Living as a True Church

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[0:00] This is the First Mustang Pulpit Podcast, a podcast of the weekly preaching and teaching at First Mustang.! Thank you for joining us. If you're new to our church, you've picked the perfect time to be here.

Whether you're a first-time guest or just been coming a couple of weeks, this is the perfect time to be here because we've got so many things that are starting new. You're going to be right in there with the rest of us.
Just a couple of notes. We've got this Wednesday night with Awana kicking off. We've got a great place for your children. We have wonderful leadership that oversees our Awana ministry.
If you have a question about that, if you've got an elementary student or preschooler and you need questions answered, call our church office. We would love to help you to find a place for your children on Wednesday nights.
Our teenagers, 6th grade through 12th grade, meet in our youth center for their service called Elevate. That's at 6.30 and goes till 8.
[1:05] They're going to begin a study for a couple of weeks on why we believe the Bible and how we can know the Bible is true. Joey Snodgrass, our youth pastor, will be preaching that service as always.

Really important. If you've got teenagers, please make sure they're here these next couple of Wednesday nights. It's the foundation of our church. It's the foundation of our life as believers. It's the foundation of our youth ministry. In our first service, our middle schoolers are in our first service. Our high schoolers are in this service. We've got a lot of them right here.
High schoolers right here at the front. If you've got high schoolers right now, you're maybe new to our church. They go to Sunday school at 9 and then are in this service at 10.30.
Most of our high schoolers sit right down here at the front. Any of you, of course, in high school are welcome to do that. You don't need a special invitation to sit with our students down here. But Wednesday night is going to be a very, very important time to make sure your teenagers are here.
[2:10] We do adult Bible study at 6.30. Jeff leads that right in here in the sanctuary every Wednesday at 6.30. And our adult choir meets right behind us in the choir room.

And if you are interested in choir, this is a great time to go check it out and to start. If you don't have a place you normally are on Wednesday nights, we encourage you to come in here and be a part of the adult Bible study that goes on in here.
We have a place for all of you on Wednesday night. And we'd love to encourage you to find your spot. If we can help you with that, call us. Or just come by the church office in person. We'd love to be able to talk with you and help you any way that we can.
Tuesday night, ladies, make sure you've got this marked down. It's our next Ladies' Night of Theology. We do these every 10 weeks or so. It's open for any lady of any age.
We'll have 450 ladies or so that will be here from ladies literally from all over the state. We've got all kinds of churches that load up in cars or church vans and bring groups here.
[3:17] We'll have children here. Teenagers will be here. Obviously adults are here. You don't have to sign up. It doesn't cost anything, ladies. You just show up. Bring your Bible. If you can, I encourage you to bring some friends with you.

And we'll just study the Bible from 630 to 830. We just take a different part of theology every time we meet. So you're not behind. There's no homework. It's open for any lady. Just show up.
I think you'll be blessed by it. If you've never been, it's a pretty awesome sight just on a Tuesday night to see hundreds of ladies in the sanctuary. The buzz is just kind of electric.

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And ladies come hungry and ready to study. And it's a lot of fun. So if you're able to, this Tuesday night at 630, we're excited for that. Tomorrow night, we've got our Men's Institute class.
I'll be teaching. If you're a part of our Men's Institute, tomorrow's our last class before your final exam on New Testament 1. So we've got a lot of things that are going on here.
[4:16] And it's a full time for us. And you've picked the perfect time to plug into our church. So we are so glad that you're here this morning. We are walking through the Gospel of Mark this year as a church.

But we're taking a little two-week break outside of Mark to look more specifically at how we're to live as the church. So open your Bible with me, if you would, to Colossians chapter 3.
Next week, we'll be back in our study of the Gospel of Mark. But we're taking two weeks just to look at this very short paragraph under the heading of Living as a True Church.
That what makes us Christians is not just where we go on Sunday mornings. It's not just the building we go to.
That there's a way that we should live. And we should be different than the world. And in Colossians 3, 12-14, Paul, who is the human author writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is using this metaphor of getting dressed.
[5:21] Just like you get dressed in the morning and you put on your outfit, so we are to put on certain things that make us Christians. So you could say that this is the Christian dress code.

