

Straight from the "Hart"

June 18, 2023 Father's Day



Sharing the journey
to know, love, and serve

Welcome to Hartland UMC's "Straight from the "Hart"". We are glad you are here and participating in today's time of this Father's Day worship. *Right, Kathy Novak plays pre, offering, and post worship music.*

Music Join us as we sing **We Believe**

Words and Music: Matthew Hooper, Richie Fike, Travis Ryan
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In this time of desperation when all we know is doubt and fear,
There is only one foundation. We believe, we believe.
In this broken generation, when all is dark, you help us see.
There is only one salvation. We believe, we believe.



Chorus

We believe in God, the Father. We believe in Jesus Christ.
We believe in the Holy Spirit, and He's given us new life.
We believe in the Crucifixion. We believe that He conquered death.
We believe in the Resurrection, and He's comin' back again.

We believe.

So, let our faith be more than anthems,
greater than the songs we sing.
And in our weakness and temptations,
we believe, we believe.

Chorus

Let the lost be found, let the dead be raised. In the here and now let love invade.
Let the church live loud. Our God will say we believe, we believe.
And the gates of hell will not prevail, for the power of God has torn the veil.
Now, we know Your love will never fail. We believe, we believe.

Chorus

He's comin' back again. He's comin' back again.

Opening Prayer Heavenly Father, we have gathered again to honor your holy name and to experience your never-failing love expressed through the rich gift of your Son Jesus Christ. In this time together, establish us more solidly on the foundation of salvation that you so generously offer through him. We offer ourselves with heart-felt gratitude and for the building of your kingdom on earth. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

Call to Worship (R – Reader, C – Congregation)

R: Come, all who have experienced and entrusted their lives to the love of God in us. Come, all who desire to live faithfully in love and in God. God is love, and truly lives in us and we in him if we love one another.

C: We have come so that God's love will accomplish its mission in and among us.

Inspired by 1 John 4:16,12b (VOICE)

Theme Our tribute to fathers begins with a comment from William Bennet who wrote, "Parents are there to protect their children from harm at the hands of the world -- and the world from harm at the hands of their children."

I think that role is best accomplished by setting good examples for the children to follow as they grow. First we have a story of conversion from bad example to good that goes something like this:

Raymond was the tough guy at school because his dad was a tough guy. If anyone dared not do what he wanted, he beat them up. Then one day Victor arrived. Neither Victor nor his dad looked like tough guys. They actually looked underweight and kind of weak.

The first day Raymond noticed Victor, he went up to him to make sure Victor knew who was boss at this school. "Hey new kid. You should know that I'm the leader. I'm the toughest guy here."

[Do you remember that person in your school?]

Victor calmly replied, "You may be leader, but I am tougher."

Victor got his first beating from the powerful Raymond.

The next day Raymond tried to take a girl's sandwich from her. Victor stepped between Raymond and the girl. "She is a friend of mine, and I am tougher than you, so she won't give you her sandwich."

That is when he got his second beating from Raymond.

A couple days later Raymond went straight for Victor and his sandwich.

Victor refused to give it over. "Tough guys like my dad and me don't steal from others, and you think you are supposed to be a tough guy too?"

Victor got his third beating. In the days that followed, Victor got hit regularly, but he never backed down. His bravery in defending those weaker than him began to impress the rest of his classmates, and he soon gained admirers. Lots of other children began to play with him, so Raymond had fewer chances to hit Victor because so many friends were around. But more than that, fewer and fewer children were afraid of Raymond's power. New brave boys and girls

emerged who copied Victor's attitude, and the playground became a better and safer place.

On parents day, Raymond's giant, muscular dad came to the school and asked his son to point Victor out. When he saw who Raymond was pointing to, he exclaimed, "That skinny rake is the new tough boss of the playground?! Raymond, you're useless! I'm going show you what a tough guy really is!" and he raised his hand.

This wouldn't have been the first time Raymond would have been hit, so he closed his eyes and braced himself. But the blow didn't come. He opened his eyes and saw that Victor's small father had stepped between and was saying, "Tough guys like us don't hit kids, right?" Raymond's father thought about hitting him, but he saw that the small, thin man was very sure of himself, and that lots of families were gathering around to stick up for him. He realized that picking on smaller, weaker people is not what tough guys do. He realized Victor truly was a tough guy – one brave enough to put up with anything bad that came his way to stand up for right at the same time. Raymond's Dad wanted to be tough like that too. So, the two Dads sat down and chatted the rest of the day. Raymond's Dad learned that being a tough guy is about what is inside because that is where tough guys get their strength to cope with and fight unfairness. Society is better when strong, smart and brave people use their talents not just to serve their own benefit, but to serve others, to help those in need, who can't stand up for themselves.

