

WAITAKI PRESBYTERIAN PARISH

September 5th 2021 – with Bethne Dodd

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‘THE GARMENTS OF CHRISTIAN GRACE’

CALL TO WORSHIP: *(Based on Micah 6 & Isaiah 58)*

What shall we bring to the Lord, the Great God of heaven,
when we come to worship him?

Will the Lord be pleased with our best offerings?

No. The Lord has already told us what is good.

What he requires of us is this.

Act justly. Love mercy. Walk humbly.

If we remove the chains of oppression
and the yoke of injustice.

If we give food to the hungry
and satisfy those who are in need.

If we open our homes to the poor
and give clothes to those who have nothing to wear.

Then his favour will shine on us like the morning sun
and he will always guide us.

When we pray,
the Lord will answer us.

When we call to him,
he will respond.

SONG: GOD OF CREATION *(Words: Craig Mitchell - Tune: Bunessan2 WOV 91)*

God of creation, gentle life-giver,
Present at birth and all through our days
Author of sunrise, song in the night sky,
Here in this place, we offer our praise.

Jesus, companion, teacher and healer,
friend of the grieving, suffering, the poor.
Stand with your people whisper among us
promise of mercy goodness for all.

Spirit of comfort blow through creation
stir up new life, breathe peace through our world
Healer of hearts, and hope for tomorrow
weave all our sorrows into new dawn.

Here we give thanks for life in its fullness
blessings received your gifts to us all
Make us a people filled with compassion
selflessly giving serving your world.

OPENING PRAYERS: Let us pray...

*As we come near holy ground,
we undress our minds and lay the garments of thought at the side of the road.
We do not carry the judgements that we place on ourselves and others.
We let fall our opinions of evil and our notions of goodness.
Next we take off our religious shoes,
all those ideas about the right way to worship
and the right steps to show our devotion to God.
Do we feel naked? Do we feel vulnerable?
Good – then it is time to proceed, bare and simple,
to the place where we will be clothed in the radiance of God,
far beyond human thought.¹
(Space of silence)*

As we gather here in fellowship and worship of thought, word and deed, while we acknowledge we repeatedly fall short of what you intend for us and for the world in which we live, nevertheless remind us we are a work in progress. Therefore, grant us and grow within us, a renewed sense of compassion for others and kindness toward ourselves. Encourage within us a humble and gentle attitude, patience and forgiveness in endless measure and most importantly love – Your love which brings us reassurance, by your presence among and within us by your Holy Spirit, and joy through the grace of your Son Jesus Christ, in whom we find acceptance, encouragement and the unlimited opportunity to begin again... Thanks be to God. And the people said – Amen.

REFLECTION

We begin today's Reflection with the re-reading of Luke 4 verses 16-21 - the Scripture which has been repeated throughout August.

Luke 4:16-21

¹⁶ When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, ¹⁷ and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

¹⁸ "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,

¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."

²⁰ And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹ Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

Think about the content of our August Services which began with TearFund Guest Speaker Ed Brown & continued with Andrew highlighting aspects of this Reading.

¹ Joy Cowley 'Come & See' pg50

What have you found most helpful, most enlightening, most challenging...
we take a few moments to consider this...

We close by listening to the Song
AMAZING GRACE (MY CHAINS ARE GONE - Chris Tomlin)

Amazing grace
How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me
I once was lost, but now I'm found
Was blind, but now I see

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear
And grace my fears relieved
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed

My chains are gone I've been set free
My God, my Saviour has ransomed me
And like a flood His mercy rains
Unending love, Amazing grace

The Lord has promised good to me
His word my hope secures
He will my shield and portion be
As long as life endures

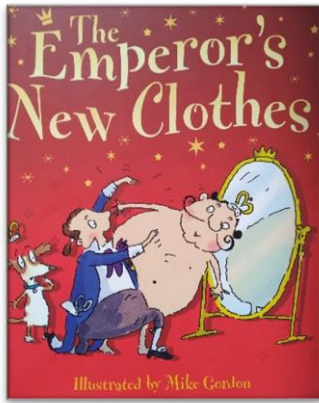
My chains are gone I've been set free
My God, my Saviour has ransomed me
And like a flood His mercy rains
Unending love, Amazing grace X2

The Earth shall soon dissolve like snow
The sun forbear to shine
But God, Who called me here below
Will be forever mine
Will be forever mine
You are forever mine

WELCOME, NOTICES & CELEBRATIONS

THE PEACE OF CHRIST: *What is your favourite item of clothing?*

KIDS STORY: *'The Emperor's New Clothes'*



We're going to read about someone who was always wanting a new outfit. This story is based on a famous fairy-tale by Hans Christian Andersen called 'The Emperor's New Clothes' Sometimes we can all get talked into buying things other people pick out for us... which may not be the best... as The Emperor in our story discovers...

