

**BROADWAY CHRISTIAN CHURCH • COLUMBIA, MISSOURI**

**THE WORSHIP OF GOD • NOVEMBER 1, 2020**

***“WEAR IT!”***

**Song of Focus**

***“Clothe Me in Christ’s Love”***

**Words and Music by Ed Varnum**

Rise to meet the day.  
What you wear has much to say  
to each person that you meet.  
So, choose carefully as you pray:

“O Lord, clothe me in compassion,  
kindness, and humility.

Let what I wear show that I care,  
your grace lived out through me.

“Clothe me in your gentleness,  
with patience from above.

But most of all on this new day,  
clothe me in Christ’s love.”

**The Scripture**

**Colossians 3:12-16 – *The Message Version***

*So, chosen by God for this new life of love, dress in the wardrobe God picked out for you: compassion, kindness, humility, quiet strength, discipline. Be even-tempered, content with second place, quick to forgive an offense. Forgive as quickly and completely as the Master forgave you. And regardless of what else you put on, wear love. It’s your basic all-purpose garment. Never be without it.*

*Let the peace of Christ keep you in tune with each other, in step with each other. None of this going off and doing your own thing. And cultivate faithfulness. Let the Word of Christ—the Message—have the run of the house. Give it plenty of room in your lives. Instruct and direct one another using good common sense. And sing, sing your hearts out to God!*

**The Message**

***Wear it: Grace***

**Mark Briley**



Most all of us have had the experience of standing before a closet full of clothes and shouting in desperation, “*I have nothing to wear!*” Have you done this? And who are we yelling at? That worn out V-neck? Maybe you are “*stylistically challenged*” and often make the “*wrong*” apparel choice for a particular occasion. I am notorious for this. Carrie has helped me some, but when left to my own devices... there’s no telling. Whatever your fashion sense, deciding what to wear can, at times, be a challenge. In this season that tends to feature Halloween costumes, athletic fan apparel, and political flare, the Apostle Paul makes some wardrobe suggestions we should never go without. Welcome to a new sermon series that will carry us through this month simply entitled: “*Wear it!*”

In just two days, the nation will stand in long lines to check some boxes and get a sticker to wear that says we did something important. As we’ve named, our neighbors will be in this very space on Tuesday helping us decide, *together*, what kind of world we want to live in. It’s kind of weighty isn’t it?

The rhetoric has been fully slung, and America is covered in it. When it comes to attack ads, every side is asking, “*Who wore it better?*” Who fits the role? Who is more presidential? Who voted for the right things? Whose character do we want on display for the world to say, “*Oh... that’s who you are. Got it.*”

Paul knows a thing or two about this sort of rhetoric. He’s campaigned successfully for a couple of movements. He was a Pharisee born of Pharisees, and he was good at it. You know that person who is just driven and zealous and one of those people who is just good at everything which totally gets under your skin. It’s like that person who finds their way into your friend group of vegetarians who just up and decides – “*Vegetarianism – cool.*” And within weeks, they are the “*best*” vegetarian in your group. And then it’s Pickle Ball. And then it’s quilting. And then its rock climbing. Bird watching. Wine pairing. We get it. You’re good at stuff. Paul was that guy. Good, good, good at his job. And he was obsessed with it. But he grew empty and weary and finally hit that pivotal, pivot-point, struck blind on the road to Damascus by lightening or some other act of God. It seems to have been the only thing that helped him actually see some things in a new way. As a Pharisee, he failed to see what was truly at the heart

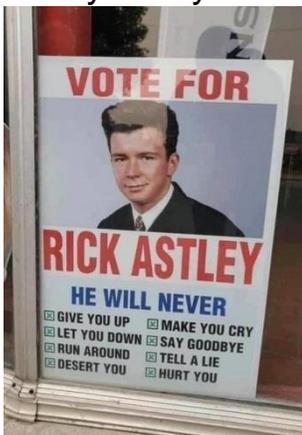
of God's longing for the world. But now? He got it. Flipped the script and became as zealous for grace as he had been for the law.

Can we claim the same? What Paul discovered in the end was that he was called to shed the hate-filled rhetoric and start dealing in grace. So... he put it on. He looked through his closet, found that company polo that had "Grace" etched over the heart pocket, and he wore it. What are you wearing today? What will you be wearing on Tuesday? Does grace get a hanger on your closet rack?

We're grounding this whole series in the third chapter of Paul's letter to the Colossians. Paul's message in simplest terms? It's time to dress the part. You know how people always tell you to dress for the job you want? That's how Chapter 3 opens. "*If you're serious about living this new resurrection life with Christ,*" he says, "*act like it.*" Tell us how you really feel, Paul. But Paul's bringing some heat on this point. "*Your old life isn't where it's at... you know it... but you've struggled to let it go because, letting go is hard, and there's pressure from family and social groups and even organizations. I get it. But... new life here... new life, new life... that's where it's at.*" And then our first verse of today's focus: "*Since you are chosen by God for this new life of love, dress in the wardrobe God has picked for you.*" And hitting the runway at God's fashion show? "*Compassion, kindness, humility, quiet strength, discipline, even tempered, contentment with where you are now, quick to forgive an offense.*" Those of the stars of the new life runway. This is *grace*. And we need to wear it.

