

Sermon Mothering Sunday March '24

I am not the best person to be speaking about putting on new clothes. I have never been one to follow any fashion. I was always too fat and then when I did lose weight at college, I never had enough cash to buy any new clothes! The majority of my wardrobe is hand-me-downs and that is fine by me.

Although the passage we have heard just now is all about putting on new clothes it is all really about 'how to put on' Christ; 'wearing' how Jesus lived his life and what he taught. These new clothes are garments of grace and forgiveness, suitable for those who are trying to become like Jesus. It is really showing how the peace of Christ can apply to all human beings in the home, at work and in the church.

These are also qualities that parents take on when they become a family. When you become a parent, you take on a completely new life; your precious child becomes the upmost thing in all that you think of and do; you do everything with that child in mind; you no longer are the self-indulgent, self-centred person that you were. 'Clothe yourselves with' **Compassion**, 'to feel with' someone, putting yourself in another's shoes. **Kindness**, This is a good sentiment, **Humility**, our estimate of ourselves, not counting ourselves better than others, but remembering that we are all created in God's image and worthy of respect. **Meekness** (Gentleness), a beautiful quality. **Patience**, the grace of the person who could retaliate but doesn't, who exercises patience when annoyed or opposed or frustrated by others, and doesn't give way to bursts of anger. Kindness, gentleness and

patience help Christians live in harmony with one another and they also help a family to live more peacefully together. Compassion and humility are at the heart of God and these are qualities that parents show towards their children (together with a ton of patience thrown in!) Parents put up with so much! Very often when we are feeling tired, overwhelmed or fearful, these are not the characteristics that we show naturally. But, these are all qualities that should be present in our lives.

Paul uses this image of clothing to describe the what it is to love in a household and a community. And **Love** is the most important item of all to put on; like a belt uniting all the other qualities. and what it is to put that love into practical action. Love is the cement that holds the bricks together, 'Love binds everything together in perfect harmony' says Paul. Without love everything falls apart. Love is the crowning work of the Spirit. Worn well, clothing becomes second nature, and like your favourite shoes you hardly know you have them on. Paul invites us to think of what we choose to wear and why. Paul is keen to tell us that the love of God will protect us, sustain us and warm us, especially in situations where we are under the greatest strain.

In the letter Paul gives the Colossians the responsibility to make changes to their lives and that is again something that parents work towards as their child reaches an age when they too need to make their own decisions. It is their responsibility to make those changes in their lives and decide what they need to do rather than expect the adult to keep making the decision for them.

Getting dressed takes effort, some days more than others!! So, let us not forget the difficulties that this Mothering Sunday can also hold for us, or maybe the longing for children that is never fulfilled, or of difficult relationships that have wounded rather than cherished, or the loss of a significant adult who was the centre of our life and who we will never forget.

Yes, Mothering Sunday is a time for some to rejoice and be thankful, for others a difficult or sad time. So, in the church we seek to be family; brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers to one another, and today, as we think about what Paul wrote to a church, it applies equally to relationships in our families. The story of the church, and each of our stories, begins with the love of God. All love begins in God, the self-giving love of God which is revealed in Jesus. God gave that which was part of himself. Mothers, and others who care for us, often give sacrificially of their own time, energy, provisions, often at the expense of their own opportunities to work or study, so that their children might prosper. For many, Mothering Sunday is the chance to thank a mother, or another, who has loved you and given you care and attention, and to thank God for them.

So, we have the 5 qualities to put on, now two ways to act: ‘**Bear with one another**’ (tolerance), remember that we all make mistakes, we too were young once, and we all still have much to learn. **Forgive**, that’s absolutely essential in any relationship. Forgiveness can be the hardest thing in the world. It is those closest to us, those in our families, who can hurt us most easily, and it is God’s love in forgiving us that enables us to forgive others. Maybe today we need to forgive our children or our

mother, or someone else in our family, or even the church. It is only love that enables us to put on these 5 qualities and to bear with one another and forgive. If we do all this then we will find **Peace**. And finally, ‘**be thankful**.’ So, we give thanks to God for grandparents, mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters in home and in church. Let us be thankful for all who have loved us, and let us seek to love others in return.

God is a loving parent who knows the love and sorrow of our lives, and calls us to be the place where his love lives in us.

So let us all aim to bring the **peace of Christ** into our lives by clothing ourselves with **compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, and forgiveness**. Wherever you are this Mothering Sunday, whether you’re on your own or celebrating with family, whether this is a day that you really enjoy or really struggle with, whether you are grieving or rejoicing, just know that the love of God is with us all - always.

Hilary Morgan 2024