It's not about fashion. It's about how we live. And it's about our hearts. Let me just read it for you. And for those of you who weren't here last week, I'll take a brief minute to kind of catch you up. And then we will continue on. Colossians 3, verse 12 says, Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another, and if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other.
As the Lord has forgiven you, so also you must forgive. And above all these, put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.
So we're putting off the old self. We're putting on who we are in Christ. And so for most of our students, they just went back to school last week.
[6:41] A few more will start this week. And just like you put on that perfect shirt or that perfect pair of shoes that you got for back to school, or if you didn't get anything new, you picked out whatever you wanted to wear that first day of school, or if you forgot it was school, you put on whatever you had time to put on, and you made sure you were dressed and ready to go to school.

And what Paul is saying is more than our shoes and more than our hair and more than our shirt, what we should be focused on wearing as believers are traits that are uniquely Christian and show that we belong to Christ.
So we looked first at two headings last week. First was our calling, our calling as believers. He says in verse 12, put on then. He's going to give you three things to remember if you're a Christian about who you are.
Remember as God's chosen ones, that's one. Two, that you're holy, set apart for His use. And third, that you're loved by God.
That's our calling. That's where we start. We remind ourselves that whatever the Lord asks us to do, it's worth it. Whatever sacrifice we have to give is worth it because we remember who we are in Christ.
[8:10] That we are His chosen ones, that we are holy, and that we are loved by God. God has chosen to save you. He has set you apart for His use, and He has put His love upon you.

And if you wonder, why would the Lord ask me to live a life that's so hard? Or if you sometimes think being a Christian means we have to give up so much, just remember what you've already been given.
That He has saved you, and He has made you His own. He has set you apart for His use, and He has loved you. So the Christian life is not about trying to be something you're not.
It's about living as a new creation. It's about living out with other people the love and the grace that the Lord has given to you.
Our calling is to remember that we are His chosen ones, we are holy, and we are loved by God.
Now, that's who He has made us. So the second thing we looked at was our character.
[9:16] What should our character be? And in verse 12, it gives us five specific things that should be true of us. First, compassionate hearts.

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We looked at last week that the word here for a compassionate heart speaks to what you feel. It speaks to that part of you that feels deeply, that as believers, yes, we should be studious.
Yes, we should be clear in our doctrine. Yes, we should study to make ourselves approved, show ourselves approved. But we're not theological robots.
We're to feel, and we're to feel deeply. We're to care for each other and love each other. And the Bible says that as Christians, we are to rejoice with those who rejoice.
We should feel deep joy when someone else receives a blessing. And we're to weep with those who weep. When people among us are hurting, we are to feel for them.
[10:17] That's compassionate hearts. But the second character trait is kindness. Kindness. And kindness, we said last week, was grace in action.

That it's taking what you feel, and it's actually putting it into action. That if somebody loses their job, you don't just feel for them.
If you can, you help them take your compassion and put it into action. This is why we have people who visit hospitals. This is why we have people who choose to give to our love account to help members that have needs.
This is why we have a food pantry so we can have grace and put it in action. This is why people serve how they do. This is why you go and mow a yard for a widow that may be in need.
This is why you call and check on each other when they're sick. It's not just that we feel, though we need to, but we have to put those feelings into action. This is the normal Christian life.
[11:21] We feel deeply, and we put it into action. That's kindness. Third, humility. We put others above ourselves.

We think of the needs of others first. We're not consumed with our way, our preference, our desire, but instead, it's first about Christ and then about others.
Fourth, he says to put on meekness, strength under control, gentleness, we could say. The Bible tells us in Galatians 6, if someone is straying away, it's up to us, the body of Christ, to try to restore them, to bring them back in the spirit of gentleness.
This affects our evangelism. 1 Peter 3, always be prepared to give the reason for the hope within you. Be prepared to engage in evangelistic conversations.
Be prepared. Be looking for ways to talk to people about Jesus. We need to be at church to be trained and taught, but once we leave, we need to be thinking and praying and involved in evangelism.
[12:39] At your schools, with your friends, with people who live around you, with people you just meet that you'll never see again, look for open doors to talk to them about Jesus.