And so - thanks to a boy who didn't seem very tough – Victory, his father and many others ended up filling the school with real tough guys, ones capable of putting up with anything that comes their way in standing up for what is right.

(ad. from "A Very Tough Dad" by Pablo Sacristán in freestoriesforkids.com).

It is a shame life's realities don't always play out as easily as in like children's stories. I don't know if the specific application is even the best approach, but it does try to get at a principle that is sound for us.

In the 1800s, a father wrote a letter to his son who was away at school. Bennett comments that there is no more important gift a parent can give than impressing their children with a positive respect for virtue, and longs that parents live worthily enough to give it by the example of their lives. Here is some of the father's advice in that letter...

You must study to be frank with the world; frankness is the child of honesty and courage. [Now today, frankness is sometimes used as an excuse for being like Raymond was in the story, a kind of bully, and to justify being rude “in the name of honesty”. I may be wrong, but I don’t believe that was what the intent was. Frankness simply meant being clearly understood without mincing a lot of words, and I think how he goes on in the letter illustrates that meaning as well, for he goes on to write] Say just what you mean to do on every occasion and take it for granted that you mean to do it right. If a friend asks for a favor, you should grant it, if it is reasonable. If not, tell him plainly why you cannot. You will wrong him and wrong yourself by equivocation [waffling back and forth] of any kind. Never do a wrong thing to make a friend or keep one; the man who requires you to do so is [gained as a friend at too dear a sacrifice]. Deal kindly but firmly, with all your classmates. You will find it the policy which wears best. Above all, do not appear to others what you are not. If you have any fault to find with anyone, tell *them*, not others, of what you complain. There is no more dangerous experiment than that of undertaking to be one thing before a man's face and another behind his back. We should live, act, and say nothing to the injury of anyone. It is not only best as a matter of principle, but it is the path to peace and honor. “In Regard to Duty” (Robert E Lee to GW Curtis Lee) in The Moral Compass: Stories for a Life’s Journey, edited and with commentary by William J Bennett.

I’ll read the rest of that letter later. And finally, one last tribute for fathers. An English bishop and popular poet during the reign of Charles I in the 17th century wrote candidly to his son, Vincent on his 3rd birthday – the hopes of what he could leave his child in this life. I’ve modernized the language to make it easier for us to grasp, because his language was a bit stilted to understand, even for me. So this is what he said.

What I shall leave you -- none can tell,
 but all will say that I wish you well.
 I wish you, Vin [Vincent was the boy’s name],
 I wish you, Vin more importantly than all wealth,
 both bodily and spiritual health:
 nor do I wish *too* much wealth,
 nor *wit* [cleverness], come to you,
 for too much of either may undo you.
 I wish that your learning, will not be for show,
 just enough to instruct, and to know;

not such as gentlemen require,
to [babble on] at table or at fire.

I wish you all your mother's graces,
and your father's fortunes, and his places.

I wish you have friends, and one at court,
not to take advantage of others, but for support;
to sustain you -- not in doing many
oppressions, but from suffering any.

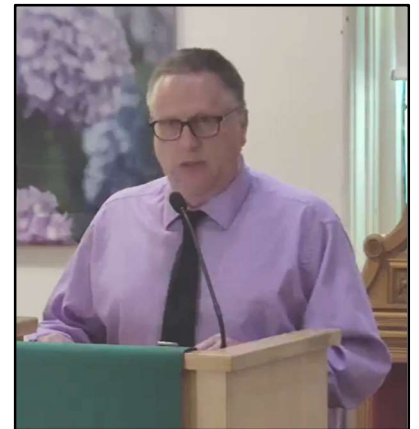
I wish you peace in all your ways,
not lazy nor contentious days;
so that when your soul and body part,
you'll be as innocent as now thou art.

“To His Son, Vincent Corbett” in
The Moral Compass: Stories for a Life's Journey,
edited and with commentary by William J Bennett.

The Bible too has a few things to say about living an example for our children and for each other.