There is some serious hype culminating this week. At least, we hope it is culminating this week. We don't know how long the process may take to confirm the election. People will be standing in line in this room and marking their ballots. And we're praying for our neighbors, who will walk in this sacred space. May they feel the blessing of this space... one that welcomes them as they are and longs for their wellbeing... no matter who they will be voting for. I hope the time in line will give all a chance to answer the "*Why?*" *Why am I voting for this person? Does it reflect my faith? Who does my vote hurt? Who does it help?*" All important questions for us to take seriously.

I'm guessing there will be a few write in votes for English singer, songwriter, Rick Astley. Did you see that meme going around: Rick Astley for President was the headline. And then there were checked boxes that detailed why he should get your vote: "*He will never give you up, let you down, run around, desert you, make you cry, say goodbye, tell a lie, hurt you.*" I don't suppose he'll pull a single electoral vote, but I did get a chuckle out of the poster. But imagine standing in line this week... I know some of you already voted... but imagine the line and as you observe what others are wearing... wonder (*not out loud or you might be asked to leave*)... but wonder to yourself: "*When these neighbors see me, do they see me as one dressed in grace?*" What might help make that clear?



I know you believe you're right in who you're voting for. We all do, don't we? We wouldn't vote that way if we didn't feel we were right in making that choice. I could give you 157 theological reasons for voting one way over another, but that won't likely change your vote. While it wasn't directly referring to the election, I read this week a word about grace that may connect. It said that *"... it may be possible for us to have the right theological answers but still get it terribly wrong: to have orthodoxy – right belief – without orthokardia – a right heart. It's one thing to believe that the heart of the law – and for that matter – the heart of Christianity – is about love for God and neighbor. It's quite another thing to actually live a life of love for God and neighbor."*<sup>1</sup>

And what we're dished with every day? Every side saying a vote for their side is a vote for love of God and neighbor. How can this be?

Fundamental Attribution Error may have something to do with it. Are you familiar with this? Fundamental Attribution Error? It's a cognitive bias that we've all been sucked into... especially this season. This bias causes us to attribute people's behavior to their character. *"The reason he acts that way is because that's who he really is. The reason she behaves that way and believes that way is because that's who she is on the inside."*

But... when it comes to our own behavior – we don't do that. When it comes to us, we attribute our behavior to circumstances and environmental factors. The Harvard Business School<sup>2</sup> dug into this and offered an example. *"So he's late. That guy at work, he's late? He's late. He's late. You know why? He's lazy and irresponsible and disorganized... that's why he's late... And then? You're late... but do you look in the mirror and say, 'I'm lazy. I'm irresponsible. I'm disorganized.'" No. We do the opposite. The reason I'm late? I was on the phone with a friend who really needed me or I was getting the kids around or any number of other things. We say to ourselves instead. "Self? I'm actually very organized and very responsible... in fact, I'm so organized and responsible, I'm late."*

This is how it works. The Fundamental Attribution Bias happens when we assume that a person's actions reflect what kind of person they really are... rather than social and environmental factors. When it comes to politics? One pastor names it this way. *"This is what it sounds like," he says. "The corrupt Democrats. Corrupt. They're just corrupt. All of them. You know why they are corrupt? Because they're corrupt. The heartless Republicans. You know why they vote that way? Believe that way? I've met all of them. I've done research. I know every single one of them... they're all heartless. They are heartless. They're corrupt. They're heartless. They're corrupt."* And before you know it they're chanting, *"Less filling!" "Tastes great!"* and we don't even know why. Sucked

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<sup>1</sup> Offered via a Face Book post by Rev. Jason Veach, priest at The Diocese of Churches for the Sake of Others: C4SO.

<sup>2</sup> <https://online.hbs.edu/blog/post/the-fundamental-attribution-error>. Andy Stanley is the pastor named as one making the political connection in this season.

into cognitive bias. Clearly something's wrong with these people. Political rhetoric feeds this.

Jesus seemed to have a way about bringing down the uber confident. Paul says, "*Check your wardrobe on this.*" The Harvard Business School says we can battle this cognitive bias within us. How? I love their answer. "*Become more emotionally intelligent.*" Nice. Yep. They said it. ... and they encouraged working on things that bring greater self-awareness and growing empathy for others.

