



Series: Colossians: Before All Things

Date: February 11, 2024

Speaker: Mike Herman, Campus Pastor- Union County

Text: Colossians 3:12-4:2

Title: Reflecting the Heart of Christ

Main point of the sermon: How you live among others should reflect Christ's Heart.

Outline/Subpoints:

- **Who You Are in Christ**
- **What Sustains You**
- **What Life Looks Like**

Introduction:

Good morning, Mercy Church! It is a joy to get the opportunity to preach to you guys again. My name is Mike and I serve as the campus pastor for MUC. I love the Word of God and it is a great honor to get to teach it to you guys.

And to get to do it on my birthday is such a gift! I mean can you guys think of a better way to celebrate your birthday than to preach a few sermons, take a nap, eat some food, then watch the Super Bowl? What a Birthday!

So, if you are new with us, we have been working our way through the Book of Colossians. It has been a powerful and transformational season for our church.

And today we come to some of the most profound ideas in the whole book.

We are picking up in the middle of Chapter 3 and leading up to this point Paul (the author of this book) has given us a declaration of who Christ is,

he has warned us about pride and judgment, and



we learned last week about this amazing concept of taking off our old self and putting on our new self.

And part of that new self is a new citizenship. This citizenship is our primary and central Identity. As one that is *in* Christ.

And today we get an idea of what it looks like to walk in this new citizenship together. In other words, as a group of people that have collectively put on the new self - what does it look like? What does the life of these people look like?

And guys these ideas are so crucial to understand and implement. Especially as a new campus, we need to know how God has designed us to walk alongside each other.

I honestly was very challenged by what Christ calls us into. Just this week I have been confronted by my own pride and how dismissive I have been in my home. And one of the most tragic ways that we fail at walking in our “new self”, and it's one of the primary things that Paul is addressing here, and that is how we, followers of Christ, treat each other.

Paul gives clear insight into this and what I hope to convince you of during this time is this: (slide)
How you live among others should reflect Christ's heart.

To give you a little preview of where we are going today:

(slide) (all three points, just the bold!)

- 1. Who You Are in Christ** - What traits define followers of Christ?
- 2. What Sustains You** - As we walk together in this “new self”, how do we maintain awareness of our identity?
- 3. What Life looks like** - Paul gives us insight into how this looks in marriage, parenting, being parented, and in your work.

So, before we dive in, let's pray.

So, if you guys would, fill over to Colossians chapter 3 and we will start in verse 12.

Like I said, we will start with who we are in Christ.

(slide)

Who you are in Christ:

12 Therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and dearly loved,



We are God's chosen ones, holy, and dearly loved.

To those of us in Christ, he has chosen you. In some way that none of us can fully understand, he created you and ordained for you to be in this room today. The God that created the universe created you and gave you a purpose. He gives your life purpose, your pain purpose, your joy's purpose. You are chosen.

Then he reminds us that we are holy. All that means is that we are set apart. Our lives should look distinctly from the rest of the world. If you belong to the family of God, how we treat each other should be remarkably different from how the rest of the world treats each other. And if it doesn't, you...we need to do some serious self-examination.

And then, most impactfully he says you are dearly loved. This cannot be over-emphasized. Part of how you are defined as a person who follows Jesus is that you are dearly loved. (THIS IS THE GOSPEL) This love is what motivated God to send Jesus to the cross. This love is what allowed Jesus to consider the cross in front of him as joy.

We learned this a few weeks ago, right? Sacrificial joy comes when you are giving up something you love for something you love more. I am sure that Jesus loved being on his throne in heaven, but because of his dearly loved, chosen ones, he sacrificed himself so that we would be reconciled to him. He knew you needed him to suffer in your place, and because he loved you, he went there. You are dearly loved.

If we are going to be a community that lives the way God designed us to live, **as a community that reflects Christ's heart** –this identity of being chosen, holy, and loved - must be foundational.

And now based on that identity, he continues in the rest of that verse to say:

(slide)

put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience,

I love how Paul isn't saying strife really hard to be, he uses the phrase "put on" This is a phrase common to Paul's letter and when you see it, you should hear it as covering yourself with Christ.