Intro to and Bible Reading 1

One of the best known and most fundamental prayers in Judaism has been recited each night and morning since ancient times. It is called the Shema, named for its first word. We have added a line in yellow font for you *to say softly* with the pastor. It is not a part of the Bible text, but originated long ago as a congregational response in the Temple, and has been said in undertones (in whispers), but spoken out during Yom Kippur (The Day of Atonement). It talks about passing down our spiritual heritage and includes one of the most fundamental expressions of Jewish (and Christian) belief, that there is only one God and he is a unified whole. The words are spoken by Moses to the people:



“Now this is the mitzvah {the commands}, the laws and rulings which {the Lord} your God ordered me to teach you for you to obey in the land ... flowing with milk and honey.

Sh'ma – [Hear] {Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.};

<Blessed be the Name of his glorious kingdom forever and ever.>

And you are to love {the Lord} your God with all your heart, all your being and

all your resources, {your strength}. These words, which I am ordering you today, are to be on your heart; and you are to teach them carefully to your children. You are to talk about them when you sit at home, when you are traveling on the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them on your hand as a sign, put them at the front of a headband around your forehead, and write them on the door-frames of your house and on your gates.

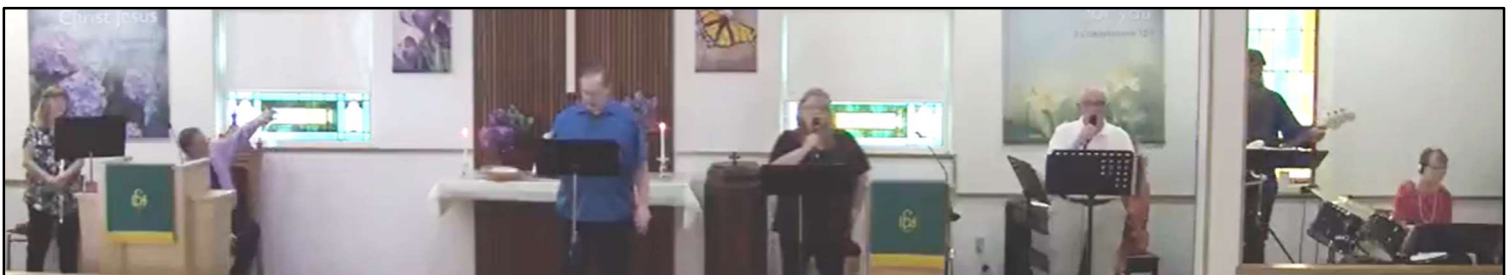
Deuteronomy 6:1a,3b, 4-9 (CJB, {NIV} <Added from tradition>)

And like the bishop, who (hopefully) set an example and wished for his son a priority of spiritual health over physical and material gains, Paul tells Timothy to set a similar priority by living out the example of one who lives the prayer as a priority...

But refuse godless {old wives' tales}, and {train yourself} to exercise godliness. For although physical exercise does have some value, godliness is valuable for everything, since it holds promise both for the present life and for the life to come.

1 Timothy 4:7-8 CJB, {NIV}

Music Just as good earthly fathers (and mothers) go out of their way to never give up but provide and care for their families and to be the right example by going to great lengths in any difficulties to instill in their children the qualities that will lead them to a faithful and successful life ... then how much more does our heavenly Father never let go of us and gift us with his example and presence as we go through the mundane, and through the routine, and through the various storms of life... Join us in singing....



You Never Let Go

Matt Redman, Beth Redman arr. by Jeff Anderson
© 2005 Thankyou Music

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
Your perfect love is casting out fear.
And even when I'm caught in the middle of the storms of this life,
I won't turn back, I know you are near.
And I will fear no evil, for my God is with me.
And if my God is with me, whom then shall I fear, whom then shall I fear?

Refrain

Oh, no, you never let go through the calm and through the storm.

Oh, no, you never let go in ev'ry high and ev'ry low.

Oh, no, you never let go, Lord, you never let go of me.

Yes, I can see a light that is coming for the heart that holds on,
a glorious light beyond all compare.

And there will be an end to these troubles,
but until that day comes, we'll live to know you here on the earth.

And I will fear no evil, for my God is with me.

And if my God is with me, whom then shall I fear, whom then shall I fear?