One other practical nugget they offered to combat the bias is gratitude... today we might say grace. They said, "*When you become resentful at someone for a bad "quality" they demonstrate, try to make a list of five positive qualities the person also exhibits. This will help balance out your perspective and can help you view that person as a whole person instead of through the lens of a single negative quality.*"

We are more dynamic beings than this. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. This is hard, but I wonder if it's not what Paul is asking us to consider when he says, "*Cultivate thankfulness*" ... especially as we're standing in line to vote. Can you see others standing with you as a whole person, beloved by God, made in God's very image? When they see you, will they see you wearing grace? And if you need some accountability... maybe you call a friend before you go to vote... just like you do before going to the events we used to attend when events were a thing. You call and say, "*What are you going to wear?*" Call 'em! Text 'em. And then you say, "*I'm going to wear grace.*" See if it starts your whole experience off on a better foot. You'll see all kinds of outfits come Tuesday. Some will wear fear, and you'll smell it from a mile away. Some will wear a cloak of arrogance. Some will wear neckties of narrow-mindedness. Some will wear REO Speedwagon t-shirts, and you'll just have to nod your head out of respect. But you wear your grace, would you? I'm going to set out my outfit the night before, so I don't forget to put it on in the morning. Do what you have to do. Paul says... "*Eh... that old life... we were concerned with the wrong things... and people are going to be caught up in that until the end of time. But not you. Not in Christ. It's a whole new life... and it's for you... and it's for them... and it's for all... and it. Can. Be.*"

I know there is a very real anxiety about what's happening right now and what will happen moving ahead. And it is real and should be acknowledged and would be unfair of me, a person of privilege, to deny any the absolute space to rightfully name that what happens this week matters significantly and impacts and effects some of us in much harder ways than others. It's worth saying that Jesus is against any reality that is oppressive. In this way... Jesus was very much a political figure... and it was politics that killed him. Some are worried about rights and freedoms and feeling powerless in the hands of the masses. Others of us just want things to go our way because of convenience or some other preference.

Richard Rohr acknowledged this as he named our feelings as we experience any true transformation. The hard spaces. The darkness. They are very real. He outlines this feeling by naming what can be felt: *“I am empty and powerless. Some call this sitting in ‘God’s Waiting Room,’ but is more often known as ‘the dark night of the soul.’ Almost any attempt at this point to save ourselves by any superior behavior, morality, or prayer technique will fail us.”* So what does he say we can do? *“All we do is ask, wait, and trust. God is about to become real. The ego, or separate self, is dying in a major way.”*<sup>3</sup> Something new is about to break forth. We do our part, and we trust God to do God’s part. We’ve got neighbors to love come Wednesday regardless.

To this end, several of you shared with me the joint advertisement that went viral this past week. Viewed now by tens of millions of people. Chris Peterson and Lt. Gov. Spencer Cox, the Democratic and Republican candidates for Utah's next governor, ran a joint ad in the race for the role.<sup>4</sup> They clearly disagree on a number of things but also passionately agree on some things, too... things they want to work on together no matter who becomes the governor, and they wanted to highlight that in a respectful way. In an interview they said, *“It’s sad that simply saying we should treat others with kindness and decency is so rare right now that it goes viral”* but they note, *“People are hungry for it.”*

As we think about the Saints today, I’m reminded of the saying, *“More is caught than is taught.”* If we want to see love of God and neighbor alive in the world... we wear it in our actions... in our voice... it shows in our smile... in our tone... in our generosity... in our efforts... by God’s grace. If anything is truly going to stick, we’ve got to live it ourselves and genuine, compassionate love has long been the most contagious thing the world has ever known.

So, what are you going to wear? It is a choice... just like the boxes you’ll mark this week. Every choice we make reflects what we value most. Does our faith inform our politics, or do our politics inform our faith? Choices. And what we wear often makes a statement. Sure... uniforms denote a certain team... some outfits have marked ones hate of one group for another. Our response to some clothing says as much about the one witnessing the outfit as it does the one wearing it. However, it is this week for you, consider putting on grace. Imagine what it may feel like for you. Imagine what it can mean for those who will encounter you. Maybe you can make others feel like my friend who posted the most inspired picture recently. I don’t know what she was actually wearing, but I know what another saw in her. She snapped and posted a picture of her coffee cup. She was standing outside in the parking lot of *Love Coffee*<sup>5</sup> on the Business Loop. Love Coffee’s mission is to provide job-skills training and employment in an atmosphere of love to individuals with disabilities and barriers to employment. As

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<sup>3</sup> From Richard Rohr’s daily meditations shared from the Center for Action and Contemplation. You can sign up to receive the daily word via <https://cac.org/category/daily-meditations/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/republican-democrat-opponents-utah-governor-joint-advertisement/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.columbialovecoffee.org/>

other coffee shops write your name or some semblance of your name on the side of the cup to identify your order, *Love Coffee* offers a different identifier. Right there on the side of the cup that my friend had raised to the sky and snapped a picture of...



were the hand-written words, "*You are radiant.*" How could that not alter her state that day?

Put on grace today... this week... how could it not alter your state... how could it not impact the state of those around you? And just maybe... it could alter the state of the State... the state of the Union... the state of the Universe. Your grace is radiant, friends. And this week... if you text me, "*What are you going to wear?*" I'll humbly respond, "*Grace.*"

May it be so. Amen.

### **The Benediction**

As we move from this sacred time,  
Let us put on the armor of God:  
The belt of truth,  
The breastplate of righteousness,  
The sandals that bring the gospel of peace,  
The shield of faith,  
The helmet of salvation,  
The sword of the spirit.  
Wearing the strength of God,  
We go in peace.