Christ is all these attributes fully realized and if we want to live them, we must cover ourselves with Christ,

we must be with Him and be surrounded by Him so much so that as we walk these attributes out, people won't see us,

but will see Christ covering our old self. This is really our only hope of reflecting Christ's heart to the world.

All of these attributes express themselves in relationships with others. You can't fully be compassionate without someone to be compassionate towards, you can't show kindness to others while you are alone. You can't be humble and patient when you are isolated by yourself.

Your identity in Christ as someone who is chosen, holy, and loved is carried out in community with others. A notable measure of how we are doing in living in Christ's design for the community is how we treat each other.

Which brings me to the next section of this scripture. He is in the middle of a sentence listing

traits of followers of Christ, and he gives an impossible, but beautiful command.

Let's continue reading.

(slide)

13 bearing with one another and forgiving one another if anyone has a grievance against another. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you are also to forgive.

Hear that command, Church.

Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you are also to forgive.

(reference that this is going to be a big part of today)

Something that is key to Christian community is to understand that you are forgiven. Your sins have been covered by Christ's death on the cross.

Through Jesus, every sin you have ever committed or will commit has been paid for by the one you sinned against.



Christ forgave you when he knew we would keep sinning. And yet, when we turn to Him, he calls us dearly loved.

This idea is not unique to the book of Colossians, Jesus drives this home relentlessly into the hearts of his followers. How we forgive others should be a marker and defining characteristic of God's people.

We see it in:

(slide) Matthew 6:12 (Within the Lord's Prayer)

And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

(slide) Matthew 6:14

"For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you."

And Jesus continues to repeat this same concept in:

(slide) Luke 6:37, Matthew 18:21-22, Matthew 6:15, Matthew 5:7 (Sermon on the Mount)

My point is this: Jesus is abundantly clear that those who experience the forgiveness of the Gospel, forgive others.

Just to be clear, this does not mean that you are earning forgiveness by forgiving others. That would be contradictory to the gospel. But rather, when you truly know how forgiven you are, you have no choice but to forgive others. You have to. If you don't then you don't understand just how forgiven you are. Jesus has a whole parable explaining this called the parable of the unforgiving debtor.

This forces us to search our hearts for grudges, for built-up resentments, for bitterness, and really for any space where we are lacking grace with other believers. And as we identify it, extend forgiveness to others. God forgave you and so you should forgive others.

This made me think of a story from a book called "The Hiding Place". This memoir of Corrie Ten Boom.

Some of you may know of her story, but she was a Dutch watchmaker during World War II. She was a Christian but was sent a concentration camp with her family for trying to help Jewish people escape



the Nazi's genocide. She survived the war, was released and in 1947 she found herself going back to Germany to speak about forgiveness.

And while she is speaking a man walks up to her and she recognizes him as a guard from her imprisonment.

She then has a flashback to her imprisonment. "It came back with a rush: the huge room with its harsh overhead lights, the pathetic pile of dresses and shoes in the center of the floor, the shame of walking naked past this man. I could see my sister's frail form ahead of me, ribs sharp beneath the parchment skin...

The man approached her and says:

I was a guard at the concentration camp you were at. 'But since that time,' he went on, 'I have become a Christian. I know that God has forgiven me for the cruel things I did there, but I would like to hear it from your lips as well. Mam—again the hand came out—'will you forgive me?'

"I stood there—I, whose sins had to be forgiven every day, could not forgive. Betsie had died in that place—could he erase her slow terrible death?" she added. "It could not have been many seconds

that he stood there, handheld out, but to me, it seemed hours as I wrestled with the most difficult thing I had ever had to do.

"For I had to do it—I knew that. The message that God forgives has a command: that we forgive those who have injured us. She recalled Matthew 6: 14 in her mind.

"Still, I stood there with the coldness clutching my heart. But forgiveness is not something I can supply—I knew that too. Forgiveness is an act of the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit can function regardless of the temperature of the heart,"

In her pain, Corrie turned to prayer.

"'Jesus, help me!' I prayed silently. 'I can lift my hand. I can do that much. You supply the forgiveness,'" she said.