Refrain

You keep on runnin' and you never let go. Singin'

Refrain

Yes, I can see a light that is coming for the heart that holds on,
And there will be an end to these troubles, but until that day comes,
still I will praise you, still I will praise you---

(Repeat)

Refrain

You keep on runnin' and you never let go. Singin'

Refrain

Music If he never lets go of us, if he is always near, then we know we can put our hope in him

My Hope is in You

Words and Music: April Geesbreght & Ed Cash

© 2010 Sony/ATV Cross Keys Pub.

I meet with You, and my soul sings out as your Word throws doubt far away.

I sing to you, and my heart cries, "Holy! Hallelujah! Father, You're near."

Chorus

My hope is in You, Lord, all the day long.

I won't be shaken by drought or storm.

A peace that passes understanding is my song, and I sing:

My hope is in You, Lord.

I wait for You, and my soul finds rest.

In my selfishness, You show me grace.

I worship You, and my heart cries,

"Glory! Hallelujah! Father, You're here."

Chorus

I will wait on You. You are my refuge. (4 times)

Chorus

My hope is in You, Lord. My hope is in You, Lord.

Music And if he is that faithful of a refuge as we put our hope in him, we know he has our best interest in mind, and as the Shema calls us to do -- we can open our hearts to accept his love and love him with all that we are ...

I Give You My Heart

Words: Reuben Morgan Music: arr. by David Shipp
© 1995 Reuben Morgan/ Hillsong Publishing

This is my desire, to honor You. Lord, with all my heart I worship You.
All I have within me, I give you praise. All that I adore is in You.

Chorus

Lord, I give You my heart, I give You my soul.
I live for You alone.
Ev'ry breath that I take, ev'ry moment I'm awake,
Lord, have Your way in me.
(Repeat all)

Chorus

Lord, have Your way in me. - 2x

Prayers Lord, we are thankful for how you work in the lives of your people. The more we hear about what you do, the more we are grateful, and the more we realize how majestic you are in all the earth and even beyond the earth. When we look around at all you have done even in this small part of your Universe; it makes us wonder how special we must be that you take so much attention and care toward us, and what potential you must believe about us and in us, to grant us the privilege of being stewards of what you have created on this earth.

On this day especially, we give thanks for our fathers and/or those men in our lives who have given us a fatherly example and influence. While literature abounds, we recognize, like motherhood, that fatherhood does not come with a foolproof manual, and perfection must often come through trial and error by people who are all too human. Some fathers excel while others are still striving to find their way. We ask your blessing for them all and forgiveness where it is needed and reconciliation when it is possible. We remember how many fathers have sacrificed big and small things to provide opportunities for their children to achieve dreams thought beyond reach.

We also remember all those who have helped fill the void when fathers pass early or are absent; grandfathers and uncles, brothers and cousins, teachers, pastors and coaches, friends, mentors, and the women of our families who have had to take on the role of father as well as mother.

Let peace abound in our homes and beyond. Purge out of every heart the lurking grudge. Give us grace and strength to persevere. Bless us with the strength to encounter what comes our way, that we may be brave in peril, constant in trouble, always loyal and loving to one another. As the clay is to the Potter, as the windmill is to the wind, as children are to their parents, we appeal for your help and mercy for Christ's sake.

Petitions Therefore, we offer our prayers today for * Kathy Novak's request for Mary Beth and Julie as they mourn the loss of their husbands Neil and Mike, * Jan asks we continue to pray for brother Reese as he still has issues with his heart, and the court date for Calvin has been moved to August in that situation, * and Cheri Holt requests prayers for father in law "Bill" who is hospitalized with pancreatitis. And we continue to pray * for Renee, the waitress from Red Olive, requested by Pat Harton, (no details given, but the Lord knows) * for Jan Martin's friend Dave Thompson who has unexplained weight loss, * and her friend Gaynell whose son Mitchell is in hospice with cancer, and Cheri Holt's neighbor's father who we said had a stroke last week, but it was a misdiagnosis, it is nerve damage in his left shoulder and spreading down the left side of his body...

