

BROADWAY CHRISTIAN CHURCH • COLUMBIA, MISSOURI

THE WORSHIP OF GOD • NOVEMBER 22, 2020

“WEAR IT!”

The Scripture Colossians 3:12-16

As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. 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. Above all, clothe yourselves with 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 the one body. And be thankful. 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.

The Message *Wear It: Gratitude* Terry Overfelt



Today offers the concluding message in our series called, *“Wear It!”* We have worn grace, our one-of-a-kindness, and we have deeply considered cleaning out our closets – what not to wear... again, because those slander slacks just don’t fit us anymore. In defense of its timelessness though, I chose to wear velvet.

Today, we connect again to Colossians 3, where Paul is adding the phrase that will center us in our ponderings: **“...and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs to God.”**

Gratitude and music go together. You do not have to be a musician to appreciate it. There is something in us that responds to melodies. Sometimes music is a vehicle to manipulate our emotions... start scary music now. Sometimes it is a pure and rich

addition that quiets our minds to listen, and at times it magnifies our sensory reception to make something even more meaningful.

[Editor's Note: Terry reads the Scripture here. You are invited to read it again, printed at the beginning of this document.]

Wow, we lived this Scripture this week! Maybe you are singing along with us. Maybe you can't. Maybe you are just listening. Perhaps you are thinking of a song that takes you back to a significant time in your life. Perhaps, even upon your first hearing, an instrumental piece has the wordless power to fill or break your heart. Is there a piece or style of music for which you are grateful? One that brings you to tears, to folly, to jolly, or melancholy? Is there a musical expression that you can "get you lost" in, one to which you say, "They're playing my song?"

If today's "Wear it" garment is Gratitude, trying to wearing it in your heart and accessorize it with songs to God.

The power of music can be sacredly personal. There is an old tale of a ruler who was arrogant enough to hire musicians and bring them to his private chambers to perform for him alone. One of his subjects complained about his selfish indulgence. "Why would he not put the musicians in a great hall and invite all to enjoy?" A wise council asked how this music affected the ruler. It was said that he became deeply entranced and sometimes ecstatic while listening. Leave him be and do not criticize him, said the rabbi. For music has the power to take some to spiritual experiences like no other gift. This is the time of holiest devotion of your ruler. Honor this practice in him. Music has the power to transport us to story and connection.

On our Wednesday morning walk at dawn, as we rounded the thicket on the north side of Bethel Park Pond, we heard four rhythmic beats before seeing the solitary trumpeter swan rise to land upon the water. Its winging looked just like Marta's from last week's illustration.

I heard the music of *Swan Lake*. I was so grateful to see this swan, who has returned many years to this place where they once came with their mate, where they hatched their signets and where they have offered us story; both tragic and beautiful. You can dance *Swan Lake* in your bathtub during COVID, you know. There is a wonderful video of *Swan Lake* performed in 27 bathtubs. (Open this [LINK](#) to watch this delightful performance.)

One of our prayer partners this week answered the question, "What are you most grateful for in this time?"

"Life," they said.

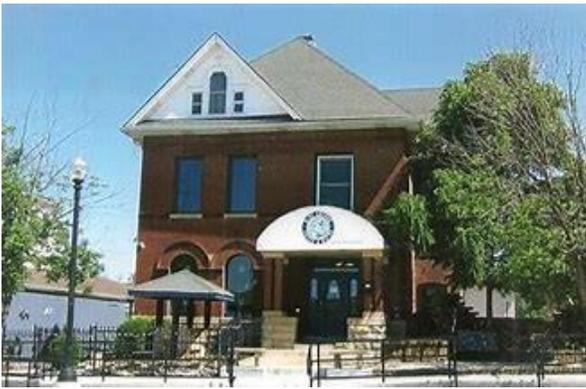
“And what does it look like when someone is wearing gratitude?”

Came the answer, “Their face lights up.”

I am also grateful for life. During sabbatical, I thought I was going to lose mine. I didn't. Being born again will make you grateful, and I'll tell you in just a few minutes.

But first, waffles.

I set up some sabbatical time to do songwriting with my brother Rob, who is also a Christian musician. In preparation, I thought I should get started on one. On August 12,



I penned the song that poured from my heart like a gift inspired by Proverbs 3. When we met at a middle point in Warrenton, we were first timers at the splendid four-story Blue Anchor Coffee and Bistro. Five stars!

We didn't need my song, because we launched into something brand new, born in a beautifully, acoustically resonant, upper room with sibling laughter over fabulous coffee and waffles. Chef Lee has a magic syrup that would be insulted by butter.

At the completion of our song, “*Come as You Are*,” the staff applauded, and we had a job offer from a new minister in town looking for worship leaders. ☺

Then I sang the song I brought for Rob. He said it was finished and just needed a gifted musician, who could score it for me. My heart was so full. In gratitude for that COVID day, I sang the whole way home, playing back the two songs we recorded on my phone, committing them to my heart. The song I had written alone was called, “*Lean*.” All I can say is that Isaiah's words are right. God will go before you, making the crooked place straight, leveling the mountains. (Isaiah 45 NIV/KJV)



Because by August 22, we were with the legendary Uncle Dave. Remember the bear story?

Have you ever thought you were going to die suddenly? Very little makes you more grateful for life than thinking you are about to lose it. The near-death experience began with Uncle Dave suggesting, “Tomorrow, how about we go four-wheeling?”

Oh, Jeff was all about that. His face lit up like he had just been

rescued from a long day of sitting at the kitchen counter, sipping coffee, and waiting for bears to lumber by.

I had one question. "Uncle Dave, do you ever try to scare the people you take on adventures by pretending that things are more dangerous than they really are?" "Never."

When Uncle Dave gives a one-word answer like that, you know it is gospel true.