So, she forces herself to embrace the man and trust the Lord to supply forgiveness.

"I forgive you, brother!" I cried. "With all my heart!" For a long moment, we grasped each other's hands, the former guard and the former prisoner. I had never known God's love so intensely as I did then.



This is the type of forgiveness that Christ calls his people to. It is a divine forgiveness. Forgiveness comes from understanding the depths that Christ has come to forgive you. Trusting the Holy Spirit to supply the freedom that comes from true forgiveness to others. If we have “put on” Christ, this type of forgiveness is possible.

If we are to **live among others in a way that reflects Christ’s heart**, this type of forgiveness must saturate our hearts.

Now, as sort of a Pastoral aside. I want to discuss what it means to forgive someone. Because in a lot of situations, how to forgive is not particularly intuitive.

So, I think it will be helpful to describe what forgiveness *is* and what it is *not*. We will start with what it is *not*.

The first thing is that forgiveness is *not* the same thing as reconciliation. Reconciliation requires both sides to be moving towards each other. Even with Christ, this is the case. Christ has done everything necessary for you to be forgiven, but reconciliation with him only happens when you,

have faith in Him and confess his as Lord of your life.

So, in cases where you have been abused, taken advantage of, neglected by a parent, cheated on, or attacked... reconciliation might not be possible. But forgiveness, through the help of the Holy Spirit, is possible.

Forgiveness is also *not* simply overlooking things. Forgiveness does not mean that you sit back and take things on the chin in an effort to be Christ-like. Christ wants you to be safe and cared for. So, abuse, manipulation, and neglect are not things that Christ wants for his children. If you are stuck in this situation, please get help. Come talk to me or one of our deacons, we will have both male and female people available to talk after the service, we will do our best to care for you.

And, lastly, Forgiveness is *not*, and I say this with as much care as I possibly can, forgiveness is not an option. It's a command. And I think if we can trust the Lord to supply forgiveness in every grievance, and especially in the most terrible of situations, we can experience what Corrie experienced as she forgives the prison guard. We can experience the Love of God like we never have before. Because we



can get a very small glimpse of what Christ has given us, an undeserved forgiveness.

So now that we understand what forgiveness is *not*, what must address what it *is*, forgiveness is this posture of seeking the Lord's help to remove the attitude in our hearts that seeks vengeance against the person who has wronged us. We pray for God to release the bitterness, resentment, hatred, and vindictiveness in our hearts so that we can treat that person with love, kindness, and gentleness.

When we do this, we can live among others in a way that reflects Christ's Heart.

If all of this sounds very hard to keep together. Thankfully, Paul gives a hopeful exhortation of how to maintain awareness of our new identity. Paul reminds us of what holds us together.

2nd point:

(slide) **What Sustains You**

(slide) **14 Above all, put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.**

We must remember that we are loved and then that love we have experienced must cover us. Love is the glue that provides unity.

The love that provided vertical reconciliation between us and God, is the same love that provides horizontal reconciliation between each other.

Remember how last week's sermon ended? Paul was declaring hey you are no longer Jew or gentile, barbarian, Scythian, but Christ is all and in all.

When you have the love of God flowing through you into others, it leads to unity.

That's partially why one of our Core Values is pursuing Multicultural unity. The love of God, fully realized in the gospel, brings and binds believers together. If we are going to live among each other in a way that reflects Christ's heart, we must be a love-bonded people.

(slide) **And let the peace of Christ, to which you were also called in one body, rule your hearts.**



Within the context of new citizenship, let that idea that you have been reconciled to God through Christ completely govern how you find peace with others.

Christ has brought you into his family, so you belong to the body of Christ which is the Church.

This has happened to every believer, so a lack of Peace with another believer is a lack of peace against another part of the body of Christ.

Christ has brought us together and made us one body. If the Peace of Christ is going to rule our hearts, we cannot see ourselves primarily as individuals.

If we are going to live among each other in a way that reflects Christ's heart, we must see each other as members of the same body.

Then, Paul gives this short and powerful sentence. **(slide) 15 And be thankful.**

We learned this a few weeks ago, Gratitude is one the most powerful tools for sustaining a Christ-like community. When you are grateful, you cannot be prideful, when you are grateful you are humble.

