

## The Three Most Neglected Virtues

1. Warm up: Jeff told a story on Sunday about an outlandish outfit he wore during his college days. At the time, he thought it looked great; but now he realizes it was dreadful. Tell us about something you once wore that you now regret. ☺
2. This week, as we continue our intensive study of the book of Colossians, we come to a passage where the Apostle Paul wants to talk to us about the clothes we wear – not our literal clothes, but rather the clothing that adorns our spirit. It's a short passage, but chalked full of insights. Let's read together Colossians 3:12-14, as printed on p. 3.
3. Although our passage mentions a number of key attributes that should be part of our spiritual wardrobe, on Sunday we focused on three of them that usually get the least attention, starting with **humility**. The Greek word translated as humility is a compound word that literally means "humble mind."
  - a. Jeff suggested two key statements that capture the essence of what it means to be humble minded. The first was, "There's nothing that's beneath me." He gave the example of his Grandma when she was dying of cancer. When he told her how sorry he was for what she was going through, she replied, "Oh honey, it's ok. We all get to do this once." In other words, she wasn't expecting special treatment and asking, "Why me?" Instead her attitude was, "Why not me?" When in your life have you been tempted to ask, "Why me?"
  - b. What do you make of Jeff's story about his Grandma? Do you agree that being humble minded includes graciously accepting life's hardships? Why or why not?
  - c. Another example of an attitude that says, "There's nothing that's beneath me," is the scene in the Gandhi movie when Gandhi required everyone in his commune (including himself) to take turns cleaning the toilets. A wise person once said, "The real test of whether you have a servant's heart is how you react when someone treats you like a servant." What do you think that means? What's something you find yourself doing – or being expected to do – that gives you a chance to practice having a servant's heart?
  - d. Is there a difference between being a humble servant and being a doormat? If so, what's the difference? Where do we draw the line?
  - e. A second key statement that helps us capture the essence of being humble minded is, "I could be wrong." Jeff suggested that a keen awareness that we could be wrong should characterize how we conduct ourselves at work, at home, at church, in our relationships, and even in our doctrines and beliefs. Have you ever known someone who could never be wrong? How did that attitude hold them back or harm them? How did it feel to be around them?

- f. Can you think of a time when you stubbornly insisted you were right only to later realize how wrong you were? What did you learn from that experience?
  - g. Is it possible to be too open minded about religious beliefs and doctrines? How do we strike the right balance between deep belief and humble awareness of our fallibility?
4. Many Christians seem to struggle with humility. They're so sure they know everything and always do the right thing. When they hear Paul say that we are "God's chosen people," they think that means they're somehow superior and it goes to their head. But the Biblical idea of being chosen is not about superiority. Read I Corinthians 1:25-31.
- a. What does this passage tell us about what it means to be "chosen" by God?
  - b. In Matthew 22, Jesus tells a parable about someone who invited lots of prominent people to a banquet, but none wanted to come. So the host invited everybody, even the lowliest, and many came. Jesus ends by saying, "Many are called, but few are chosen." What does that tell us about what it means to be "chosen"?
5. Another key attribute that should be part of our spiritual wardrobe is being "longsuffering." The underlying Greek word refers to someone who patiently endures hardship with great determination and an upbeat spirit. The opposite of longsuffering is someone who grows frustrated, angry, or defeated by hardship.
- a. Where in your life right now are you being given an opportunity to practice having a longsuffering spirit? How's it going? Do you feel like you're responding well or wobbling?
  - b. Why is it so important to have a longsuffering spirit?
  - c. How can we cultivate a longsuffering spirit? What makes the difference between those who are longsuffering and those who wilt in the face of hardship?
6. A third key attribute that should be part of our spiritual wardrobe is found in verse 13, which exhorts us to "bear with one another." The underlying Greek word means to put up with a person instead of giving up on them. It means making the gracious choice to stay present with someone in their weakness, opposition, or immaturity.
- a. Why is this virtue so important both to us and those around us? What's the downside if we don't bear with others?
  - b. Jeff' Uncle said that the secret to a lasting marriage is giving 70% and getting 30%. Do you agree? Why or why not?
  - c. Who's someone in your life right now who's hard to bear? What would it look like to bear with them in a healthy way?

### **Colossians 3:12-14**

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and longsuffering. <sup>13</sup>Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. <sup>14</sup>Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

### **I Corinthians 1:25-31**

<sup>25</sup>God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

<sup>26</sup> Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. <sup>27</sup>But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; <sup>28</sup>God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, <sup>29</sup>so that no one might boast in the presence of God. <sup>30</sup>God is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, <sup>31</sup>in order that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."