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.!

This is a passage I've been able to do some work in this summer already and just want to share with you some things I think will be helpful for us as a congregation here in Colossians 3, verses 12 to 14.
Let me ask you to stand, if you would, in honor of the reading of God's Word. I'm going to read verses 12 to 17, and in our time of study we'll be focusing on verses 12 to 14.
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 you also must forgive.
[1:34] And above all these, put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body.

And be thankful. 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. 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.
Would you pray with me? Lord, we do thank you this morning for your word and pray that through the power of your spirit in this moment that we would be able to understand what you have for us, that we would listen carefully, that our hearts would be in tune to your word.
Lord, may we have belief in what your word says and a will that desires to obey all that you would instruct us. And as we have just read, may everything that we do in word or in deed be done for the glory of the name of Christ Jesus, our Lord.
[2:58] Amen. You can be seated. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. I'm going to have to do it again.
The knot was too narrow. I would do it again. And finally, I learned what to do. I just needed to practice. So I just locked myself in the bedroom in front of the mirror until I could tie my necktie perfectly every time.
Because, I mean, what eight-year-old doesn't need to know how to do that? You just need to know how to tie a tie. And it can't have a clip behind it, gentlemen.
By the way, that doesn't count if it's a clip-on. You've got to learn how to dress yourself. And being dressed is, for the occasion, as important as you get older as well.
[4:41] If you've ever shown up somewhere and been wildly underdressed, you know how uncomfortable that is. Being dressed appropriately helps us. It's how you know what team to cheer for.

In just a few Friday nights and a few Saturday nights, it'll be high school football season and college football season. And if you're a college football fan, you turn on the TV, and here's a bunch of guys you've never met.
You don't know them. The new ones, you don't even know their name. How do you know who you like? If they make a tackle, how do you know if you're excited or sad? If somebody scores, how do you know whether to yell and clap and cheer, whether to cry and grieve?
Only one way. What color jersey are they wearing? That's it. These aren't people you know. These aren't friends of yours. You don't know their character, hopes, and dreams in life.
All you know, red team, good. Orange team. Blue team. Just whatever. Just whatever.

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[5:49] That's all you know. And if a player happens to go from orange to red, then that's okay too. And from red to, say, whatever other color, then not so much.

Based on what? Based on the color of the jersey. The uniform is very important. How do you know how to find a police officer?
By the uniform. If you're at a store needing help, how do you know who to ask for help? The uniform. The way that they're dressed helps us.
And this is the metaphor Paul is using all throughout Colossians 3. In fact, just look up for just a minute to verse 8. He says, To put away anger, wrath, and malice, and slander.
Verse 10. Put on the new self. So, Paul is using this metaphor of take off and put on. That as believers, there's a dress code.
[6:56] Not fashion and wardrobe. But how we live, our character, and our conduct. That just like you know somebody works at that store because of the way they're dressed, so people should know that we belong to the Lord Jesus Christ because we have put on the character and the conduct that reflects Christ.

It's not a dress code in the church in terms of what you can and can't wear. Not in a sense of fashion. But in the sense of our character. In the sense of the way that we live.
In the sense of how we treat each other. There should be a way that people can know and distinguish who we belong to. It's very important.
I mean, we are right here at the back to school week. It comes so quickly, doesn't it? It's amazing how fast summer flies by and it's back to school. And I remember when I was going to be a freshman.
Of course, I didn't drive yet. And so, my friend and I wanted to go to the store, go to the mall. Some of you old timers remember Crossroads Mall. Remember Crossroads Mall?
[8:08] We went to Crossroads Mall to get our first day of school. You know, clothes we wanted to wear. And so, his dad dropped us off. And I just immediately felt the pressure.

He said, I'm going to drop you off. We'll be back in two hours. And I felt this pressure. I've got to get this right outfit for the first day of my freshman year. We've only got two hours to find it. And I just couldn't find anything I like.
Nothing I like. Couldn't find it. Store after store after store. And finally, my friend's like, my dad's going to be here in five minutes. We've got to go. And so, I just bought what was right in front of me. It just happened to be a heavy fleece sweatshirt. I wanted to buy something. So, I bought it. And I got dressed that day wondering, I wonder if I'm going to get made fun of for wearing a heavy sweatshirt to school the first day of school.
And you'll be pleased on the answer is absolutely yes. I did. Sometimes you have this idea of, you know, I've got to find the perfect thing to wear. And in the sense of wardrobe and fashion, you just can't find it.
[9:12] You can't find the perfect shoes. You can't find the earrings. You can't find the tie. You can't find the shirt. Whatever it may be, we're accustomed to trying to find exactly what makes the wardrobe work.