Followers of Christ are a grateful and humble people. If we want to be a people that lives in a way that reflects Christ's heart, we have got to be a people of gratitude.

And then he says: **(slide) 16 Let the word of Christ dwell richly among you, in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.**

This feels like some fresh air among a lot of conviction truths. Paul gives us very practical ways to center us in our new identity. He says, consume the word, let it teach you, shape you, sing and celebrate together, tell the Lord of how grateful you are for what he has done. Let songs of gratitude fill your heart. This is vital to living in community, it's a gift from the Lord for us to gather together and learn his word and sing together.

All of this, guys, the love of Christ, the Peace of Christ, gratitude, the word of God, and worshiping, is our only hope in living among others in a way that reflects Christ's Heart.



And this brings us to my third point, we get an idea of:

3rd point:

(slide) What life looks like:

(slide) 17 And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. 18 Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. 19 Husbands, love your wives and don't be bitter toward them. 20 Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. 21 Fathers do not exasperate your children, so that they won't become discouraged.

So, what does your life look like as your “new self” walking in this new citizenship? You do everything in the name of Jesus. Paul gives specific examples that were relevant to the Colossian Church in a min, but this applies to all of us, if you are single, dating, empty nester, widow, or widower, whatever you do, you must recognize that you are designed to **live in a way that reflects Christ to the world.**

There is not enough time to give these concepts their full justice, so I will summarize and refer you

guys to our Ephesians series where we spent more time unpacking them. But I'll try to summarize here:

Wives submitting to their husbands does not mean “be oppressed by him”, but marriage is meant to be a **reflection of Christ** and the Church, submitting to your husbands is to embrace the leadership that God has ordained for him.

This does not mean you do not have a voice, but it does mean that you are to trust the Lord to work through your husband. And the reason you should be able to trust your husband in this new identity is because your husband should be loving you the way Christ loves the church.

This means that your husband should be pursuing you with a love that transcends anything a hallmark movie can capture. Husbands you should be dying to yourself and putting the needs of your family above your own. It is hard for me to preach that sentence because I am so aware of all the ways I fail at that. But in a marriage that reflects Christ's heart that is the type of love that wives submit to. Not an overbearing and bitter husband who does what he wants and retreats when things get hard. Marriage **reflects Christ's Heart** when



both the husband and wife are submitting to God's design for marriage.

Now, if you are in a marriage and thinking, ours looks nothing like this, do not take this lightly. Please reach out for help, get in a community group, come talk to me, fight for a marriage that reflects the gospel.

Children, you think you are off the hook. Paul says obey your parents for this pleases the Lord. Obedience to your parents is the training ground where you can learn to obey someone who loves you and wants what's best for you even when it doesn't make sense to you. And as you begin to make your faith your own, obeying the Lord will be a discipline that you are familiar with. Kids, you can be reflecting Christ with how you obey your parents.

And then he doubles down on the dads, don't irritate your kids. Your relationship with them should be one that is encouraging and fruitful. You are to disciple them. What a tragedy it would be, if our kids grow up and think, man I always felt like Dad was disappointed in me. Dads you need to fight against the temptation to exasperate our kids and encourage and empower them to follow

Christ. You loving them, in this way, is a way to reflect Christ to them, and to the community around you.

Lastly, Paul gives this description of slaves and masters. Before I unpack this, it is very important to understand the context. Slaves in this context are not at all the same things as pre-civil war America. These slaves, that Paul is referring to, were not property, they were not based on race, and they were mostly people working to forgive a debt. I am not saying this "slavery" was a good thing, and neither was Paul. But I think a helpful way for us to think about this and apply it to our culture is by applying these principles to any situation where there is someone who has power and influence over someone else who is subject to that power and influence.

Think boss and employee, it's probably the closest thing in our culture.

So, let's hear what Paul has to say about these types of relationships.

(slide) 22 Slaves, obey your human masters in everything. Don't work only while being watched, as people-pleasers, but work



wholeheartedly, fearing the Lord. 23 Whatever you do, do it from the heart, as something done for the Lord and not for people, 24 knowing that you will receive the reward of an inheritance from the Lord. You serve the Lord Christ. 25 For the wrongdoer will be paid back for whatever wrong he has done, and there is no favoritism.