Now holy God, for all that lay before us, those requests that are unspoken or unknown to anyone but ourselves, we lift them up to you. We ask that you would fill us with strength and courage, with discernment and compassion, that we may be instruments of your will on earth as it is in heaven, that we may live as you taught us to pray. **Lord's Prayer**

Intro to and Bible Reading 2

In the mid-1500s, Teresa of Avila persuaded a classmate to help her reform the Carmelite Order. The classmate knew that reformation leading to spiritual growth would not be easy. Indeed, resentful authorities kidnapped and imprisoned him in a windowless cell. No heat in winter, no ventilation in summer. Malnourished and flogged weekly, he was constantly ill. By the light of a three-inch hole that was high up in the wall, the Spanish priest, now known to us as Saint John of the Cross, wrote two love poems to God which have become classics in Spanish literature. One was called *Dark Night of the Soul*, in which he urges us to extinguish everything but the desire for God. He wrote that "dying with Christ" is the feeling of an absolute loss of God, a sense that the sun is completely obliterated. Yet the soul clings to God. This "spiritual crucifixion" is necessary because one must learn to seek God for God's sake, and not just for his blessings. Paul put it this way:

Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your mind and heart and sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ rules in the place of honor at God's right hand. Stay focused on what's above, not on earthly things. For you died to your old life. Your real, new life is now hidden, enmeshed, with Christ in God.

And when Christ, who gives meaning to your life – who is our very life – is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory. So don't be controlled by, but put to death the sinful, earthly impulses lurking within you... for you have stripped off your old sinful nature with all its habitual practices.

Colossians 3:1-5a,9b (VOICE, NLT, CEV)

Music It almost sounds like you could claim Paul is saying to be so heavenly minded that you are not earthly good; but I think his real intent is the opposite – that we could become so earthly minded that we are no heavenly good. That brings me back to the first reading. I was looking at the Shema and looking at from rabbis and Jewish sites on the internet and kind of went down the rabbit hole with it and I'm going to take you there with me for just a minute.

To love God with all our heart, soul, and resources (or strength or might). Love in the ancient context was not primarily an emotion, and certainly not one that is involuntary, unpredictable, and that we can't help but fall in and out of, as it seems to be expressed often today. Primarily, it is a promise of exclusive and wholehearted loyalty, service, obedience and action – in this case – the love is to God alone. And it is observed not because of God's sheer power and authority, but in gratitude that is properly felt for the gifts he has so generously granted to us. Gratitude is a motivational and driving force energizing the lover to good behavior and inhibiting the lover from destructive behaviors. And we are to love with all our hearts (to the ancient Jews, the heart was the home of thoughts and ideas, and yes emotions too – so a more literal translation for us might be to love with all our mind.

And with all your soul – or today's translation said "being". In the ancient Hebrew vocabulary, it referred to the person's life force – what makes you alive, and while Paul's "Christ is our very life" certainly makes it sound like that is referring to our spiritual journey, to the ancients, it was less about the spiritual life as it was the physical life – the body, so as another concluded – it is about willing to give up our life for (or Paul might say our old life in lieu of the new one).

And finally, we are to be wholeheartedly loyal with all our resources or strength or might. Rabbi Goldberg reviewed a previous talk (that I didn't look for, that was on rabbit hole I didn't go after) and he said that he had explained that for some people, money is more precious, money is more valuable than their own body, than their own life, which led him into the definition of our final word which is usually translated in our English versions as strength or might (what we put our force into). The word (Me'odecha) describes "whatever we crave, whatever we desire, whatever we have a drive for, whatever we love, whatever we want, whatever we can't get enough of, whatever we have an insatiable appetite for, all of that is within that last word "might" and it should be channeled and directed to the service of God. We take that drive and give it to God for his use.

And then he went on to say this: "Whatever God has decreed, whatever he has designated, however he is interacting with us, whether we perceive it as good and pleasurable, whether we understand it or want it – or if we perceive it as something that is painful, something that is uncomfortable, something that is undesirable, we must love him then too. In whatever way he relating to us, we cannot only root for and feel connected to God when things are well. We aren't only loyal, we don't only love God -- when things work out – we love him no matter what is happening to us in our life, even when that which happens is difficult, even when the struggle is bad, in all of it, we credit the Almighty as the source of all, whether it seems he is giving, or whether it seems he is taking away.... This next song captures that sentiment. Let's sing

Blessed Be the Name

Words and Music: Matt & Beth Redman
arr. Jeff Anderson © 2002 Thank You Music

Blessed be Your name in the land that is plentiful,
Where Your streams of abundance flow, blessed be Your name.
Blessed be Your name when I'm found in the desert place,
Tho' I walk through the wilderness blessed be Your name

Chorus

Ev'ry blessing you pour out I'll turn back to praise.
When the darkness closes in, Lord, still I will say,
Blessed be the name of the Lord, Blessed be Your name.
Blessed be the name of the Lord, Blessed be your glorious name.

