

Chris Murphy

October 20th, 2024

Scripture: Colossians 3: 12-17

Sermon Title: Peace in our Hearts

Prayer...

Introduction:

This morning, as we continue our sermon series on peace, I want us to remember the wisdom we can learn from the book of Colossians.

Colossians is a letter connected to the Apostle Paul, although commentary writers have questions about its original authorship. It is written as if it is from the perspective of the Apostle Paul as he seeks to provide guidance to the church in Colossae.

Now the church in Colossae is having some struggles. They are experiencing conflict because of tensions related to different spiritual philosophies. Apparently, some of the ideas circulating in the church include the value of worshipping angels, focusing too much on visions, and choosing ascetic practices with rules related

to what one eats and drinks. This church is becoming legalistic and maybe a little out there in their beliefs.

The Apostle Paul encourages the church in Colossae to focus instead on Christ as the head of the church. In Christ is the fullness of God. Colossians 2: 9, says referring to Christ, “For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have come to fullness in him, who is the head of every ruler and authority.”

As we explore Colossians message about peace, I want to highlight that Paul here is laying a foundation of faith first by teaching that Jesus Christ is the head of the church. This means knowing our identity in Christ is the first way as followers of Jesus we can begin to embody peace.

In the passage we read today, we also see that peace is a product of right relationship with God and others. Let us walk through verse by verse our passage.

Paul in verse 12 of Colossians 3 says,

“As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.”

Notice that the verse starts with a reminder that we are holy and beloved of God. This is important because in what I might call the psychology and spirituality of Paul, we see that receiving love from God is the necessary beginning point for demonstrating virtue.

In other words, we must understand our identity in Christ, our belovedness, and our holiness, in order to then show the fruit of compassion, kindness, humility, and patience. Also, Paul in his wisdom encourages us to act out of our identity in Christ. He uses the helpful metaphor of putting on clothes as a way to show that we can also put on virtue as we focus our attention on being kind and loving to others.

In Colossians 3 verse 13, Paul says, “Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as

the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.” Paul as a good pastor knows that in any community of people there will from time to time be complaints and conflict. Forgiveness becomes the key way therefore to heal hurts. Paul reminds everyone that forgiveness is a must and that they can be motivated to forgive by remembering that the Lord has forgiven them.

As I read our passage this last week, I was drawn to the connection between peace and forgiveness. Sometimes we approach peace as if it requires calm waters all the time. We believe that life must stay calm and conflict free in order for peace to reign in our hearts. Then when something unsettling happens in our life circumstances or relationships we might have a tendency to freak out a bit because our peace has been jeopardized.

Paul is more of a realist. He understands that in any relationship and any community there will be feelings hurt and mistakes made. He

reminds his readers that forgiveness is a healing method that can restore peace.

“My story...learning to forgive my boss.

- Jesus wants me to forgive him.
- I need to be honest.
- If needed I need to acknowledge my own mistakes or sin.
- I need to choose reconciliation.
- Forgiveness and rebuilding of trust takes time.

Reminder: Forgiveness is as much for yourself as for the person who harmed you. Also, forgiveness does not always require us to maintain close relationship with someone. Boundaries are important.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who was the chairman of South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission that confronted the history of apartheid in South Africa, says this about forgiveness.

“When I talk of forgiveness I mean the belief that you can come out the other side a better person. A better person than the one being consumed by anger or hatred. Remaining in that state locks you in a state of victimhood making you almost dependent on the perpetrator. If you can find it in yourself to forgive then you are no longer chained to the perpetrator. You can move on, and you can even help the perpetrator to become a better person too.” Good words on forgiveness from Desmond Tutu.

We find in our passage today that forgiveness is a big part of the journey to peace in our hearts.

Colossians 3:14 says, “Above all clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.” Paul is consistent in saying that love is the most important thing we can embody in this world. Genuine love between one another and God is what creates real harmony. Then verse 15 says, “And let the peace of Christ rule

in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.”