God tells us the best things to be clothed in are these 9 qualities (*we'll be learning about later in our service*) Compassion, Kindness, Humility, Gentleness, Patience, Forgiveness, Love, Peacefulness, Thankfulness.

With these in mind I share a few choice words from modern Bible Translation *The Message* which pictures our old life in comparison to our new found life in Christ... It first describes that old life being rather like a set of ill-fitting clothing then positively states in Colossians 3:10 – *“Now you're dressed in a new wardrobe. Every item of your new way of life is custom made by the Creator with his label on it.”* “So,” says Paul (v12) *“Chosen by God for this new life of love, dress in the wardrobe God picked out for you.”* He ends by emphasising (v14) *“Regardless of what else you put on, wear love. It's your basic, all-purpose garment, never be without it.”*

SONG: THE SERVANT SONG (Richard Gillard - SinS Bk2 256)

Brother, sister, let me serve you, let me be as Christ to you,
Pray that I might have the grace to let you be my servant too.

We are pilgrims on a journey, we are travellers on the road,
We are here to help each other walk the mile and bear the load.

I will hold the Christ-light for you in the night time of your fear
I will hold my hand out to you, speak the peace you long to hear.

I will weep when you are weeping, when you laugh I'll laugh with you,
I will share your joy and sorrow till we've seen this journey through.

When we sing to God in heaven we shall find such harmony,
Born of all we've known together of Christ's love and agony.

Brother, sister, let me serve you, let me be as Christ to you,
Pray that I might have the grace to let you be my servant too.

INTRODUCTION:

²From her book 'Wearing God' author and Episcopal Priest Lauren F. Winner explains, *“Ever since God clothed Adam and Eve in their full humanity, clothes have not only protected us from the elements and kept us warm, they have also profoundly shaped our identity and our sense of self. It is not surprising, then, that clothing is an image that runs all the way through Scripture from the first mention in Genesis to Revelation.”*

² 2017 book 'Wearing God' Lauren F. Winner pg36

She goes on to ask,³*“If to change clothes can be to change one’s sense of self; if to change clothes is to change one’s way of being in the world; if to clothe yourself in a particular kind of garment is to let that garment shape you into its own shape – then what is it to put on Christ?”*

We give this some thought as we hear from William Barclay’s NT Translation of Paul’s letter to the Colossians.

BIBLE READING: COLOSSIANS 3:12-17

“So, then, as the chosen of God, dedicated and beloved, clothe yourselves with a heart of pity, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience. Bear with one another and if anyone has a ground of complaint against someone else, forgive each other; as the Lord has forgiven you so you must forgive each other. On top of all these things, clothe yourselves with love which is the perfect bond; and let the peace of God be the decider of all things within your hearts, for it is to that peace you were called, so that you might be united in the one body. May the word of Christ dwell richly in you with all wisdom. Continue to teach and to admonish each other with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you may be doing in word or in deed, do all things in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

MESSAGE: ‘THE GARMENTS OF CHRISTIAN GRACE’

Chosen, dedicated and beloved. Three words Paul uses to address the Church community at Colossae. These words originally belonged, so to speak, to the Jews. It was they and they alone who were God’s chosen people, a holy and dedicated nation, set apart for God. All well and good if you were Jewish. But to non-Jews, Gentile believers like those who formed the Church at Colossae, being addressed as such by Paul - a man steeped in religious Jewish tradition and conduct - was significant indeed. It was meant to be. Paul, now radically clothed in Christ, takes these three exclusive words and graciously, generously and deliberately gifts them to the Gentiles, to ‘others’, to everyone. In doing so he shows that the love and grace of God now embraces and includes all believers in Christ, no matter their background, culture, race or label... their size, shape, age or gender... and it is the same today.