But 1 Peter 3.15 says, When you do this, do it with gentleness and respect. We want to be gentle. We want to be respectful.
Bold? Yes. Clear? Yes. Courageous? Absolutely. But also gentle and respectful. So when you think about evangelism, sharing the gospel, you've got to be equipped and trained to share the gospel, share your faith, but do so with gentleness.
When we talk about apologetics, how do we defend the faith? Let's be well prepared. But let's do that with gentleness and respect. It's one of the reasons I want every parent that's got teenagers, get your students here, particularly these next two Wednesday nights, as joy walks our teenagers through why we believe and why we trust the Bible.
Let's make sure they know the truth, but also prepare them to explain it, to defend it, but to do so not out of hostility, but with gentleness, meekness, which is a way that believers should live.
[14:00] And then we'll pick up today with this fifth character trait. It's at the very end of verse 12. And patience. Maybe the hardest one of all, patience.

patience. The word here is macro through maya. Macro meaning big. Through maya, think of it like a thermos, a thermos that keeps something hot.
The idea behind this word is that you should not be easily made hot. You should not be quick to be angry. To be patient is that you're not just instantly heated up.
That's what the word's talking about here. Do you find yourself getting upset with your spouse very quickly? Mom and dad, do you find that when you go home, that the smallest, slightest things your children do that you don't like makes you quickly angry?
Do you find yourself being very easily agitated by people that you work with? This reminds us that part of what we should put on is patience, that we're not easily heated up.

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[15:15] We're not quickly made angry. If you find yourself quickly and easily made angry, I just want to encourage you with love to repent of that.

That's not how believers should live. And it may be that what would be the most helpful thing for you is to take a day this week and set aside, maybe during your lunch hour, maybe early in the morning for anybody else to rise this, and just spend time praying through that, confessing your anger to the Lord, confessing your sin, asking the Lord to put within you a spirit of humility humility and meekness and patience, because this is how we should live.
Patient with the people in your own household. Patient with people that you work with. Even patient, if you really want to get sanctified, in the school drop-off line.
Heard some great stories of opportunities many of you had this week to practice patience. Aren't you glad for the chance to live out what we study?
Be patient. These are the things that should describe and define the Christian. This is our character. Compassionate hearts. We feel deeply.
[16:42] Kindness. We act on what we feel. Humility. We put others before ourselves. Meekness. We're gentle as we live our Christian life.

And patience. If you want to sum all of those five traits up, you could say it's to be sympathetic. It's to be empathetic.
I think all of it is just living out what the Bible says elsewhere, to love your neighbor as yourself. That's how we should live. I heard a man tell a story of this.
I think it's helpful for us. That imagine today, church is over. You're staying. You're talking to friends here. And let's say one of your closest friends at church just says to you, hey, we're leaving. We're going to go to the restaurant to eat. You know, we'll see you tonight. Whatever. And they leave. In about 15 minutes, your cell phone rings. And it's your friend from church. And you answer it, and right away you can tell they're upset.
[17:42] They're distraught. You know something is wrong. And they tell you, I'm so frustrated. They say, I was leaving and I was in a hurry. I guess I wasn't paying attention. And I backed up in the parking lot, and I just ran right into a car in the church parking lot.

Now, if that's your friend, all of us, when we hear someone's been in a wreck of any kind, our first thoughts always, are you okay? Are you hurt?
Is anyone in your car hurt? That's what a compassionate heart would feel. Are you okay? Kindness is taking that feeling and putting it in action.
Is there anything you need? And you right away start to think, are you okay? Is your car okay? And you wonder, because it's your good friend, I wonder, is your car drivable?
Did it create that much damage? Are you going to be able to drive to work tomorrow? Do you need help maybe borrowing a car? If your friend's got kids that go to school, you maybe wonder, are they going to be able to get their kids to school?
[18:43] Do you need help getting your kids to school? You wonder about the expenses. How expensive is this fixed? You hope that your friend is in a financial bad situation because of this.

