

Dear saints in Christ,

So, you're baptized, are you?! That's great. But do you ever think about living out your baptism? Do you ever think, "Well, I'm a baptized child of God, so what does that mean for how I live? Does God have anything special in mind for me because I'm baptized?"

We've been talking about Remembering Our Baptism for the past four Sunday mornings. Remembering is a mental thing. I have to remember to pick up milk on my way home from work. I have to remember to study for my big test tomorrow. We don't want to forget those important things, so we tell ourselves, "I have to remember." That's a mental activity. Reminding ourselves of our baptism starts like that. It's a head thing but it is intended to move to the heart. I remember—mentally—that baptism marks me as a Child of God (up)... Congregation, look at all the words on our walls. Remember that baptism marks you as an heir with Christ, as being "in Christ", meaning what he has is yours. It marks you as saved, renewed, justified, alive. It marks you as filled with Spiritual Gifts, as part of the body of Christ, the body of believers, and as belonging to one another and belonging to God. Those are huge blessings that we've talked about.

When we remember all those blessings that come with baptism into Christ, it should become more than just head-knowledge. Yes, truly remembering will touch our hearts. It humbles us. It excites us. It inspires us. The reminder in our head trickles down to our hearts. But that's not where it stops.

In our Bible reading, the Apostle Paul tells the Colossian Church—in the last verse we read—this is how to live out of your baptism:

Col 3:17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

There are a lot of different ways to express what living out your baptism means. Here Paul says it means doing everything that you say and do for Jesus. In the children's message verse, Paul said that Christians are called to be the aroma of Christ. Sometimes we tell people, "Your actions really stink!" Paul says our lives should smell like Jesus, remind people of Jesus. Point people to Jesus. That's Paul's point here in Colossians 3 too. If Jesus has marked you as his own—which is what baptism symbolizes—that's got to touch your heart. Then if your heart is touched by his love, it'll effect your words and actions as a Christian.

It's impossible for it not to make a difference. And it's not just because we are baptized. It's because of what baptism signifies. It's because of the one true God in whose name we are baptized. The power to change comes from Jesus.

Remember where Colossians 3 started. It's what we talked about last Sunday morning. Paul writes here something similar to what he said in Romans 6

about being buried with Christ and raised to new life with him in baptism. Here in Colossians 3, he says in v.3,

Col 3:3 For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

That's the identity of the Christian. We aren't our own. We are now identified with Christ. Our life is wrapped up with his. This verse hints at the two implications of this on our life and the rest of the chapter spells it out much more clearly.

The result of our connection to Christ is two-fold: some things have to go and some things have to come.

Some Things Have to Go

First of all, says Paul, some things have to go if you are connected to Christ.

Over 20 people in our congregation are currently trying to get ready for their move into Emmanuel Home next year. Every one of them—single or married—has to get rid of stuff. Some things have to go when you move from a house into a one or two bedroom apartment.

But the issue for the Christian is not that we are just getting rid of some old behaviours or bad habits that we've outgrown or don't have room for anymore. It's that they simply aren't compatible with Jesus who is living in us. These things don't fit anymore. They must go.

Most often, these sinful desires die hard too. We might fight against them for a long time or even a lifetime.

I was watching an old movie this past week: *Sleepless in Seattle*. I've never seen it before and I wouldn't be any worse off if I had never seen it. It was a good romance show comedy to watch with Patsy and reminded us again of how wonderful it was to fall in love. In any event, in this movie, the widowed father in the story, played by a much younger Tom Hanks, has an 8 year old son who is trying to help his dad get a new wife. At one point, this little boy says something about sex and his dad asks him where he learned that. His response was that his friend has cable TV or something like that.