So, borrowing that metaphor, Paul says there are some ways that Christians ought to dress. There's a look we should have. There's a way that people ought to be able to look at you and recognize you and see that you belong to Jesus.
And it's not because you wear a coat and tie. It's not because of your shoes. It's not because of your jewelry. It's not anything external.
It's about your heart. It's about what you love. It's about how you treat each other. It's about how you forgive each other. It's about how you handle disappointment with each other.
[10:13] That these are the things that should mark us. And part of living as a true church is that we should be people who are known by who we love, Christ first, also each other, even our enemies, Jesus said.

We should be known by how we live with a focus on Christ and also serving others. And people should be able to recognize what team we are on by the jersey we are wearing.
Not our fashion, but our life and our conduct. And so, borrowing that metaphor, Paul says in verse 12, put on then.
Here's how you dress. Here's what the Christians should look like as they go through life. Let me give you a few headings.

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We'll do a little bit today and a little bit next Sunday, Lord willing. First, let's look at our calling. Our calling. I see this in verse 12. This is what we've been called by God to do and to be.
[11:24] Verse 12, put on then. This is our command. This is what you put on. This is what you're to wear. You put this on.

This is your uniform. This is your game jersey. This is your wardrobe. Not something you buy at a store. Something produced in you by the work of the Holy Spirit.
So, if you're starting school this week, kindergarten all the way through college, raise your hand. You're starting school this week. Let me see your hand. All right?
Lots of you. Before you start school, if you're a Christian, more important than what you wear the first day to school, more important than any outfits you pick out this week, if you're a believer, first, make sure you put on what the Lord Jesus called you to put on.
We spend a lot of time thinking about what to wear and how we look and how we want our hair to look and all these kind of things. But far more important than that is the way that you live as a representative of the Lord Jesus Christ.
[12:39] And so he tells us there are some things that we are to put on. He's already said there's things we take off and there's things we put on. And I want you to understand that borrowing this whole metaphor, what Paul is absolutely saying is that as Christians, we should be different.

We're supposed to stand out. We're supposed to be different. When I, the first paying job I had, some of our, I don't know, I mentioned this in Awana a couple of years ago.
Some of our children may remember this. When I worked for, my first job was at Brahms, the hardest job I've ever had to date. Back then, the colors were brown.
So I had a brown hat and brown jeans and a brown apron. And the worst part was that they took the apron and hat out of my paycheck.
I made $3.11 an hour. And my first paycheck went to my uniform. I went to Anthony's. I'm really dating myself. You guys remember Anthony's? We're just having some reminiscent down Old Man Road here.
[13:52] But when I left you, I was in my 40s. I've come back to you in my 50s. This is what old men do. But I went to Anthony's and I said, I need some brown jeans.

And the guy literally said, why? Well, that was the uniform. When I went to work at Brahms, I had to have a uniform on that people would know I worked there.
And I didn't like it because I stood out. Who else in high school has brown jeans? To make it worse, they gave me this green button that said, I'm new.
I mean, why not just give me a button that says, I'm an idiot? I mean, what? The whole deal is to make you stand out. Well, as believers, we don't always like that, do we?
We don't always want to stand out. Sometimes as believers, we just kind of want to just slide by. But Paul says specifically here, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that there are things we're to put on.
[14:59] We're to be different. We're to stand out. And church, that's got to be true of us. Churches should be different from the world.

And man, has the American church forgotten us. This is not a small thing. This is a pervasive mushroom cloud of embarrassment on the American church.
How much of the world we're trying to bring into the church. It's not what we're supposed to be. We are to be different because by the Spirit of God, we are different.
We just are. We're still sinners. We still need forgiveness. Our church is so imperfect. I am so imperfect.
All of us among us need grace. By no means are we a finished product. By no means have we arrived. But brothers and sisters in Christ, if you know Jesus Christ, you should be different from the world.
[16:13] There's things that we love the world doesn't love. And there's things we should want no part of that the world craves. And so when Paul says put these things on, he's saying that you need to live in such a way that you stand out.

So those of you who raised your hands, you're starting school this week. I just want to tell you as your pastor, as a Christian in your school, you need to stand out. And you say, well, that may mean some people aren't my friend.