All of your thoughts, all of your feelings are all about your friend. That's what we're talking about. Compassionate hearts, kindness, gentleness. But what if the conversation continues and your friend says, by the way, I hit your car?
Now, here's my question. Are you still thinking about them? Or does the reality that you've been inconvenienced now absorb 100% of your attention?
Understand, the world would do the first one. Even an unbeliever could care about a friend who's had an accident.
Even an unbeliever could care about the financial needs of their friend. Here's what's Christian character. Even if it inconveniences me, even if it hurts me, I'll still put your needs above my own.
[19:56] That is Christian character. That's how the body of Christ should live.

Not that we live these things out as long as it's convenient. Not that we'll be gentle and patient and kind when it's easy. But even when you tell me you hit my car, I should still be concerned about you.
I was preaching at a church out of state a couple of months ago. And I used that illustration. After church, a man came up to me and he said, I'm from the security team here.
I need to let you know while you were preaching, somebody backed into your car. I was like, oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. He's like, why are you laughing? I said, well, I mean, because of what I said.

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He said, I wasn't in the service. I was in security outside. What are you talking about? I said, you don't know what I preached about? He said, no, I wasn't in there. I said, so somebody really hit my car? He said, yes, while you were preaching.
[21:03] I'm telling you, somebody hit your car. I thought, well, great. I'm sure glad I used that illustration this morning. I wish I'd have said, like, how to be generous when someone gives you $1,000 out of the blue or something.

But we go outside and a policeman's there. And a policeman said, sir, someone has hit your car. And Marcy thinks the same thing.
Oh, they're just kind of teasing us because of what Michael said. I said, no, honey, somebody really did hit her car. And the question is, in that moment, is the Bible study, is the word study, is the theology, does it really come out?
Or is it just things we affirm hypothetically? It's not that difficult to tell you what the words mean. It's not that difficult to know the language and the background and the sentence construction.
I can help you with that. Here's the question. When it's my life inconvenienced or when it's your life inconvenienced, do the things that we study and affirm truly come out of us?
[22:09] Well, this is how it should be for the Christian. That we really live as a true church. Truly put these things into practice.

Not just things we talk about or affirm, but things that we really live. And you say, but that seems like a really hard way to live. That even if we're inconvenienced, we should be kind.
And even if it's hard for us, we should be generous. But why would we live that way? It's verse 12. Remember, God has chosen you, set you apart, loved you.
It's because of what Christ has already done for you that creates within us the desire and capacity to live out our true faith.
So that's our calling and our character. Third, I want to show you this morning our conduct. This is when all of the theology gets real life put on display.
[23:14] We see it in verse 13. Two things. Bearing with one another. And if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other.

See, ultimately, our theology has to be lived out. We're talking about how Paul uses this metaphor of what you put on. You put on the uniform, but you put the uniform on not just to look good on the sidelines.
You put on the uniform to equip you to go in the game. So, in the locker room, the football player meticulously puts on his uniform.
And yes, the jersey's clean and the pants are bright. And yes, the helmet is shiny. And yes, it looks good and you feel good putting it on. But the whole reason you put that helmet on is to absorb the blows when you're playing football.
The reason you put the shoulder pads on are not just to look good. It's to absorb the crushing tackle so you don't get injured. The purpose of the uniform isn't just for people to see you.
[24:23] It's so that you can actually do what you've trained to do. Church, this is what the Bible's talking about here. That we don't only study, though that's essential, but our study is our uniform.