Blessed be Your name when the sun's shining down on me,
When the world's all as it should be, blessed be Your name
Blessed be Your name, on the road marked with suffering,
Tho' there's pain in the offering blessed be Your name.

Chorus

Blessed be the name of the Lord, Blessed be Your name.
 Blessed be the name of the Lord, Blessed be your glorious name.

You give and take away, you give and take away;
 My heart will choose to say, Lord, blessed be Your name.

(Repeat)

Chorus (2x)

Intro to and Bible Reading 3

On the other side of that dying described by St. John of the Cross, JRR Tolkien writes in *The Lord of the Rings* that against all hope, the world was saved, including Frodo and his faithful servant Sam. Sam wakes up and sees Gandalf. "I thought [we] were dead! What's happened to the world?"

Gandalf replies, "A great shadow has departed." Then he laughed. It sounded like music, or like water in a parched land. Sam thought that he had not heard the sound of pure happiness for days... It fell on his ears like the echo of all the joys he had ever known...

He burst into tears. Then, as a sweet rain passes... and the sun shines all the brighter, his tears ceased. Laughing welled up as he sprang from his bed. He waved his arms in the air—"I feel --- like spring after winter, and sun on the leaves; and like trumpets and harps and all the songs I have ever heard!"

(paraphrased excerpts)

That conveys something of the joy we experience when we encounter the living Christ and we realize that by nothing less than his resurrecting grace, we can become friends of God. The only reasonable response is committing ourselves to living the way Jesus lived, and died, and lives again. Paul now puts some rubber to the road on what that new life might look like...

Each of you is now a new person. Put on your new nature. You are continually being renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become more and more like him. In this re-creation [of] new life, there is no distinction between Jew or Gentile, if you are circumcised or not, barbaric, uncivilized, slave or free; because Christ is all that matters, and he dwells in all of us.

Since God has chosen you to be set apart to be his own special people, made holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with a holy way of life: with compassion ([that is, with] tenderhearted mercy), with kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Put up with one another and make allowance for

each other's faults ([traditionally called "forbearance"]), and forgive anyone who does you wrong, who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you should forgive others. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which ties everything completely together in perfect harmony.

Let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For each of you is part of the body of Christ, and you were called and chosen to live together in peace. And always be thankful. Let the word, the message about Christ, in all of its richness, completely fill and inhabit your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. With hearts spilling over with thankfulness, sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. Whatever you say or do should be done in the name of, as a representative of, the Lord Jesus, as you give thanks through him to God the Father. Colossians 3:10-17 (VOICE, NLT, CEV)

Sermon Clothed in His Character

London was draped in a deep fog. You could hear the shrill whistle of the [police] as they chased the fleeing form through the lanes. They finally corner him in the basement of the doctor's house. They shot and killed the hideous fiend. But they buried a kind-hearted gentleman named Dr. Jekyll, who had the misfortune of experimenting and concocting a potion that distorted him into the monster named Hyde. Robert Louis Stevenson was presenting through the metaphor of chemistry the battle with evil that is within each of us.

In today's text, Paul uses the metaphor not of chemistry but of clothing. By taking off the dirty rags of the old life and put on the new clothes of dearly loved people that are chosen by God -- meaning, be transformed more and more into Christlikeness. I say "more and more" because as the little girl explained to her mother, "The reason I fell out of bed was because I went to sleep too near where I got in." Lest we fall asleep too close to where we started our spiritual journey and fall out and away (revert back to the Hyde-iness of us -- that still surrounds us and seeks to once again penetrate our lives) we must strive to let the living Christ live in us as we seek, by his gracious power and strength, to more and more, put on his character traits -- moving us more into the new way of living and farther away from the old way of living. Let's take a look at the pieces of clothing Paul tells us to put on.

The first piece is compassion. or tenderhearted mercy. It is a gut feeling that motivates us to do something to bring relief to the someone who is hurting.

Clothed in Christ's character

Compassion

French philosopher Voltaire, in his novel *Candide*: Candide and philosopher Pangloss are shipwrecked due to an earthquake. Candide is prone on the street covered in debris and wounded. He says (what is medical for that time, I suppose), “Get me a little wine and oil for I am dying.”

Pangloss (the philosopher) [ignoring the state of his friend] replies, “This earthquake is not a new thing. Lima suffered the same shocks last year. Same causes, same effect -- there is certainly a vein of sulfur underground from Lima to Lisbon.”

