectly has made it possible for us to be identified with Him...

Changing who we are and now changing how we live.

Fundamentally what is the new wardrobe that we put on?

New Wardrobe: Life of Christ

Living His life in us!

So Paul says

Take off the old wardrobe

Put on the new wardrobe

So how do we continually take off the old wardrobe and put on the new wardrobe?

How do we live with love, kindness, forgiveness, and humility?

Paul concludes this section like this

Colossians 3:15-17

¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

How do we live in this new identity?

4 commands:

(Slide) Let Peace Rule

Let the peace of Christ rule - reign in our hearts.

Notice it is not inner peace, it is not peace because we all agree.

It is the Peace of Christ - ruling in our hearts...Why?

Because are one - we have been bought with a price and because of Jesus

We have peace with God, peace with one another and peace beyond all comprehension no matter the circumstances.

The command is to let it rule!

To let it sit on the throne of our life.

To pursue it, to live it, to trust in His peace.

Secondly, how do we live in this new identity? How do we put on the New wardrobe?

Secondly he says in vs 16

(Slide) Let the Word Dwell

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly!

Dwell is such a good word - that is letting our lives be saturated by the Word of God - the revelation of God of who He is, what He has done for us and who we are because of it.

Paul says..We teach, admonish, sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness to God.

The new wardrobe is one of dwelling in the Word of God, growing in Christlikeness, worshiping Him with our whole heart, because of what God has done for us and for what God is doing in us.

It is the work of the Holy Spirit through dwelling in His Word that we will over time be transformed more and more into the image of Christ.

To look more loving, forgiving, humble, and compassionate.

How else do live this new identity? How else do we put on the New wardrobe?

(Slide) Everything for Him

Vs 17 "And whatever you do - in word or deed - do everything in the name of the lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the father through Him..."

Whatever you do - God intimately cares about the day to day - not a single area of your life that God is not involved

Everything we do, everything we say, everything we think is to be shaped and saturated by who He is!

But lastly, Notice 3 times throughout these last 3 verses - Be thankful, with thankfulness in your heart, giving thanks!

(Slide) Be Thankful

That seems so simple - and yet Paul often connects gratitude and peace and gratitude and transformation.

Being thankful is not just saying thanks...

But rather it is a whole life response of gratitude!

These 4 things together are quite radical.

Letting peace rule, dwelling richly in His Word, Doing everything for him and not for ourselves...

All as a life response in gratitude to God.

There is something about a heart of worship, praise, gratitude toward God that takes off the old wardrobe and puts on the new one.

It all comes back to gratitude and thankfulness to God for our new identity in Him - that allows us to put on the new wardrobe.

The gospel wardrobe!

We build our new life around His Love and His gospel.

When we see Him forgiving us, showing kindness and compassion to us... When we see Him dying in our place and keeping His promises!

It shapes everything about us.

Our vision for life comes out of who He is and what He has done for us.

That is why Paul says to sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your heart!

Today, I want us to close by doing just that...praising God for he alone is worthy of our worship and praise.

He alone is worthy of our life.

In gratitude, we let peace rule, we dwell richly in His Word, and do everything for Him.

All because of our new identity in Christ!

Lets pray