



SERMON REFLECTION QUESTIONS for the week of July 5, 2020

"From the Inside Out"

Rev. Jeff Wagner

Theme/concept

A person who is fully alive in Christ demonstrates Christ-like character. In our Vision Frame we say, "We develop godly life-giving habits in thought, word and deed, releasing self-centered, sin-driven, self-reliant living." One of the greatest accusations against the church is that it is full of hypocrites—literally, "play actors"—who say they believe in God and the 10 Commandments, but lead lives that deny their words. Instead, believers are to mature in Christ in a process the Bible calls "sanctification." Jesus saves us not only from sin's penalty, but also from its power. This passage in Colossians reveals God's plan for our thorough-going and extensive transformation.

Application

Put off the old superficial nature and be changed from the inside out.

Charge

Let God change you daily from the inside out.

Getting started:

Can you think of a time you faced what looked like an insurmountable challenge for which you felt ill-prepared? Maybe it was a challenge that would take a whole different "you" in order to be successful? What was it? Were you successful in meeting that challenge?

Reflections on the sermon

Looking back at your sermon notes, what hinders you from becoming more Christ-like in your behavior?

Setting

One mark of being "fully alive in Christ" is to demonstrate Christ-like character. In Colossians 3, the Apostle Paul gives us a lengthy list of dos and don'ts as he describes our new identity and our new purpose. Pastor Doug likes to say, "Jesus loves us just the way we are, but he loves us too much to leave us just the way we are. He didn't die on the cross so we could stay the same." God has big plans for us as his adopted family: to see the character of Christ formed in us from the inside out.

Scripture

Colossians 3:1-17 (New International Version)

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. ³ For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ, who is your^[a] life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

⁵ Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. ⁶ Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.^[b] ⁷ You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. ⁸ But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. ⁹ Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices ¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. ¹¹ Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

¹² Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³ Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ¹⁴ And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

¹⁵ Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Breaking down the Scripture

1. Paul starts each section of the Colossians 3 passage with either *since* or *therefore*, which would indicate a new reality and a new way to live in response to that reality. Pastor Jeff calls it our new identity and our new purpose. In verses 1-4, what does Paul say is our new reality—our new identity? What does he urge us to do?
2. From verses 5-11, what are the things Paul wants us to eliminate from our lives? What does verse 7 say about this list?
3. What does Paul say about the “new self”—this new identity—in verse 10? How does verse 11 further define this new identity?

4. In verses 12-14, what does Paul want us to “clothe ourselves” with? What is the goal? How does this compare with Galatians 5:22-23?

5. How does Paul describe the new reality for the community of believers in Colossians 3:15-17? How should we treat one another in light of this reality?

Going deeper

1. Thinking about Colossians 3:1-4, describe in your own words this new reality/identity that Paul is picturing. How would you state it as a spiritual principle—a truth for all who would put it into practice?

2. In verses 5-11, Paul uses two metaphors to describe what he wants us to do: “put to death” our old ways and “put on” the new self. How can these metaphors help us understand our new identity? What is our part in this transformation? What is God’s part?

3. In verses 12-14, Paul uses the words “clothe yourselves” to extend the metaphor of “putting on.” What is the foundational truth that enables us to take these actions? What is the goal?

4. In verses 15-17, Paul describes believers as “members of one body.” What is our clear obligation to that body?

Reflection questions

1. Paul’s lists of things to avoid and things to do can seem daunting. Can you identify a few of these that you would like to focus on with the Lord’s help? What are they?
2. Pastor Jeff asked us to focus on living, dying, and abiding in Christ. From Paul’s list, which of these things could help you embrace that new identity and new purpose?
3. What might your daily life look like if you were to focus on developing Christ-like character?

Closing prayer

Dear Lord, you have big plans for me—and for us! I can only begin to imagine, yet I want so badly to be more and more like my Savior. Please help me put on this new identity and new purpose in Christ. Change me from the inside out as you form my new identity in Christ. In his matchless name, amen.