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That's true. And you say, there may be some people who mock me. That's true. There may be some guys who won't ask me on a date.
That's true. But you stand out because you are different. You're different. You don't look like the world anymore because you're not of the world.
We are supposed to be different because we are different. And in verse 12, put on then. This is the verb tense, what we call the present imperative.
[17:26] It means we keep putting it on. This is something we're continually focused on, continually thinking of. We are constantly obeying the Lord's command here.

What's our calling? What is it that we put on? What are we being called by God to do? Here's our calling. First, he says, as God's chosen ones.
This is who you are if you are in Christ. Just God's chosen ones. And I get that in the world, in the church world today, even just that word, just that phrase can create all kinds of debate and discussion and uncomfortableness and whatever.
And a different sermon for a different day of all that entails. But to stay in context of what he's saying in Colossians 3 here, remember, when he says you are God's chosen ones, this is not about bringing confusion.
This is about bringing comfort to God's people. This isn't about a launching point to divide and have some theological debate primarily. This is about helping God's people understand.
[18:40] Yes, you stand out. Yes, you may be mocked by the world. Yes, you won't fit in with the world. Yes, you're taking off the clothes of the world, putting on the clothes of the believer.

And yes, that may be uncomfortable. But here's the good news for you. When the world rejects you, take heart. God has chosen you.
That's the heart. That's the heart. If the world rejects you, take heart. God chose you to be his. You're called not only as his chosen ones.
The next word, you are to be holy. That word means to be set apart. You've not only been chosen by God, you've been set apart for God's use.
But you've got to understand this, believer. It's not as if you live for yourself, you do your own thing, you do whatever you want, and you add a little bit of God to you so that when you die, you go to heaven, not hell.
[19:44] That's not the picture of conversion. The picture of conversion is you are a new creation. That you are bought with a price.

That you no longer belong to yourself, you belong to him. I don't know if there's anything that's been more damaging to a generation of young people than this motto and idea of just you do you.
You do you, you will go to hell. It's just the way it is. You fulfill your dreams, you are making yourself an enemy of God.
You live for your agenda, your goal, your desire, your flesh, your temptation. And what you're doing is saying, I am my own God.
But believer, you're different. Christian teacher, you're different. Christian business owner, you're different.
[20:54] Christian mother, you're different. Christian middle schooler, you're different. Christian college student, you're different.

You have, if you're a believer, Paul says, remember you've been chosen by God, but you're also to be holy, set apart for his use. Your life exists for his purpose, not your own.
That's what conversion is. You're a new creation. You've gone from spiritual death to spiritual life. You have a new life.
You have a new hope. You have a new joy. You have a new master. You have a new Lord. You have a new focus on life.
You exist for him. Be holy, set apart, different from the world. There's a third part of your calling, and he says you are beloved.
[21:53] He loves you. So, why would you put off the flesh and put on the things of God?

Why would you do that? That's going to be hard. That may make you stand out. That may make you uncomfortable. That may cost you relationships. That may cost you a promotion. Why would you live that way? Here's why.
Because God chose you, he set you apart, and he loves you. Don't ever forget that. You have been loved by the God of the universe.

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Whatever the world says about you, pay no mind to it at all. If you go back and look at the things that we used to be, verse 5, this is how we used to live.
Sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, covetousness, idolatry. That's how we used to be. That's how the world lives.
[22:59] But we are to put those things to death. How did you used to live? Verse 8, anger, wrath, malice, slander, obscene talk from your mouth.

That's how we used to live. That's who we used to be. That's how we used to dress. No more. We've taken that off.
And we've put on a new dress. A new wardrobe. No longer will we be known for jealousy and immorality and slander and obscene talk.
We're going to be known by something different. But first, before we look at our character, let me just remind you of your calling here. You live this way because of God's grace.
Paul says, he chose you, he set you apart, and he loved you. So when you go to school this week, if you are believing the Lord Jesus Christ, you remind yourself.
[24:15] You're not saved because of your works, or your looks, or your intellect, or your talents. It's all God's grace.

And you walk in that school and you say, according to the word of God, I am God's chosen one. I am holy, and I am loved by him. That is all the encouragement and strength I need to live for the Lord Jesus Christ.
That's how we're to live. That's how we're to dress. So, if you're fortunate enough, you've got a new outfit for the first day, have at it. Mom and dad, post pictures of your kids to school.
Old people like us like to see that. But if you want to pray for your kids, don't worry about what shoes they're wearing first.
You pray that they would put on the character of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that knowing they are chosen, set apart, and loved by God, that that would always be enough to bring them joy in their life.
[25:27] That's our calling. Now, let's get in the nitty-gritty of how we're to live. Secondly, let's look at our character. Put on then as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved.