Candide weakly answers, “Nothing is more probable, but some oil, and some wine.”

“What do you mean ‘probable’? I maintain the matter is proved. Candide loses consciousness. Voltaire was commenting on the compassion-less-ness of the religious and political leaders in his time.

Jesus calls us to something different in his parable of the Good Samaritan. (See Luke 10:25-37) You may recall that to emphasize the point that it was a racial-religious enemy that has been moved to compassion because he didn’t see a principle or philosophy or a theology. He wasn’t moved to empty rhetoric about the problems of law enforcement and rampant crime or the dangers of contamination or the theology of evil or the wild idea that people who are beat up in life – it is somehow their own fault, or whining about the actions of political policies of the other side that “allowed it to happen”. Instead, he saw a person in need, and was moved to feel mercy and put it into action, to alleviate the pain of the hurting person, and he asked no accusing questions about what had got him there. Compassion.

Kindness. We clothe ourselves with kindness. Kindness puts your neighbor’s well-being on par with your own. A very *old* Christianity Kindness Today editorial states that the early church unleashed a flood of kindness in a world of strife; while the modern church too often unleashes a flood of - resolutions.

The ancient historian Josephus used this word to describe Isaac, who dug wells and then when others claimed it was their water, he simply dug another well a little farther away, and repeated the process until there wasn’t any more dispute over the water. The Bible isn’t clear whether the complaint was legitimate or not. But the point was that he refused to fight over a spot when there was plenty for everyone. (Genesis 26:18-26) To do something like this requires a healthy dose of kindness and humility.

Today, Humility is often equated with worthlessness, low self-esteem, weakness, and humiliation. When a person tries to humiliate another, the idea is that they are putting them back in their place (in the pecking order of life), like Raymond did on the playground in the earlier story. But if we are humble, we already know our place and we don't need to worry about where other people think we belong or are trying to put us. We don't feel a need to prove anything to others. Biblical humility means to give yourself an accurate self-assessment. Humility is what we feel when we sense we are in the presence of the Creator of the Universe and all of its grandeur of his creation, and we are but just a small part of it, yet at the same time we recognize that he has befriended us and deeply loves us, and he has granted us a high place of responsibility, and equipped us with the gifts of faith just as he sees fit. (See Psalm 8 (esp vv 3-6), Romans 12:3) So there is no room for pride beyond what we ought, but there is also no room for devaluing ourselves or others, or being devalued by others, or by ourselves. Right?

Humility

Humble people are often gentle people, another quality that today seems to be seen as a failing, a vice rather than a virtue. Gentleness is an inner strength (such as Victor and his dad had on the playground) that allows a person to stand up for right, but doing so in a non-bully-ish way, in a courteous way, to know that sometimes a light touch is needed and helpful. This is what internet "Karens and Kevins" do not do well. They are like clumsy elephants in a tiny novelty shop filled with fragile items, wreaking unnecessary havoc on things and on others -- embarrassing not only to themselves but to those associated with them. No, we have the inner strength to see others as people and to treat them how we wish we would be treated (and especially when there is a misunderstanding, a mistake, or a wrong committed).

Gentleness

Then Paul says we patiently forbear and forgive. Forbear means putting up with, tolerating, letting it go... We have the inner strength to take a lot of guff -- accidental or intentional, and to deal with it without getting ourselves out of whack at the same time. (Boy, that's a challenging thing for some of us, like on the road, hmm?)

Patience, Forbearing, Forgiving

Current culture seems to say, "If you can't take it don't dish it out", implying if you can take it, go ahead and dish it out, leading a lot of people to pretending they can take it and so they dish it out to the full, but are then surprised when they get served the same behavior back, and then all of a sudden they can't take what they were

dishing out. But the Christian says, we can take it, but we *won't* dish it out, because we are called to a different outfit -- Christ didn't *re-act on the basis* of what was done to him, but *pro-acted* on the basis of what his heavenly Father's desire was for him to be – and the desire for whole relationships.

Finally, we dress with love. It is the last piece of garment that holds all the other the other pieces, all the other character traits together and brings the outfit to completion. Without love, all these other things may be reduced to mere moralisms, or obligations (when someone says, "I'm only forgiving you because the Bible says I have to..." – it may be a starting point – but that is not what the goal is. lace, We are striving for sincere, heart-felt forgiveness.