Off we went to Lead King Mountain to run "The Legendary Loop." The face of it was ribboned with the old-miner's trail that took us up beyond 8,000 feet. The four-wheeler was about five-feet wide. Four of us were strapped in, and most of the time the trail was six-feet wide. I sat in the back with my cousin, Darla. I thought she was being so brave on the way up the mountain face. Usually she is so excitable. I was on the outside, so I could see all the way down as we ascended in the twists and turns. Speedy Uncle Dave wanted us to beat the rain, because these dirt road mountain passes could get very slippery. Oh good, a slippery slope.

There were turns up ahead that looked to me to be drop offs, but sure enough, we would wind around, and there was trail on the other side. Sometimes the rubble and rocks were sizeable enough to throw off the balance of the wheels, and we would two wheelies to the right putting we outsiders at a 45-degree angle to the great below.

I couldn't see Jeff's face, because he was in front, and I thought I might not see it ever again. But Darla, the excitable one, remained calm so I did, too. I started singing "*Lean*." It poured off my pen, and now I knew it was given to comfort me alone as I sang softly to myself, "Lean In."

At one point, Uncle Dave leaned over to Jeff. "See that glint way down there? That's where the guy made it out of his truck, but his wife didn't."

When we made it to the top, I was so thankful. I mean I really have never been more grateful. I totally surrendered myself to the fact that we were going to die. I imagined our funeral. Our kids were so sad but kind of laughing that we would have gone on such an escapade.

The rain began. We met some L.L. Bean clad guides in two vehicles who wouldn't pass on the outside. So, Uncle Dave gave them the "What For?" look, threw it in reverse, took the outer edge and they, in disbelief, passed safely on the mountain face side. Then, as Uncle Dave went back, the dangling back wheel was off the path, but the four-wheeler lunged forward. Uncle Dave said a bad word and was down shifting with determination. Darla got all wide eyed and asked if I heard that? "It's not good if Dave swears." Remember, he never fakes a scare.

Really, I came to terms with my death. I was grateful, surrendered, and comforted by the gift of a spiritual song. *“Lean not on your own understanding; in all ways acknowledge God, and God will direct your path.”*

And having survived the 13-mile ascent and descent, I am a new person!

While all this is fun and good and godly gratitude and gift of song, I want to point out that Paul does not say the grateful heart’s singing, hymns and spiritual songs to God are necessarily happy. We are living through a time of great tumult and torment. The psalmist’s cries are ours! We dare not dismiss the power of the lament. It is at the center of our faith story. It is essential to our rebirth.

You spoke yours this week:

School is hard!

I can’t go into the hospital with her.

I feel so weary.

We worked and listened tirelessly to figure things out.

Risk is all around us.

I miss our family, our friends.

Someone we know now has it.

Hourly reports of spikes and suffering.

For fear, for caution for precaution.

Will I survive?

They didn’t survive!

Comorbidities.

Will I spread it to others?

Be permanently affected?

God wants us to draw near and bring the Psalm of Lament and do our own spiritual processing.

Let God share your authentic heartache. Look in the eyes of every person you meet and see what they are wearing, hear what they are saying, and listen deeply to what they are not saying. Or just see them. Make eye contact like never before, because we can’t read one another’s minds, and we sure can’t read their lips. We have lost loved ones, neighbors, and friends to the virus and the consequences of isolation, and we are crying out! Give in to your tears to our God, who lamented and mourned with the suffering. We do not need to rush to optimism and solutions while we ignore or skim over our pain. The chapters of our faith story are filled with wailing, anger, rage, lament, and brokenness even bitterness. Grieve with God, who knows what it is like to mourn death. We know how to mourn and lean into God, who is on our side.

Hear Rev. Kerri N. Allen, *The Christian Century*, November 16, 2020

“When we lament the losses of 2020, we make a theological proclamation that affirms the full humanity of each of the valuable lives that has been lost. We honor those lives by being ‘anti-silent.’ We must speak out-speak directly to God and name our pain and suffering, speak to other Christians and remind them of our collective responsibility to care for one another, and speak straight to the whole of society to say things are not right”.

“Hear, O Lord, when I cry aloud...” (Psalm 27:7)

“These things I remember, as I pour out my soul...” (Psalm 42:4)

Where does gratitude come in for the song of lament? It is our baring our souls, and our bearing one another...today’s Scripture. So grateful for a heart that is strong enough to hold and strong enough to overcome leaning on the God who will not forsake or abandon us. A God whose intention for us is to be restored.

Wear gratitude in your heart and wear the songs:

The private one,

The swan song,

The new song,

The gifted song,

The song of triumph,

The lament,

Each one, a spiritual to God.

The musician to score the finished music was our very gifted, Ed Varnum. We bring you, *“Lean!”*

Song of Response

“Lean”

Words and Music: Terry Overfelt; Arrangement: Ed Varnum

1. When I’m leaning on my own understanding,
I am falling, falling.
When I feel I am unsteady, you are ready,
you are calling, calling,
“Trust in me, place your uncertainty aside.
I’m on your side!”

Refrain:

Lean in, lean on when the tumult and the torment won’t deride.

Lean in, lean on. I can calm the sea and hold the ebbing tide.

When you lean in, I’ll embolden. As you lean on, I am holding.

You are steady, you are ready for this ride. Now lean!

2. When you can't see the way between the risings,
days are long, nights are longer,
the sun and moon are losing their horizon,
dreams are broken, darkness lingers,
your deep sigh generates a breeze.
Now breathe, O breath of life!

Refrain:

Lean in, lean on when the tumult and the torment won't deride.
Lean in, lean on. I can calm the sea and hold the ebbing tide.
When you lean in, I'll embolden. As you lean on, I am holding.
You are steady, you are ready for this ride. Now lean!

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.