That reminded me of my life. I was probably about 8 or 10 years old as well when my friend introduced me to *Playboy* magazines. His older brother had a big stash locked away in a cupboard in his bedroom. But there was just enough room for a curious kid to squeeze his hand in there and slip out a magazine. And that's what my friend did. Those glossy magazines were probably pretty tame compared to what's online today but for many years, almost every time my eye caught a glimpse of one of those shiny covers in a cornerstore, my mind would go back to the pictures I saw with my friend as a boy. That's just to say that porn and all other kinds of sexual immorality can be very addictive. They are powerful, deceptive and destructive traps.

Porn is destructive because it skews a guy's view of women. Or a woman's view of men. For that matter, it can give a young woman the wrong idea of what a woman is supposed to be and a young man a warped view of himself. Yet, this is the stuff that is all around us today. It's worse today than it ever has been. So easily accessible on the internet and we must guard ourselves against it.

That's just to illustrate the destructive power of sin. Because of that, Jesus wants us to get sin out of our lives. Sin never serves us well. Sexual immorality, for example, as I said, ruins our view of ourselves. Oh, at first it arouses us and makes us feel good. But later regret comes, and so do shame and anger with ourselves. Sexual immorality ruins our view of what God has in mind for healthy relationships in general and a healthy sex-life specifically. It exploits people. It destroys marriages. It attaches financial worth to sex which should never be bought and sold. It's just not good for any of us.

And the same sorts of things are true when greed takes root in our lives. Or lust or anything else in that list Paul gives. But that list is not exhaustive. It's just a sampling of sin that was particularly applicable in Colossae. All sin should be on the list of things that need to go. Paul says it like this in v.8:

Col 3:8 But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.

Don't ever think that these things will serve you well. Sin never does. We must get rid of it. It has to go.

Some Things Have to Come

The good news, friends, is that we can change.

Since Jen started working in the office, Hennie has been changing! It's been fun. Hennie would agree! She's in the process of giving up old stuff. Like her old computer. That thing in computer life is a dinosaur. Nothing new is compatible with it. It's doesn't run new software so it was time to upgrade and Jen, who is—I'm not exactly sure—about 25 years younger than Hennie, is bringing Hennie up to 2019. And Hennie's getting it! So am I... because I'm up there with Hennie too.

In our lives as Christians, when Christ comes in, it's like a brand new computer with Windows 10 and interactive software like Office 365 when you're a person who is still using Windows 7 and Word 1997. Change needs to happen. Not only do the old computer and programs have to go. Yes, but we also need to start getting into the new.

In our Christian life, as children of God, we have to unlearn old ways of doing things, learn new ways of living and also new things that we should do. The old must go and the new welcomed in because these are new things that will enhance our life rather than rob us, like sinful actions do. That's why Paul writes,

Col 3:12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

¹³ Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have

against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ¹⁴ And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

In other words, Paul is saying that just taking off the old, sinful nature is a good start but God has more in mind for us. Remember, our sinful nature is buried with Christ in the grave and symbolized in baptism by being pushed under the water as if you're dead. When God looks at a person who believes in Jesus, he sees the person raised to new life. He sees purity and holiness that are imparted to us by Jesus' victory over death. Sin is gone because sin doesn't fit with Jesus. So we need to recognize—hard as that is sometimes—that God wants the fullness of life in Christ for us. He wants us to live into the newness Christ has given us.

It's in Jesus that we have the power to live the new life and it's by listening to his Word that we know what that new life looks like. Our life needs to be shaped by the word. We put it in our minds, it filters down to our heart and it transforms our actions and words. Hence part of Paul's closing words in our reading:

Col 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

If you want to live in the fulness of your baptism, living the life Jesus has saved you to enjoy, then you need to get your marching orders from Jesus. So look to the Bible. Let the word of Christ dwell in you, says Paul. The whole Bible is the word of Christ. It's his direction for what has to go and what has to come into our lives.

And he's given us a cheering squad that comes with him and his word. It's the church. It's the "one another" Paul mentions in v.16. There's a group of people—Paul is talking to the church in Colossae—and he's also talking today through the Bible to Trinity Church. God has given us to one another. We are the people who worship together—singing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs together.