CHAPTER 4

Masters, deal with your slaves justly and fairly, since you know that you too have a Master in heaven. -- Colossians 3:12-4:1 (CSB)

So what Paul is saying here is to redefine your work. You are not working for the person who has power over you, you are working for the Lord. Have integrity and work hard. Have an eternal perspective with your work. The Lord sees you and your character pleases him.

And those who have power or influence over someone else, you have got to remember that you are not the actual master, but you must submit to your Lord in heaven. How you treat those under you is not based on your position over them, it is based on your position as a follower of Christ. If you run a company or hold a position of leadership in a company, your earthly position as “master”

may give you permission to squeeze productivity out of people and manipulate them for profits, but your position as a follower of Christ commands that you seek justice and be fair. **How you live among others should reflect Christ's heart.**

Conclusion:

Church, there is so much to reflect on in the verses. We are chosen, Holy, and dearly loved. We have put on Christ, we are unified by Christ's love, The Peace of Christ rules our hearts, we are grateful, we love the Word, we worship together, and we should do everything in the name of Christ Jesus.

And so, to conclude of time, I want to lead us through a time of prayer and then a time of communion.

Communion is a time when we reflect and remember what Christ has done for us. Communion is also a meal reserved for those who follow Christ.

So, please don't take it if you are in one of these three categories: unsaved, unrepentant, or unsure.



Instead, we encourage you to pray about the word you heard today and consider the cross of Jesus.

So, as we pass communion around, simply let the plate pass by. Some of our pastors and deacons will be in the back of the room during communion and after the service to talk through anything that you need.

The communion team is going to come and pass out the elements, and the worship team is going to come up and get set up. And while they are doing that, I want to lead us through a time of prayer. Please do not take the elements until I instruct you as I want us all to take them together. You will need to hold on to it for a few minutes.

(slide) Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11:27-28: 27 So, then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sin against the body and blood of the Lord. 28 Let a person examine himself; in this way let him eat the bread and drink from the cup. 29 For whoever eats and drinks without recognizing the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself. -- 1 Corinthians 11:27-29 (CSB)

Please bow your head and pray as I lead.

We discussed a lot of ways that Christ calls us to live among others in a way that reflects him. I know that all of us have something that we need to repent of, so take inventory of your heart and confess to the Lord where you have taken off Christ and put on your old self. And as we recognize all these spaces that we fall short of, we must praise God and thank him for forgiving us and providing a path for reconciliation.

Others of us need to extend forgiveness to someone who has wronged us. You need to take inventory of your heart and search for resentment and bitterness towards others. And just like Corrie Ten Boom, we need to extend forgiveness and trust the Lord to warm our hearts and provide real healing to our hearts. Whether it's a spouse, a friend, a pastor, another church member, or maybe a parent, maybe it's someone who hurt you 30 years ago and you have been holding on to pain your entire life. Christ calls us to a forgiveness that is only possible with the Holy Spirit's invention. I want you to pray to the Lord to supply for the forgiveness needed for that person.



And some of you might be feeling a coldness in your heart. Maybe through this, you are realizing that you can't give or receive this type of forgiveness because you have never experienced the forgiveness that comes from the cross of Jesus. You need to experience that forgiveness first. If forgiving others isn't something you even desire to do, I am loving you when I say this, you probably do not know the forgiveness of God. You need to seek forgiveness from your Father in heaven and experience the overwhelming joy and being chosen, holy, and loved. What you need to do with the time, is confess your sin to the Lord and trust him to forgive you.

Take a few moments, whatever you need to self-examine before the Lord and give it to him.

1 min silent prayer

On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took bread, 24 and when he had given

thanks, broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Christ's body given for you - take the bread.

25 In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, and said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. -- 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 (CSB)

Christ's blood shed for you- take the wine.

We have remembered what Christ has done, we have reflected and repented of our shortcomings, we have forgiven as we have been forgiven, and now we celebrate what he has done through worship, please stand and praise our King and our Savior.