He's going to mention here several characteristics that should be true of us. First, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.
Let's look at the first one, compassionate hearts. This would literally be translated bowels of mercy. Now you know why they translated it to compassionate hearts.
Why would it be bowels of mercy? Well, it's because in the ancient world, when they spoke of the bowels of the stomach, of the insides, that's where they refer to as the seat of emotion. It's that part of you that feels deeply.
We still use this in our culture. We'll say things like, I've got a pit in my stomach. Those of you who play sports, you've got your first game coming up soon. Before that first game, what does every athlete talk about?
[26:38] They've got butterflies. What do we mean by butterflies? It means in your stomach. You just kind of feel the nervousness, the anxiety. Before you play your piano recital, before you sing your solo, before you go to the academic bowl, whatever you're interested in, before you're in front of people, you feel butterflies.

That's what it's talking about. Bowels of mercy. Is that part of you where you feel things? Translated for us in English, compassionate hearts.
It's not cardia. It's not the heart muscle. It's splenchnia. Again, it speaks to that inward part of you that's vulnerable and that feels.
Keep this in context. As God's chosen one, set apart for him and loved by God, we are to feel deeply.
This is critical for us because the Christian life absolutely includes but is not only about what you know.
[27:51] It absolutely must include the truth. There is no conversion without doctrine. There is no right conversion without right belief.

But the Christian life is not only about what you know. It's also about that inside part of you that is different, that you feel things, that you don't just recite Bible verses, but you love Christ, that you don't just go to church on the Lord's Day, but that you feel love and affection for each other.

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The Christian life tells us we are to have compassionate hearts. We are to feel things toward God and feel things toward each other.
You could look at it this way. It's saying that we are to be tender-hearted people. So if a friend of yours says, I've got really bad news.
I've just been diagnosed with cancer. You've got to feel something. Absolutely, you should know doctrine and you should know Scripture you can share with them, but you ought to feel for them too.
[29:09] We're not robots. We're human beings made in the image of God. If someone in your Sunday school class loses their job and tells you, I've lost my job.

I don't know what we're going to do. What they need you to do is to have a compassionate heart, a tender heart that feels for them, that hurts for them, that grieves for them, that mourns for them.
And this is why you cannot do biblical church from a distance. This is why technology will never replace the local gathered assembly.
Because I can go online and listen to brilliant men teach, and I do often. You ought to as well. But I can't feel anything for the people in that church that I don't know.
I can't grieve with them. I can't mourn with them. I can't cry with them because I don't know them.
See, the Christian life absolutely includes what you know, but it also includes feeling deeply for the people that are a part of your life.
[30:33] If you've got a son, you don't just say, I know his name, knowledge. You feel deeply for him.

I heard that the grapevine Jeff and Shauna have a new grandbaby. Is that true? I heard something about that. You showed remarkable restraint last Sunday, by the way.
I know your heart was, you don't want to make it about you and your focus on you. I get that. I appreciate your heart when it's focused on the Lord. You showed remarkable restraint. I think only seven times.
I expected a slideshow, a video, a testimony, a live demonstration of you holding something. Congratulations.
We're really excited for you guys. But if you have a grandbaby, you don't just know their name. You feel something. If you ask Jeff today, what's the name of your grandson?
[31:36] And he says the name, he's going to feel something deep inside. Paul says, Paul says, that's part of how we're to dress.

We're tenderhearted. We feel deeply for each other. So, in our pursuit of doctrine and knowledge, which is an absolute must, don't lay down that part of you that feels deeply and emotionally about Christ and about His people.
It's how we are to live. Compassion art. Second, he says, kindness. This means that we don't just feel something, we actually do something.
You can think of kindness as grace in action. Somebody comes to you and says, I've lost my job. I don't know what we're going to do. It's one thing to feel deeply for them, and you should, but kindness is taking your feelings and putting it into action.
[32:54] Maybe it's giving money to someone who's in need. Maybe it's going and providing a meal for someone whose family's had surgery. You feel for them, then you put that feeling into action.

Paul says, as believers, both should be there. Don't miss this. Sometimes people feel deeply, but never do anything about it. Other times, people will do something that looks right, but they have no heart and compassion behind it.
And Paul says, that's not how believers should be. We feel deeply, and then we put those feelings into action. Compassionate hearts and then kindness.
We feel it, and then we take that grace and put it into action. Kindness. By the way, I think this helps us with our evangelism as well.
Romans 2, 4, it's the kindness of God that leads us to repentance. Let that be true of us as well. Be kind.
[34:05] When you go to school next week, and that car line is 18 miles long, I'm so glad I will never again be in a car line.