From this same portion of Scripture, Paul highlights a further nine words which set the tone of all human relationships. These are not only to be extended within the community of faith but in life in general. We are encouraged to clothe ourselves in what Scottish Preacher and Teacher William Barclay refers to as **‘THE GARMENTS OF CHRISTIAN GRACE’**

COMPASSION

Barclay calls this having a heart of pity for people. This quality was sadly lacking in the ancient world which was harsh and often barbaric in nature. There was very little, if any, provision for the weaker members of the community – like the aged, those who were disabled or disadvantaged in any way – people were expendable, life was cheap. Set against the backdrop of his day Jesus’ message of compassion stood out in sharp contrast as something radically different. Everything that has been done

³ Pg40

(and continues to be done) for the welfare of those in need has first been inspired by the compassionate example of Jesus.

KINDNESS (*Chrestotes*)

We tend to think of kindness as a sort of goodness, which it is, but it's so much more than that. Interestingly, I learned this word (in its original Greek) could be used of wine which had grown mellow with age and in the process had lost any harshness its flavour once possessed. It might sound odd, but in some instances goodness alone can have rather a stern, formidable aspect to it, and can be quite hard to swallow – whereas goodness which is kind always has a lovely flavour to it, it goes down well. Jesus loved God's world, God's people... he stopped to play with children when on his way to die in Jerusalem... he was happy at a wedding... outcasts didn't avoid him, he was their friend. We cannot authentically show people Christ unless we make our living not only good, but kind.

HUMILITY

It has been said this quality was introduced by Christianity.

Before then the word humble was understood to have a negative, cringing or grovelling edge to it, and anyone described as such was somewhat despised. For me, this brought to mind a Dickens character from his book 'David Copperfield' Some of you may be familiar with his character with the wonderfully descriptive name Uriah Heep. This guy was a bit of a creep, who attempted to ingratiate himself with others. He'd go about wringing his hands in false humility and was often heard to cry, *"Oh, I'm ever so 'umble. I am well aware that I am the 'umblest person going"* – which, of course, he was obviously not.

Thankfully, under Christianity's influence humility was turned into something strong and noble. It was based upon the awareness of God as Creator, coupled with the belief since all people were created in God's own image they were blessed with inherent worth.

GENTLENESS (*Praotes*)

Long ago the Philosopher Aristotle described gentleness as a happy mean between too much and too little anger. The person who has gentleness is self-controlled because they're first God-controlled and therefore angry at the right time and for the right reasons. Thinking about that definition, Jesus certainly exhibited that kind of gentleness. He was angered at the Devil's "rob, kill and destroy" tactics to undermine the promised abundant life... He was justifiably outraged when his Father's house of prayer was exploited for gain... And he spoke out against the hypocrisy of those who taught the law, being a law unto themselves. Gentleness is no wishy-washy thing, rather it is strength under control, and another quality we should strive to cultivate within our own lives.

PATIENCE (*Makrothumia*)

This speaks of the enduring spirit that never entirely loses its patience with its fellow human beings. Though frustrated by others inconsiderate treatment, patience is not driven to total despair and cynicism, bitterness or retribution. Human patience, in some small way, reflects part of the great divine patience which bears all things and never willingly turns away.

FORGIVENESS

A tolerant and forgiving spirit can only flow from a forgiven person. We all know if we've been on the receiving end of some good experience, it's more likely we'll then pass that same good thing on to others. Because God has forgiven us – through Jesus' sacrifice that's wiped our debts – we too should be of a forgiving nature toward others. No easy task... it doesn't come naturally and like all these things begins from an internal change within our own lives. Ultimately this type of forgiveness means freedom from bondage for ourselves and others, whether we view it as deserved or not.

LOVE

Much like forgiveness, we learn we should be loving, and love, because God who is love first loved us. Not only is love the strongest of all human bonds but it is also the power that holds the whole Christian body together. And while, in Community, we simply don't have the capacity to *like* everyone, we *are* called to *agape love* – God's love - which is a deliberate choice, an act of the will. It really is our basic all-purpose garment, an essential we're continually reminded never to be without.

PEACEFULNESS

This word peace has a sporting connection. It can be explained as being like an umpire in an athletic arena. That umpire or referee is the peace of God within our hearts – there to settle matters of dispute, there in the decisions we make. We should seek Jesus as the peaceful decider of all things within our lives – for the sake of both Christian harmony and that of our own. And we are promised that if we bring our concerns to God in prayer, asking with a thankful heart for all we need, God's peace – which surpasses our understanding – will keep our hearts and minds safe in union with Christ Jesus.

THANKFULNESS

All things, we are told in word and deed, in worship and fellowship, must be undertaken with a grateful attitude of heart. This rejoicing and thankfulness – especially for all God's done for us through Jesus, by the Holy Spirit – is the way we're encouraged to continually live out our lives.