Our beliefs is our uniform. It's what we put on. But it's so we can be equipped to really live out the work. And I want you to notice that all of these things that are being mentioned here are things that must be lived out with people.
You cannot do these things in isolation. When the Bible talks about being humble and patient, you can only do that if you're with people.
This is why you cannot live your Christian life in isolation. It can't be done. You can read the Bible at home on your own. You can sing songs of praise on your own.
You can listen to great sermons on YouTube. I do all of those things every week. But none of those things are a substitute for what we're doing here.
[25:43] How do we know? Well, one, because of the Scripture at the beginning, Hebrews 10, where you are called by God to be together with the people. But second, all of these commands and descriptions of how the true church lives demands that you're with other people.

You just cannot live the Christian life in isolation. You can't do it. And so we want to train and equip each other not only to believe right, but to actually go live it out.
Again, I've mentioned a couple times, but this is why with our youth ministry, the next two Wednesday nights are so important. We want our students to know what the Bible says, yes. We

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also want them to be able to know why we trust the Bible and why we believe the Bible, and so they can go share with others in their school who do not believe why we trust the Word of God.
It's critically important. It's not only of what you believe. It's what you believe and how you live it. We don't want to be hypocrites who just affirm one thing and live a totally different lifestyle.
If we really believe the Bible is the Word of God, we know that doctrinally, but then we have to go defend it. We have to go live it. We have to believe it. Now, within the life of the church, I don't know if you've noticed this, but the people in this room are not perfect people.
[27:22] Have you noticed that? We're real people. Imperfect marriages. Imperfect tempers.

Raising imperfect children. And when you're a part of a church family, just like in your own biological family, sometimes you've just got to put up with each other.
Well, that's what he's saying in verse 13. All the things that we put on is so that we can bear with one another. We bear with each other.
We hold each other up. We put up with each other. We strengthen each other. I love the words of one author who I think captured this so well.
He said, Be on guard against those who threaten to leave the church every time they don't get their own way. People like this view the church as religious theater, and they are consumed with their right to go shopping for a better performance or a more thrilling experience.
[28:32] If ever someone captured the heart of the American church today, he nailed it. At the heart of what makes a biblical church is not about the member just sitting back and watching as if they're at a theater, and they just decide, where do I get the biggest buzz?

Or what facility do I like best? Or what service time is most convenient? It's so much more than that. A church is about, where can I be taught and be challenged to live like Christ?
And it's not just, what do I love and enjoy? It's where can I serve? It's where can you take verse 12 and put it into practice? How can I learn how to be compassionate?
How can I serve in kindness? How can I help the church grow in humility? It's not just about my preference and your preference. It's about how can we live like Jesus?
And don't be the kind of person who the first time you don't get your way, you just look for a different show in town. Instead, the Scripture is very clear.
[29:56] Sometimes you just got to put up with each other. You just got to bear with one another. There's 10,000 things I love about our church. High, high on the list is that I get to be a member of a church with people who really practice these things.

This church enjoys so much unity and peace and joy and it's not because we're perfect.
It's because we really do believe that the theology we study on Sundays should be practiced on Mondays.
And we don't do it perfectly. That's why we have to forgive each other. But this church really believes these things.
And for me to be a member of such a church and be the beneficiary of so many people who have practiced these things with me and for my family and I've been able to watch people live these things out is such a blessing.
[31:11] But you've got to understand this. When he says all these things in verse 12 how you're to live, it's with the understanding in verse 13 that it's not going to always be easy.

Sometimes you've just got to bear with one another. And you need to remember it's not just you having to put up with other people that frustrate you.
Believe it or not it may be people having to put up with you when you frustrated them. that just like you should forgive the church member because they are also loved by God so you need to remind yourself that sometimes you need them to forgive you too.
In fact school has started back so we can do a little bit of grammar here. For our students in school look back at verse 12. Put on then as God's chosen ones.
Is that singular or plural students? Strong. That's good. You've had one day of school I'll expect better next week.
[32:22] That's plural. There's an S. It's plural. The idea here is not just that you are God's chosen one though you are if you're a believer. It's a part of a family of God's chosen ones.

meaning that when somebody disappoints you in the church you ought to remind yourself Jesus loves them too. And when somebody frustrates you remind yourself Jesus saved them too.