Well, at least this year, I won't. I may be back up one day, but be kind. To that school secretary who's trying to help you find your schedule, and she's had 18 other people ask the same question, be kind.

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To the bus driver who's late, not because it's his fault, but because some other rat was running behind, be kind. To your teacher who feels frazzled because she's got more put on her than she could possibly handle, be kind.
Be kind. Before you walk into school, put on kindness. Before you go anywhere, put on kindness. Compassionate hearts and kindness. Feel deeply for people in your life, and then act on that. Third, he says, humility.
[35:25] Put on humility. This is the opposite of pride, the opposite of self-exaltation. And we are to serve each other.

We are to be servants. Servants. This church needs to be made up of servants. People who are willing to do whatever it takes to serve each other.
To help teach, and to help serve, and to help encourage, and to help pray. Humility. Pride says, I'm too good for that.
Pride says, you know how many degrees I've got? You know how much money I make? You know how long I've gone to this church? You know how long I've been in this community? You know how long I've sat in this row?
Pride says, this is mine. Humility says, I was a sinner, and God chose me, and set me apart, and loved me.
[36:33] I want to live the rest of my life in kindness, helping you know the kindness of the grace that saved me. Church, let's for sure be known for our truth.

Let's be known for our courage. Let's be known for our convictions. Let's be known by being unflinching in the face of a changing culture.
But let's be kind. You can be courageous and kind. You can be bold and humble.
And Paul says, this is the wardrobe for the believer. This is what you put on. Compassionate hearts, kindness, humility.
And then, fourth, meekness. Meekness is a word we don't use it much. It's actually a bit of a challenging word to define.
[37:40] I think the best definition of what this word means in the original language would be this. I like this definition. It's the quality of not being overly impressed by a sense of your own self-importance.

To be meek. Not to be timid. Not to be weak. But to not be overly impressed with yourself or your own self-importance.
The same word is used in Psalm 37. The Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament. In Psalm 37, it uses this exact same word translated in Colossians 3 as meekness.
In Psalm 37, to say, it's the result of fully trusting the Lord. That when I trust the Lord fully, I can live a meek life because I trust His power, His authority.
I don't have to go around flexing. I don't have to go around trying to convince people how important I am. I don't have to go around trying to demand my own way. I can have strength under control.
[38:55] That's what I mean by meekness. Let this describe and define us. We're to be meek.

The same idea, the same word can be translated as gentleness. Galatians 6.1 says, if there's a brother among us who's straying into sin, we are to restore them with a spirit of gentleness.
Again, back to our evangelism, 1 Peter 3.15, set apart Christ Jesus in your heart as Lord. Always be prepared to give the reason for the hope that is within you, but do so with gentleness and respect.
You bet we know the faith. You bet we defend the faith. You bet we're willing to speak out against error and false doctrine. You bet we're going to stand up for the truth of the gospel, but do so with gentleness and with respect.
John, what time does service end here? We about there? I spent 10 days preaching with no time limit, so I take it from your looks at your watches, we're about there.
[40:21] Church, what you wear matters. Put on the character of Christ.

You're going to be known for something. Why not be known for the things that honor the name of the Lord Jesus Christ?
Christ. So, students, when you're thinking this week about what you're going to wear the first day, when you're laying everything out, when you're trying everything on, have at it.
Enjoy the first day of school. But if you're a believer, whatever you choose to wear, make sure you put on a compassionate heart, kindness, humility, and meanness.

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And when somebody says to you, you know, you don't really fit in with us, here's what you say. You're right.
[41:41] The Lord has changed me. I'm no longer of this world. But I'm still here. And I want to serve you any way that I can so that you can experience the same salvation that has changed my soul forever.

Live like that. Amen? Lord, we thank you for your word today. We thank you, Lord, for your kindness.
We thank you that you have saved us and you have changed us, that you have called us. We thank you, Lord, that it's not because of our works we would have no hope, but it's because of what you have done for us.
Lord, I pray for our students who are preparing to go to school, for those who are moving off to college. I pray for moms and dads who are sending their children to school for the first time or maybe moving their son or daughter into a dorm room for the first time.
Lord, I pray, I pray, Lord, that you would give them strength and help them. Lord, I pray that you would give them the courage to live in a way that would honor the name of our Lord and Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.
[43:18] Lord, help us to be faithful by your grace. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen.

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