

Text: *Colossians 3:1* (Peterson) So, if you're serious about living this new resurrection life with Christ, act like it. Pursue the things over which Christ presides. Don't shuffle along, eyes to the ground, absorbed with the things right in front of you. Look up, and be alert to what is going on around Christ.

## THE RESURRECTION LIFE

**Introduction:** The words "born again Christian" we usually associate with evangelicals who use this claim of uniqueness to establish their superiority to other Christians. Episcopalians, in all humility of course, deride their politics and their fundamentalism. But and there is always a "but" in religious discourse, we should not allow them to have exclusive use of the term "born again Christian." While Episcopalians believe that we are born anew in baptism, it is even more correct to say that we are born again every waking moment. Commitment and renewal are not one-time occurrences, but are continuing dynamics in our lives. Peterson's translation has Paul talking about the "new resurrection life with Christ." What an insightful way to remind us that it is not the Bible, but the resurrected Christ that we worship. It is also the resurrected life that we lead.

Paul, as is his usual wont, does not leave us on our own to wonder how to apply this theological truth to our lives, he gives us explicit instructions in a rather colorful fashion. Paul imagines God as a great wardrobe mistress who sees us with filthy and ill-fitting clothes that we have ripped off and put in the fire. The Creator then acquaints us with the new fashion. He first makes sure that we understand the inclusive nature of our new wardrobe. "All the old fashions are now obsolete. Words like Jewish and non-Jewish, religious and irreligious, insider and outsider, uncivilized and uncouth, slave and free, mean nothing. From now on everyone is defined by Christ, everyone is included in Christ."

Hard to get much more specific than that, but humankind is still more interested in differences than in similarities. The Episcopal Church in the U.S. has made substantial strides toward inclusiveness, but only recently and with great difficulty. The larger population, especially the younger demographic, is ahead of the church on most inclusiveness measures. It is possible that one reason that young people frequently are separated from the church is that they simply do not see the point in the battles, often viscous, over inclusiveness that so characterizes the contemporary church. In any case, Paul takes pains to remind us that the resurrection life in an inclusive one.

Let us spend a few minutes looking at other aspects of the wardrobe that "God picked out" for us. Of the nine components of our Christian clothing **compassion, kindness and humility** are at the top. It is easy to why these are linked. It is difficult to be arrogant and to show compassion and kindness. In a sense humility is the personality glue that makes compassion and kindness behaviors that are "included in Christ." Without humility compassion is a sham, a shallow show of sympathy. We know that without humility kindness becomes an ostentatious display of wealth and power. So, humility is the key. God frequently gives us humility lessons. Those lessons come in many forms. As a teenager I worked in a service station. While my main duty was to pump gas, this was in the days before self-service, my secondary duty was to keep the restrooms clean. Believe me, cleaning public restrooms gives one a surplus of humility! Please God, I am too old for any more lessons like that.

Our godly wardrobe also consists of **quiet strength and discipline**. Paul put this garment on in prison. What a change for a powerful prosecutor to find himself a prisoner. The strength of his prosecutorial commanding voice had to be replaced by the quiet strength that comes from Christ. And that kind of strength demands discipline. Paul struggled with this one. Quiet strength demands the

discipline of silence. Yet, in many of his letters, he displays an impatience with people and institutions that must have bothered mightily the recipients! We can all sympathize with Paul. Who among us has not bitten their tongue, or wished that they had! A truly strong person does not need to constantly put his strength on display. Quite the opposite. One suspects that the person who puts his strength on display is really simply a weak person displaying bravado.

The wearing apparel that Paul next suggests is absolutely unamerican! It consists **of being even tempered** and **quick to forgive**. Well, those we can perhaps manage with substantial heavenly help! But the third element of dress is one that makes an American go naked! It is **being content with second place**. What an heresy, but how much an integral part of walking with Christ. Sometimes we win by not winning. Winning at all costs is a good way to lose one's sense of ethical and moral direction. We fall into an ends justifies the means frame of mind. To win the resurrection life we may have to come in second in the worldly life. And not winning, is alright.

Finally, Paul tells us “. . .regardless of what else you put on, wear **love**. It's your basic, all purpose garment. Never be without it.” Love is not a fashion accessory. It is the single most necessary part of our spiritual wardrobe. If we have love, for our unknown brother and sister, for our neighbor, for our family, for ourselves, we then can begin to grasp the resurrection life. The clothes of spiritual fashion that we wear are not just dress-up clothes for a life charade, but clothes of human inclusive relationships that bring us, not to Christ, but within Christ.

“So, if you're serious about living this new resurrection life with Christ, act like it.” Amen.