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And that person you're tempted to talk about or to gossip about or to tear down if they are in Christ they are a part of the body of Christ.
Be careful how you talk about each other. When you're married forgiveness isn't just about you've got to forgive your spouse though you do they also have to forgive you too because you're not always right.
And so Paul says here the living out of this the conduct we should have is that we bear with one another. But there's a second thing he says not just bear with each other but also if one has a complaint against the other forgiving each other.
[33:47] That we don't seek our own retribution. Now the language here let me help you with this because this is very important in verse 13. It's indefinite pronouns which means the details are unspecified.

That's purposeful because the idea is that if there's a complaint not just one kind of complaint or two kinds of complaint whatever you may be dealing with whatever somebody may have done to you and the language in verse 13 suggests that the complaint the concern is legitimate.
So if there you have a real reason to be upset with somebody or somebody has a real reason to be frustrated with you even then what are we to do?
Forgive each other. And Paul purposefully leaves this very broad. If anyone has a complaint against another brother or sister even if the concern is genuine your conduct should be I want to seek to forgive this person.
Why? Because you're both loved by God and you're both set apart for his use and you're both a part of God's family and you don't tear down the bride of Christ.
[35:23] So we have to really live these things out. But let me also show you in verse 13 if one has a complaint against another forgiving each other little two letter word in English as a s the Greek word here is kathos as Christ forgave you kathos meaning in proportion to to the measure of to the degree of in other words the way Christ forgave you becomes the standard with how you seek to forgive other people so we have to ask ourselves how did Jesus forgive us well he forgave us freely didn't he and he forgave us fully and he forgave us willingly and he forgave us when we were undeserving

Romans 5 8 says God demonstrated his love in this that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us how did Jesus forgive you freely fully willingly and when you were undeserving now look at the verse again as the Lord has forgiven you so you also must forgive somebody in your family hurts you someone in the church disappoints you those things are real how do you live as a true church you stop and you say how did Christ forgive me Christ forgave me fully and Christ forgave me freely and I want to seek to forgive this person and when your flesh says yeah but they don't deserve to be forgiven remind yourself how
Christ forgave you you weren't deserving either as he forgave you to the degree in proportion to the measure of forgive others as he forgave you you know what happens when you find a church like that people don't want to leave you just want to linger you just want to be here I love Sundays for a lot of reasons but part of it is because when I come here on Sundays I'm around people who really believe that and when I go around in places in the world I don't see that and when I watch the news of the day I don't see that and when I look at what's going on all around us I don't experience that the place I go where I see people who really long to be compassionate and kind and humble and meek and patient and bearing and forgiving it's in this place if the
Bible said you're encouraged to gather with God's people but you don't have to if the Bible said that which it doesn't but if it did I'd be here every Lord's Day not because I have to because this is the place I want to be with imperfect people like me who love Jesus who believe the word and with all their heart are trying to live this out imperfectly so we need grace imperfectly so we need to be forgiving people this is why people love to be here this is why our students sit here and pack in with a hundred high schoolers packed in close because they love each other because they really care about these things and they have the rest of the world and the rest of the week that treat them totally different than that but here there's something real this is why when
Sunday night service is over and Sunday school is over people don't want to leave you just want to stay you just want to talk you just want to linger here because this is not how the world is and when you find a church that lives this imperfectly but believes this and lives this you just say there's no place else I want to be this is why you have the friends that you have here this is why you serve the way that you serve here this is why you serve and worship the way that you do because you just

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love to be with God's people Wednesday nights when all the activities are over down in the children's wing people just want to stay and linger you got to kick them out the door and turn the because they just want to stay you're just around people who really believe this nobody nobody should make you go to church it's the most amazing invitation and privilege you could ever know you get to be a part of a family like this now be careful don't say yeah well
[41:21] I don't know about that somebody hurt my feelings I'm sure they did which is why verse 13 says be quick to forgive and you say well I don't know about that because I think I may have hurt somebody else's feelings I'm sure you did which is why they need to be quick to forgive you and you say well I don't know if I love the church that much because some people are kind of hard to put up with I'm sure they are which is why the Bible doesn't hide or mask that it just tells you live like this believe like this practice this and bear with one another!

