

Emmanuel Ev. Lutheran Church—Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod  
Pentecost 17  
September 16, 2018  
Sermon by Pastor Dan Pautz  
Blessed by God to be a blessing to others  
—Colossians 3:1-25

This is the second of three sermons on the subject of stewardship. A steward is a manager. When we hear the word stewardship, we are accustomed mostly to thinking that God wants us to be good stewards of our finances – and of course that is true. But there are many other areas of life in which God calls upon you and me to be good managers and that includes our relationships with the people around us. The Almighty God who is in control of everything including your very existence has chosen to place you not in Old Testament times or in the 16<sup>th</sup> century but right now in this 21<sup>st</sup> century. He has chosen you to be living not in Argentina or Pakistan but in the United States. He has chosen to place you in this world with 7 billion people. Your personal world is not all the 7 billion people but the people with whom you come into contact – your family, your friends, your fellow students and workers, your neighbors, the clerks at the stores you shop, the people in cars driving the same road with you. These are in your life for a purpose. God wants you to be a positive influence upon them – a blessing to them. A good and brief mission statement of your life is “Blessed by God To Be A Blessing to Others.”

Please keep in mind that God has blessed you. He cares for you, He hears your prayers; He knows your situation; He forgives you, He has brought you to faith, He strengthens you; He is concerned about what is going on in your life right now and He will be with you all the days of your life and then in heaven itself because of His grace. You are a precious blood-bought soul. Now He calls upon you to be a blessing to others.

The part of the Bible assigned for this sermon about our relationship to others is Chapter 3 of the Book of Colossians and it is wonderful but it is 25 verses long. You don't want to know how long the sermon would be to cover each of the verses. This past summer Ingrid and I attended the 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary of a brother-in-law and sister-in-law in Wisconsin. There were about 100 people there – and I knew most of them, many of whom I had not seen in years. I touched base with most of them but with what I call surface talk, nothing deep. “How are you? Haven't seen you for a long time? Your health holding steady? You're looking good. My, how the kids have grown.” And then it was time to move on to the next person. Today instead of surface talking on all the subjects in these 25 verses, let's drill a bit deeper on just a few.

Managing your relationships with others! That does not mean trying to manage them or manipulate them but it begins with managing yourself, your attitudes and words and actions. There are two foundational things in managing your relationships with others. It means first and foremost that you have the right attitude toward God, and then the correct attitude toward self. It means not having the 'better than thou' attitude or the worse-than-thou attitude. It means having Christ's attitude toward others since Christ loves them and has redeemed them whether or not they accept that through faith or reject that. A snowbird from Fort Wayne, Indiana, who attends the Thursday morning Bible Class during our winter months, has business-size cards titled “I am #3.” Number one is God, number two is family, friends, and others; and I am number three. The Apostle Paul wrote, **“For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.”**

Your moods and attitudes, your words and actions affect others sometimes in a negative way, sometimes positive. To be a blessing to others you must stop your sinful attitudes, words, and actions. Stop the sinful attitudes mentioned in these verses from Colossians - lust, evil desires and greed, idolatry, anger, and rage. Stop sinful words such as filthy language slander and lies. Several sinful actions are mentioned in these verses - sexual immorality, impurity, and malice.

Consider a few things. Take the attitude of moodiness and being grouchy and touchy. Do you think that attitude affects others? It certainly does. It affects your parents or children, your spouse and your fellow workers. They probably have to walk on eggshells around you. You are not being the blessing God intends you to be. Mentioned also is filthy language. Filthy language that comes out of your mouth is not good for you, it is not being a witness for Jesus, and it certainly is not a blessing to others. I don't often go on my Face book pages but I have been amazed at some of the language, the F words, and slander directed at people. That's not being a blessing. Or let's say you drink too much. That is not good for you, it is not praising Jesus, and it is not a blessing to others. It is said that the average alcoholic affects traumatically the lives of six family members or friends. That is not being a blessing to others. Children, think of how it hurts a person if you are a bully at school. You might get good grades in all your studies but you should get a failing grade in being nice to others.

Consider the subject the Holy Spirit speaks of through Paul and that is sexual immorality. Think of the husband who on his wedding day had promised to his wife and to God to forsake all others and be faithful to her. He is to be a blessing to her and vice-versa, but he breaks that promise and his marriage with sexual immorality. There is a divorce. He has offended God and there also are many people who are deeply affected and hurt, Hurt are the wife and children who possibly might carry emotional and mental scars for a long time, his parents if they are still living, his siblings, his friends and others. Then there is the family and friends of the one with whom he committed adultery. He was to be a blessing but instead was a source of great sorrow.

As we look back upon our lives, we might be hanging our heads in shame and disgust at the times we treated others wrongly, at the hurts we caused our parents, brothers and sisters, classmates, and others, and at the times we have not been blessings to others. You likely have done what the Lord calls upon you to do and that is to repent. Then we need to remember the gracious words of Jesus that we are forgiven, truly forgiven. He shed His blood for you not only so that when you die you will be blessed with heaven but also so that as you live you in turn will be a blessing to Him and to the people He has placed in your life.

Stop the negative sinful things but do the good and positive things as you seek to be God's blessings to others. As Paul tells you about the positive things he begins by reminding you who you are. You are a member of God's chosen people. God chose you to be His own. Then Paul says that you are holy because God has forgiven your sins. He goes on to say that you are dearly loved by God - not simply loved but dearly loved. The illustration of clothing is used as Paul in these verses speaks about the attitudes, actions, and words you are to have. This clothing is not to be left in the closet but to be worn every day and all the time. There are six pieces of clothing and they matched beautifully and are always in style. "Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you." With that kind of clothing you will be a beautiful blessing to others.

Special attention has been given to the piece of clothing called 'bearing with one another and forgiving whatever grievances you have against one another.' You cannot and will not go through this earthly life without someone sinning against you or someone who tends to make life miserable for you. It has happened to you, it will continue to happen to you. That's just how it is. Is there anyone right now in your life whom you need to forgive? Don't say "I will forgive when that person starts being nice to me." Rather forgive as the Lord forgives you. We pray, "Forgive me my sins as I forgive those who sin against me." Be a blessing by being forgiving. Think of Joseph whose brothers caused him misery and harm and how he was sold into slavery. Because of their evil actions Joseph was separated for twenty years from his father and the area where he was raised. Yet he did forgive them from his heart. Especially think of Jesus who has forgiven you. Go with the attitude of forgiveness. If there is a real hurt and problem, let God take care of it. Don't hang onto grudges and resentment – they will destroy you.

Well, there you are – six pieces of clothing. But you need an overcoat just as in winter the people of Dakotas and Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan, need an overcoat. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Love goes beyond liking someone. Love means placing that person's wellbeing first, especially that person's spiritual wellbeing. Don't go without an overcoat, God says, Love one another as I have loved you,

Our words are to serve as blessings to others. The Apostle Paul speaks of this in Verses 16-17. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

The ultimate blessing of words that come from your mouth is to bring the message of Jesus to others.

There are 7 billion people in this world. You cannot touch them all. However, think of this truth. You are only one person in this whole world but you might be the whole world to one person. Don't seek to get credit by being a blessing to others nor should you always expect to receive thanks. You are doing these things for their sake and especially for the glory of God. It is Him you are serving as you seek to be a blessing to others. We are reminded of that truth in the closing verses of chapter 3. Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving."

God has blessed you. Be a blessing to others.