

Sermon: Raised Up

Text: Colossians 3:1-11

Introduction:

I think people fall into one of two categories: Those who really like shopping at Goodwill, and those who don't. I fall into the former category—my wife falls into the latter.

The reasons that I like Goodwill (and basically any other thrift store) are many. Let's start with economics. It just **MAKES SENSE** (and cents!) to spend \$4 on a perfectly good button-down dress shirt, versus spending \$40 or \$50 on the same shirt that just so happens to be "new." New is very over-rated ☺. Another reason is the "treasure hunter" side of me. I think I would have made an excellent gold prospector. There's just something extra fun about coming across that special "find." You're not just shopping—you're discovering!

Goodwill, though, isn't just about walking in the front door and shopping. It's also about going to the back door and donating. How many dozens of shopping bags or boxes full of clothes have I dropped off at Goodwill? More than I even want to admit. Just thinking about it reminds me of how blessed I am.

I want you to think for a minute about those bags of clothes that you've taken to Goodwill. You hold up that pair of pants, and realize that you haven't worn them in years. Perhaps they're just not your style anymore. Or maybe they don't fit quite like they used to. Whatever the reason—you make a choice. You decide that you don't want to keep them.

That is precisely what the Apostle Paul talks about in our passage today. He has just finished warning the believers in Colossae to be on their guard against false teaching and man-made rules that masquerade as "religion." He reminds them that what really matters is that we be in a **RELATIONSHIP** with Jesus. We have to have a "connection with the head," which is Jesus Christ (Col 2:19). Now, as we begin chapter 3, Paul turns a corner and talks in very practical terms. He shifts from how we ought to think—to how we **OUGHT TO ACT**.

It's here that Paul employs a very helpful metaphor—clothing. He begins describing old clothes. Imagine you've just lost 30 points (speaking personally—that's quite an exciting thought!). The clothes that fit you before you lost all this weight—don't fit you at all now. The exact same thing is true when we give our lives to Christ, and yield control of our hearts to Him. All of the things that used to "fit" us when we lived to gratify the desires of our flesh—they don't fit us at all now. It's tempting to want to hold on to those clothes...just in case we put on all of that weight again. But doing so is **NOT A GOOD THING!** It signals the fact that we view the changes as temporary.

We need to clean out the closet, and get rid of those old clothes! Paul makes it clear that this isn't just a helpful suggestion. It's **VITAL** that we make this change and take these steps. If we are really and truly transformed on the inside, getting rid of those old clothes is something that we must do.

Examination:

- Read **Colossians 3:1-4**
 - If you are a believer, something significant has happened. You have died. What exactly does this mean?
 - **“Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.”** (v. 2) What sorts of things are “things above”—and what sorts of things are “earthly things”?
 - Is it POSSIBLE to set our hearts, our minds, entirely on **“things above”**?
 - Our life now with Jesus is **“hidden with Christ in God”**. One day when Christ appears we will be seen with Him in all His glory. (vv. 3-4) Why does Paul tell us this at this point? (Hint: What will appropriately fill our hearts and minds when we are actually with Jesus, and what will be entirely inappropriate?)

- Read **Colossians 3:5-10**
 - Why do you think Paul uses such forceful language here such as **“Put to death”** and **“rid yourselves”**?
 - In verse 5, Paul tells us to put to death sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed (which is idolatry). In verse 8, Paul tells us to rid ourselves of anger, rage, malice, slander, filthy language and lying. Are there any surprises in the two lists of things he calls us to purge from our lives? Are there any commonalities in these lists? What are the differences between these two lists?
 - How would you approach a Christian brother or sister who seems to have an ongoing issue with (for example) anger or slander or filthy language?
 - Why do you think Paul singles out lying? (see v. 9)

- Read **Colossians 3:11**
 - What do you think Paul is referring to when he says “here” there is no Greek or Jew etc. Where is “here”?
 - What leads to such unity across barriers which had historically divided people?
 - When Paul says **“Christ is all, and is in all,”** what do you think he means by this phrase?
 - What difference to today’s barriers can Christ being **“all, and in all”** make? What are the barriers today which typically divide people? [Take some time with this question—there is hardly a more relevant question than this one when we think about the world that we live in.]

Application:

What practical difference in you life (if any) will this entire passage of Scripture (verses 1-11) make? What will it mean for you to more consciously **“set your hearts on the things above”** and more deliberately **“put to death”** and **“rid yourselves”** of certain things?