

One Another

Sermon-Based Study Guide
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

Colossians 3.1-17 | November 12, 2017

Prepared by Rev. Paul T. White
paul@gspc.org | 562/493.2553 x116

I. Introduction to this Study

This week we continue our series engaging the “one anothers” found throughout the Christian Scriptures, thinking about what it means to live in community as the Body of Christ. Today’s passage is full of “rules for holy living,” including the encouragement to forgive one another...

II. Connecting with One Another

When have you been in a situation when you discovered that what you were wearing was inappropriate to the occasion? How did you try to explain your attire? What did you try to do about it, if anything?

III. Study the Text

- a. Read Colossians 3.1-17. Suppose there was a business in which everybody behaved in the way described in verses 5-9. Suppose, a few miles down the road, there was another business where everybody behaved in the way described in verses 12-17. Which would you rather work in, and why?
- b. Why do you think some people would prefer to work in a business that is characterized by the description in verses 5-9?
- c. Paul names two main areas of behavior as typical of the old lifestyle that is now to be abandoned. They have to do with sex on the one hand and speech on the other—two central areas of human life, both involving great potential for good and also for evil. Even though some pretend that such things are purely private matters, how does wrongdoing in these two areas of life lead to problems for a community as a whole?
- d. What is the great transformation which Paul gives as the reason for our changed behavior (vv. 9-10)?

One result of new life in Christ is *new knowledge* (v.10). Paul expects the Christian, as part of their renewal in the image of God—in other words, part of their discovery in practice of what it means to be a genuine human being—to be able to see clearly, and understand, the deeper issues involved behind apparently casual sexual behavior and apparently casual talk. Contrary to what a lot of people today imagine, being a Christian means learning to think harder, not to leave your brain behind in the quest for new experiences. Thinking straight and knowing the truth are part of what it means to be truly human, the sort of human being the gospel is meant to create.

- e. In verses 10-11, Paul says that as a result of “being renewed in the image of the creator,” old divisions of race, ethnicity, culture or geography must be done away with. In what ways might Good Shepherd exhibit this truth that Christ is “all, and is in all”?
- f. Consider the behavior Paul sets forth in verses 12-17. Cynics might say that this is the behavior of weak-willed, wimpish people who cannot stand up for themselves. How would you respond to that charge about the difficulty of doing the things mentioned here like forgiving, being patient, being humble?
- g. Being *compassionate* doesn't mean being sentimental. Being *kind* doesn't mean being a soft touch. *Humility* isn't the same thing as low self-esteem. *Gentleness* is not weakness. How might you instead define these character traits?

How is a foundation of love (v. 14) and a confidence in Christ's peace (v. 15) the deciding factor in each?

- h. Paul balances the negatives of the old life of sin with the positives of the new life in Christ. What is lacking when a Christian community denounces those things that should be “put off” without the corresponding emphasis on those thing which should be “put on”?
- i. Verse 16 portrays believers as teaching one another, exhorting (insistently encouraging) one another and singing to God with grateful hearts. How does Good Shepherd practice each of the three?
How can you contribute to the practice of each within the church?
- j. React to these concluding words from commentator N.T. Wright:

Notice how Paul draws the picture together, again and again, with reference to the Lord, the king, Jesus himself. Jesus forgave you, so you must forgive. King Jesus is to be the decider in all your deliberations. His word is to be alive within the Christian community. And, finally, whatever you do or say must be able to stand having these words written above it: In the name of the Lord Jesus. Settle that in your hearts and minds and a great deal else will fall into place.

IV. Reflect

- a. As you look at the virtues listed in verses 12-17, which are most natural for you? Which are most challenging? Why?
- b. What does it mean to “Forgive as the Lord forgave you”? What experience have you had with forgiveness, both in forgiving and being the one forgiven?

V. Pray

- a. Ask the Holy Spirit to remove anything in your life which needs to be removed, and to increasingly clothe you with Christlikeness. Pray for Good Shepherd to be a community whose actions can proudly stand under the words:
In the name of the Lord Jesus...