I love the reminder here that we are called to be people of peace and our peace is found in our relationship to Christ. The peace we have in our hearts comes from Christ himself, who is the Prince of Peace.

This encourages me to seek Christ in prayer when I am seeking to find peace in my heart. Peace is a gift from Jesus and it grows in us through relationship with Christ. As we dwell in Christ, we also are encouraged by Christ to forgive others, remembering the grace offered to us, and we are invited to be kind and compassionate.

I often laugh when I enter my office at work because in the Christian Education building we have different fruit of the Spirit outside different rooms and the pastor’s office has the word peace.

I think whoever chose the names outside the rooms did a good job.

Peace is both what people want to feel when they come into my

office, but also I long for the peace of Christ to rule in my heart as I prepare sermons and meet with people.

Peace in my heart helps me love well and create space to listen to others and provide pastoral support. An anxious heart hinders me from hearing God's voice and being fully present as a friend and pastor.

Friends, how is the state of your heart these days? Are you experiencing peace or has anxiety taken hold of your life. If you feel anxious you are not alone, but today I want to remind you that Jesus want peace to reign in our hearts.

This is especially important as we prepare to vote in the coming election. One thing I notice in the news and in my conversations is that both the right and the left are afraid of the potential results of the election. Both are worried that the other side will do something bad depending upon who wins. The intensity of the conversations

and the strong rhetoric we hear from different perspectives make us feel like we are entering a time of political and social unrest.

How do we respond as followers of Christ? I think our passage today would encourage us to let peace reign in our hearts through the power of Jesus.

I hear the internal sigh. Are you kidding pastor Chris? Are you ignorant of the state of the world? And the answer is nope. Rather, I am inspired that Jesus shows us another way to engage the world.

Friends, there is a spiritual power of peace and love that enables us to walk in peace even in difficult times. We peacemakers are the ones that are to be used by God to be healing agents of unity and peace after this election.

Whatever happens I do not think we should respond in a way that shows fear and anxiety are controlling us. No, by the Holy Spirit we can do better. We can remain loving and kind to anyone who votes differently than us and as I say that I understand that within our

congregation people may vote differently than one another and that really is okay. We call that democracy. The truth is we can come together as a church community to support peace and justice. We can love our neighbors as ourselves and continue to work to love our enemies and make them our friends whenever possible. We can put our relationship as followers of Jesus above our politics, while still recognizing that politics is an important way to live out our faith.

Why do we let peace reign in our hearts? Because this is the Jesus way. The Way of peace. Paul is bold in stating the we are to let peace reign in our hearts through Christ. And if we are naive enough to think that the early church had it easier than us, then may I remind us that the early church experienced greater persecution than us from the Roman Empire and they also struggled mightily with inner tensions as they learned together the message of Jesus.

Finally, as we embody peace during this season, let us remember the Holy Spirit is here to help us find peace in our hearts. Without

grace, we can easily fall to the patterns and habits of people who get politically charged and aggressive. With the Holy Spirit we can embody a different way that seeks to learn from others and that works for greater peace and unity within our diversity. We are to let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts through the power of the Holy Spirit. This is possible through Christ, the way of peace.

Our passage today finishes with the words in Colossians 3 verses 16 and 17, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs 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.”

I hear in these words the invitation to put our hope and faith in Christ. We are to trust the Holy Trinity and to do everything with a spirit of gratitude as we remember God’s faithfulness to us. The season of harvest in the fall is a time of gratitude for God’s provision.

As we worship God and express our gratitude, we create the right soil to allow peace to be planted in our hearts. This peace is not easily uprooted because the living Christ is our source of strength. May this truth comfort us and we face the days ahead and as we continue to come together as a community of grace, hope, peace, and love. To God Be the Glory. AMEN

Colossians 3:12-17

12 Therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. 13 Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord[a] has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. 14 Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. 15 And let the peace of Christ[b] rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ[c] dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God.[d] 17 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.