These nine garments of Christian grace are among the qualities we are encouraged to deliberately put on, so that we are well dressed, clothed in Christ each and every day. This is not solely for our own benefit. For just as God graciously re-clothes and reshapes us, so too we must play our part in reshaping the world in which we live... helping to re-clothe those around us with hope, dignity, worth, freedom and so much more... by partnering with others, such as Tearfund, in following Jesus where the need is greatest.

In closing, I repeat words from The Message Bible which remind us... *“Now you're dressed in a new wardrobe. Every item of your new way of life is custom made by the Creator with his label on it.” “So, chosen by God for this new life of love, dress in the wardrobe God picked out for you.” “Regardless of what else you put on, wear love. It's your basic, all-purpose garment, never be without it.” (Colossians 3:10,12,14)* Amen.

OFFERING

We acknowledge & remain grateful for Your overwhelming love & generosity which, in turn, stirs our own.

We ask for Your blessing upon all gifts of money, food, time and talents - our very selves – that we bring before You in worship. May these increase & become a blessing to others. Amen

PRAYERS FOR OURSELVES & OTHERS – Anthea Brown

THE LORD’S PRAYER

Almighty God, we come before you with open hearts with our concerns and petitions. Please guide us as we pray for others and ourselves.

We bring before you those around the world who are suffering from sickness, disease, fear, hunger, and those held captive in slavery. War and poverty bring feelings of hopelessness and despair. Earthquakes, floods and people fleeing from Afghanistan cause misery. We are also mindful of the many volunteers who are involved with helping people, many risking their own lives. Lord we lift these ones to you and pray that they will experience your love and those that don't know you will call upon you and seek you.

Lord, we also pray for those who are perpetrators of war, and human suffering. We think of people who bring misery through greed, drugs and selfishness etc. May they come to know you and their lives changed.

Covid 19 is causing so much fear around the world and even in our own country. We think of all the health professionals and front line staff that work long hours. We pray for wisdom and discernment for our Government and those who are involved in decisions concerning lockdowns etc. which are causing so much stress.

Heavenly Father, please grant us your peace. Help us to pray and live in accordance with your will. We need your guidance, love and wisdom in our lives to be overcomers.

I finish by reading this verse from 2 Chronicles 7,14. 'If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.'

I invite us to share in saying together The Lord's Prayer.

Our Father in heaven, holy be Your name,

Your kingdom come,

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are Yours, now and forever. Amen.

SONG: SHINE JESUS SHINE (*Graham Kendrick*)

Lord, the light of your love is shining

In the midst of the darkness, shining

Jesus, light of the world, shine upon us

Set us free by the truth you now bring us
Shine on me x2

*Refrain: Shine, Jesus, shine, Fill this land with the Father's glory
Blaze, Spirit, blaze, Set our hearts on fire
Flow, river, flow, Flood the nations with grace and mercy
Send forth your word, Lord, and let there be light.*

Lord, I come to your awesome presence
From the shadows into your radiance
By the blood I may enter your brightness
Search me, try me, consume all my darkness
Shine on me x2

As we gaze on your kingly brightness
So our faces display your likeness
Ever changing from glory to glory
Mirrored here may our lives tell your story
Shine on me x2

THE GRACE: May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be ours now and for ever more. Amen.

BIBLE READING: Colossians 3:12-17
*(NT Translation & Message based on insights from
Scottish Preacher & Teacher William Barclay)*

MESSAGE SUMMARY: 'THE GARMENTS OF CHRISTIAN GRACE'

We are encouraged to be clothed in...

1. **COMPASSION** – Compassion (having a heart of pity) is the basis of all Christian care and welfare.
2. **KINDNESS** – Goodness which is kind, has a lovely flavour to it, goes down well.
3. **HUMILITY** – Divinely grounded in awareness of God as Creator and humanly grounded in belief made in God's image, thereby have inherent worth.
4. **GENTLENESS** – Strength under control, angered at right time for right reasons.
5. **PATIENCE** – Enduring spirit that never entirely loses patience with others and reflects, in part, the great divine patience.
6. **FORGIVENESS** – A tolerant and forgiving spirit flows from a forgiven person.
7. **LOVE** – The strongest of all human bonds and the power of God's Agape Love that holds Christian body together.
8. **PEACEFULNESS** – Christ's peace acts as umpire in decisions we make.
9. **THANKFULNESS** – All things to be undertaken with the attitude of a grateful heart.