we don't love this place because we're perfect I don't love my wife because she's flawless I love this church and I love my wife because Christ in grace has blessed me to be a part of this family because Christ in grace brought my wife to me two imperfect people two sinners but people who really do believe this that's why Saturday is about two o'clock I just get antsy I usually come up here on Saturday afternoon I just want Sunday to get here I just want to be with you guys I just want to sing with you I just want to have high schoolers pepper me with Bible questions incessantly
I just want to have children come up to me and show me what they colored in Sunday school they were learning about the Bible I just want to live here and if we could I'd be tempted to say let's just turn this place into somewhere we can live and eat and sleep and never leave except except there's a world to reach and so we come here to be trained equipped strengthened and sent out in a world that's very very different than what we've described today which is why you put on the uniform of Christ likeness to engage in the world of ministry and missions and evangelism and apologetics and service and discipleship for the glory of
Christ one last thing from verse 14 and that's our covering what covers all of this he says above all these things put on love which binds everything together in perfect harmony above all of this put on love our covering is love this is unique distinct Christian love you put a suit on you need the pants you need the belt you need the socks you need shoes you need a shirt but over all of that is the coat it's the covering now the Bible is not that concerned with how you dress though it should be modest and holy and all of those things but coming to church is not about your wardrobe the uniform the Christian should have is not about fashion ultimately it's about our character and our conduct verse 14 above all these things put on love love but notice what it does which binds everything together in perfect harmony it pulls everything together it's love that makes meekness and kindness and humility and patience it's what pulls it together but loves also what unites all of us together the same word same
Greek word translated earlier in Colossians speaks of the ligaments that hold the body together love is that ligament that unites us to each other this is one of the things that's heartbreaking honestly of pastoral work is if you've got a family and they just disappear they just quit coming to church they don't tell anybody they just quit coming you grieve that because you love them and they say how the church runs a thousand people eleven hundred people there who cares no one misses me of course we do we have people who pray for you all the time we have people who love you and care about you you're not just a face you're part of the family and if you take one ligament in your body and sever it you tell me if you feel that take one bone in your whole body and break one bone just one you tell me if you feel that love is what binds us together love is what holds us together in perfect harmony it's not your perfection it's not my perfection
[47:08] I'm not your friend as long as you do exactly what I want you don't come to church here as long as you get your way with everything that's how the world thinks what holds us together is love love for Christ and love for each other that's why we grieve when a loved one in our church dies we know they're in heaven if they're a believer we don't grieve for them but it hurts to lose somebody you love them that's why if somebody wanders away sure there's other people here and sure we've got hundreds of people here but we love that person we care for love is what holds us together and so this context of verses 12 to 14 has this rich beautiful language but it's so raw and so honest and it just tells you sometimes you just got to bear with each other and sometimes you just got to forgive each other but what's going to hold us all together is love our church staff makes 10,000 decisions a year and we spend very little time talking about decisions we can chapter and verse if we can chapter and verse we're settled on that that's done the bible says do it we do it bible

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says don't do it we don't do it we don't have any debates over that that takes us no time but things we can't chapter and verse you got to talk through a lot of decisions we don't agree on every single thing we don't have the exact same opinion and same preference on every single thing what holds us together

I've been here 23 years Kathy's been here 23 years Jeff's been here 11 John's been here 12 what keeps everybody here so long it's love it's love for Jesus and it's love for each other it's not the mirage that we're perfect it's that you find a place where people love like that and you just want to stay but here's the truth Monday morning's coming and you got to go you got to go to work and you got to go to school and you got to raise your kids and you got to get busy to get busy living a real life and the things we've learned and affirmed and believed here you've got to live those things your college students grow up and they go you send them away to their dorm room you send them away to their workforce you send them away to get married and a part of you thinks but can't we just stay here forever and the answer is no because there's people to reach there's a gospel to take to the nations and so sometimes God sends away those relationships end no because we're held together by love and it changes you profoundly