Part of putting on the things of the new life Jesus calls us to is learning to trust the Word of Christ for direction. And part of that is listening to one another as we all try to live Jesus' best life for us. Sometimes that involves teaching and admonishing one another too, says Paul. We are called to help one another on this walk of faith. We don't have to do this alone. We need the encouragement as well as the direction at times from one another. And giving that direction requires wisdom so that we do it well—to build up, rather than tear down; to encourage rather than demoralize. Elsewhere I think Paul would call this speaking the truth in love.

Tom Wright wrote, "a church where everyone is very caring and supportive but where immorality flourishes unchecked (perhaps precisely because people are afraid to confront it in case they're told they are being 'unloving') is allowing noxious weeds to grow all around the flowers in the garden. You can't select some parts of the picture and leave others. For any of the parts to make sense, they all need to be in place."

Some people only want love and by love they mean just accept anything and everything. Nothing has to go and nothing has to come. Just live and let live. That certainly is the way it is in our world today. In fact, if you don't let people do whatever they want to do, then you are told that you are not loving them. So the Bible is really calling us to do something counter cultural when it calls us to teach and admonish with the word of Christ.

That's why we need to remember our baptism. Let's remember who we are, whose we are, what he's given us and how to live. Let's stand side by side and cheer on one another to trust and obey the true and good word of our Lord. Let's encourage each other to trust and obey even when it's hard. Let's speak the truth in love and receive the truth with love, even when it's hard.

I was so proud of one of our young adults a few weeks ago. He heard some solid biblical teaching that was very, very relevant to his life. And I wondered if he'd disagree or balk at it. But when I asked him, he said he was really glad to hear that clear teaching from the Bible and wanted to live it out. I'm proud of him because I am sure that's not easy for him.

But Jesus never promised it would be easy. But he promised it would be good for us in the long run. Friends, our Lord Jesus didn't take the easy road to save us. He faced lots of opposition and made many unpopular choices. Similarly, living the Christian life isn't always the most popular way to live today. People may scoff at you for saying no to sexual immorality, greed and other vices listed by Paul. They may mock you for not participating in the malice, slander and filthy talk that Paul mentions. They might possibly even mock you for trying to put on compassion, kindness, gentleness and patience. And depending on who you choose to forgive, people might certainly question your sanity if you choose to forgive people who have seriously grieved you and then even aim to love them, as the word of Christ tells us through Paul this morning. Some will undoubtedly applaud you for that. But others may mock you as they mocked Jesus.

That's just to say that living the life Christ calls us to live isn't for wimps. The Christian lifestyle Paul is describing in this section is not for "weak-willed, wimpish people without much to say for themselves," says one commentator. "Anyone who thinks that simply doesn't know what they're talking about. Have you ever seriously tried to forgive someone who has wronged you? Have you ever seriously tried to be compassionate and patient? Have you ever tried to let **Christ's** peace, Christ's word, Christ's name be the reality around which you order your life? If you have, you'll know it's not easy. It takes serious prayer and real moral effort...."

I'm not going to tell you that it's easy to follow Jesus in this way. I've fallen back into sinful ruts more times than I can count. But I've always found my Saviour holding his hand out to me when I've fallen down and cried out to him.

C.S. Lewis wrote, "A Christian is not a man who never goes wrong, but a man enabled to repent and pick himself up and begin over again after each stumble—because the Christ-life is inside of him, repairing him all the time."

That's so beautiful and comforting because we all know we keep stumbling back into sin. However, Jesus is always here for us. He's the one in whose name I'm baptized. And in whose name you are baptized. It's in his name, by his word and with his strength that we keep getting rid of the sin in our lives and keep trying to live life his way.

And, get this! Because he's with us in this life, we can live courageously and confidently. In him, we receive grace to try again, to put the old self to death and to live the new life he has won for us. We have his power within us, the Holy Spirit. We have God's promise that on our head in the water of baptism: I'll be your God and you'll be my child. And I'm here to help you live into the new life I've saved you to enjoy. So, go forward in faith, dear people. *Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*