Put on Love

All these things happen when peace rules. The word "rules" means to act like a traditional umpire. I say traditional because now (1) technology overturns umpires, and (2) even in little kid's sports, I hear about umps/refs are getting attacked by parents -- sometimes physically, because they think it is their job to run the rules of the game (for their child) ... even though they are not even (supposed to be) on the field. So when it says peace rules (like a [traditional] umpire) it means – what makes for true peace in the long run is what makes the final decisive call. Peace is what determines the decision-making process in conflict. Allow the inner calm and external peace the comes from knowing Christ make the conclusive decisions in every internal and external debate -- deciding for God and others and ourself, but against self-ish-ness.

Let Peace Rule

We can only do this if we allow God's Word to saturate our being. Let the Word dwell, the Bible says. If we are going to live by Christ living in us, then let him live in us fully. When we do all these things in increasing measure, we can teach, and sing, and be thankful for all God has done and is doing.

Let the Word dwell

Christians wear the uniform of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, enduring patience, forbearing and forgiveness. We wrap it up in love by allowing his peace to rule and his word to dwell... In these tumultuous times, we cannot afford to be caught out of uniform. We say and do all things thankfully in the name of Jesus, and we dare not misrepresent him and his ever-seeking love. It is the duty of every Christian. Paul concludes, in essence, if we are going to share in Christ's ultimate glory in heaven, we must do everything for his glory now.

Do all things for his glory

We heard earlier a letter written to a son about treating others well, and he concludes the letter with a story impressing upon his son the importance of carrying out the duty of treating others well to the very end. I'll paraphrase what he wrote,

... nearly 100 years ago, (remember this was from the 1800s) there was a day of remarkable gloom and darkness -- when the light of the sun slowly extinguished, as if by an eclipse [but there was no eclipse]. The Connecticut legislature was in session and as the members saw the unexpected and unaccountable darkness coming on, and they shared in the awe and the terror of it. It was supposed by many that the day of judgment had come. Someone moved an adjournment, but an old puritan legislator said that if the last day had come, he desired to be found at his place doing his duty, and therefore, moved that candles be brought in, so that the house could proceed with its duty. There was a quietness of heavenly wisdom in that man's mind, and an inflexible willingness to obey present duty. Do your duty in all things like the old puritan, (he advises his son). You cannot do more, you should never wish to do less. Never let me and your mother wear one gray hair for any lack of duty on your part.

“In Regard to Duty” Ibid.

Nor should Christian offer any gray hairs to anyone – for we are not meant to be a threat or a stress, but an invitation to wonderful opportunity for those who wish to participate in the life of Christ as they see him in us. Let's pray...

Prayers And so, Lord, after receiving the most horrible cruelties humanity devised and delivered. You could have destroyed us, but instead you transformed it to remind us of the depths of your forgiving love. That even the worst we can do will not deter you from your never-ending desire to embrace us in friendship, and to eagerly seek to continue living on in us and through us. And that, Lord, is why we want to serve you in holiness and praise your holy name no matter what may come. We open our hearts and lives to you, letting you enter and live in us so that you can bring glory to your name through us. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

Music We trust God's character regardless of what happens – others may want to find fathers, men (and women) who have character that counts – they are looking for that in the world, people that they can rely on. We need to find in Christ the strength of character to live all for his glory no matter what happens, and then blessing will come to the Lord, so let's sing...

10,000 Reasons (Bless the Lord)

Words: Matt Redman and Jonas Myrin

Music: arr by Ken Barker © 2011 Shout Publishing

Refrain

Bless the Lord O my soul, O my soul, Worship His holy name.
Sing like never before, oh my soul, I'll worship Your holy name.

The sun comes up, it's a new day dawning;
It's time to sing Your song again,
Whatever may pass and whatever lies before me,
let me be singing when the ev'ning comes.

Refrain

You're rich in love and You're slow to anger,
Your name is great and Your heart is kind;
For all Your goodness I will keep on singing,
Ten thousand reasons for my heart to find.

Refrain

And on that day when my strength is failing,
the end draws near and my time has come;
Still my soul will sing Your praise unending,
ten thousand years and then forevermore.

Refrain 2x

I'll worship Your holy name. Lord, I'll worship Your holy name.
Sing like never before, oh my soul, I'll worship Your holy name.

Blessing Now as a child of the Father, as Christ's friend, go out to the world in the power of the Spirit -- with your heart set on Christ who draws all people to himself and binds us together in love. Amen.

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