I want to close with one last thing amidst all this talk in the scripture here about how to live and what we're to do and how we're to be different don't forget something very obvious that's here it would be easy to miss this verse 13 forgiving each other as the Lord has forgiven you if you are in Christ Christian can you remember something very basic with me this morning Christ has forgiven you rest in it God I know you wish you were a better husband and wife we all do rest in

God's forgiveness I know you feel the weight of how you wish you were more effective as a parent we all do but rest in God's forgiveness forgiveness I know there's conversations where you should have spoken up for Christ and you didn't I know there's times you should have been prayerful and you weren't rest in God's forgiveness I'm not making light of disobedience I'm not making light of our sin I just want you to be reminded of the obvious truth of the gospel it's not about your performance that saves you it's his grace don't forget brother or sister if you're in Christ he has forgiven you that's what makes us the same stories told of a man who had committed a crime and was convicted and sentenced to years in prison he embarrassed himself he embarrassed his family his father was especially wounded by the shame his son brought upon his family's name his son was sent away to prison where he spent a number of years during that time his family did not visit him and his family did not write him he knew he had embarrassed and shamed his family he hoped the reason they didn't come visit was because he knew his parents didn't have much money he hoped they just couldn't afford to travel and to go and see him eventually he got word he's about to be let out they said we're going to put you on a train and we'll give you enough money to get where you're going and then you've got to get off the train and start your new life somewhere well the man had nowhere to go his family wanted nothing to do with him he had no friends he had no money so he wrote a letter to his dad and he said dad the time has come

I'm about to be released from prison he said I don't know if I'm welcome home anymore or not I don't know if you would ever let me back in he said I'm not even going to show up to ask I'm too embarrassed he said the train they're going to put me on is going to go right by our family farm and he said I want you to do is if there's any way you would forgive me just take a single white ribbon and tie it on the front of the apple tree by the train and when I pass by if I see a white ribbon I'll know I'm forgiven I'll know I'm welcome home I'll get off at the next stop and come home if I don't see the ribbon I'll know I've got to find family somewhere else he mailed the letter a few weeks later it was time to go he was set free they put him on a train he began to go on the train sitting by the window he knew that he was now just a few minutes from his family's farm he began to picture what that apple tree looked like and wondered would he see even just a single ribbon on there he got so antsy and jittery the person sitting beside him said what is wrong with you son and the man told his life story he was a convict he was a prisoner and wondered if his dad would ever forgive him but the prisoner released and I can't even stand to look out the window the pain and the anxiety is too high and so the friend here said I'll trade seats with you if you'll tell me when we're getting close to the farm

[55:47] I'll look out the window so you don't have to so they switched seats the convict looked out the window and he said we're about 30 seconds away from my house just look to see is there a single white ribbon on the apple tree and the man just buried his head in his hands couldn't stand to watch a few seconds went by he knew he had passed his father's house and so he said to his new

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friend that was looking out for him did you see it and the one looking out the window said no I didn't see a single white ribbon on the tree he said what I saw was hundreds of ribbons he said what I saw was hundreds tied all over the tree and the convict knew that was his father saying you're forgiven brothers and sisters in the midst of a busy chaotic life don't forget this basic truth that in

Christ you are forgiven and welcomed home if you don't know Christ as your savior here's what the bible tells us that we have all sinned and all fallen short of God's glory and that Christ came sent by the father and lived a perfect life and went to the cross and took our sin upon himself and suffered in our place was laid in a borrowed tomb on the third day raised back to life has ascended to heaven and he has said that he is going to prepare a place for you that where he is you will be also and those who would believe in Jesus those who would turn from their sin and have faith in the finished work of Jesus they will be saved forgiven and welcomed home if you've never turned to Christ in faith and asked him to be your Lord and Savior would you even this day confess your sin and ask the Lord Jesus to forgive you and you can know for the rest of your life you're welcome in the Father's house and based on that great truth go live different from the world up and with all of and this was just it as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as as

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