

Pastor T.C. Arnold
19th Sunday after Trinity (Stewardship Sunday)
Ephesians 4:22-28
October 11th, 2015

Today I would like to focus on two very different portions of the Epistle text from Ephesians chapter four because they go so well with the two very different portions of today's service we have before us this morning. We have four baptisms today. Two already with Robert and Kourtney and then two more next service with Lane and Piper. The first portion of this text reminds us "*to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life... and put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.*" This putting off and putting on is in no better way illustrated and carried forth than in baptism. We put off the old self and put on the new garment of righteousness – clothed with Christ's righteousness of the forgiveness of sins won for us on the cross.

The second part, different from the first, will be what we do every second Sunday in October, and Paul gives us a good reminder that goes with this as well. This is Stewardship Sunday and we will again this year bring our pledges of time, talent and treasure to the front and place them in the baskets. Paul reminds us, "*Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.*" If you noticed in the text, this second part about doing honest work with our own hands and sharing with anyone in need comes after the part of putting off the old self and putting on the new self. There is a reason for this. God brings us back to life – His work for you and me. Then, we are provided, as new lifers, to do for others for the sake of their lives – even the life of the church here in this place.

Beloved, this first part is our daily life that's lived in Christ. In ancient days baptismal candidates were baptized naked and then after the baptism they are clothed in white symbolizing that they are now clothed with the righteousness granted by Christ. They are now "little Christs" or, "Christians" that walk about in His newly given life. When you were baptized you may have worn white. If not, that is fine too. That part is just a symbol of how God has washed you clean in the waters of Holy Baptism. But your gift of life is not symbolic. That's the real deal. And, beloved, you have it.

What has been granted to you is yours to live in and to live by. And because of what we have been made to be as a Christian, God does expect us to live that way. When it says, "put off your old self," God means it. Put aside that which is not Godly. It's not easy but it is that simple. In other words, we naturally love to have ourselves at the center of the universe. What please me is the most important. No, God would have us to live for Him and for each other. Which means, God, in His love, has given us the law. Putting off the old and putting on the new is a total gift from God. His love and forgiveness are ours. But instead of treating that forgiveness and love like it doesn't matter, treat the Lord and His Word like it matters the most. Treat those you love like they matter the most. Treat one another like they are Children of God.

God making you who you are – forgiven. God clothing you with life through His precious work on the cross. You have heard it many times and it is true, beloved in the Lord. You are put here by God as one who has been gifted with that which we did not earn on our own – that which we do not deserve.

And so now, as God has given us that which we do not deserve, how are we going to use these gifts – our time, talent and treasure for the sake of His kingdom. It is important that you use your gifts. Yes, this is Stewardship Sunday and we more readily talk about such things on a day like today. But truth be told, this is a matter of what our Lord gives us to do right from His Word. He says, "*Let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have*

something to share with anyone in need.” There is the honest labor of our vocations as husbands, wives, children and even the workers of what we do for a living. Those vocations are Christian vocations because Christians are in those vocation that serve His precious children – and this is good. But also as a part of our good works is the work in your church. It is an important work. I know you are busy. I know you have many commitments and you are pulled in all sorts of different directions. But the Lord needs you as you work through your Church as well.

Men, I want you to seriously consider getting more involved with your church. You may be thinking, “I don’t have the time” or “I used to do that but not anymore – it’s someone else’s turn.” You are right, it’s their turn and it is still your turn. None of us are finished because our church is not finished. We have many and exciting things that could be done here – even more than what we are doing already – but we need you. Men, if you get a phone call about being a director within the next couple of weeks, I urge you to accept that you will let your name stand for nomination. We need good directors. We need you – I will be bold and blunt about it. If we don’t have you, then who? God’s church that is here in this place can only do what people are willing to help with. So, this place functions not because of me or the church staff, but because of all of you – your time, your talent and your treasure. Your church needs you.

Ladies, there is much to be involved with here in this place. We are blessed with our current workers for the sake of the church and we have many of them. You are a blessing to us, but we need more – more of our women and men to work. If you look at that pledge form you received, you will notice how many opportunities there are. Find two or three or four and share those with us. You are very important to Christ Lutheran Church.

The Lord has blessed us and He continues to bless us. But how much more could this church be blessed through you? Well, that’s up to you. That’s the second part of our Epistle text for today. You have been blessed to do it, to give of your treasure for the sake of the kingdom, to practice good stewardship as we acknowledge together that all we have is from the Lord in the first place. Please pray about this and consider where your heart lies, beloved in the Lord.

Because your Lord has kept you in mind, your life and your needs, every moment of the day. You have been clothed in righteousness for this very moment – for today and tomorrow and the next day and the day after that. The Lord has given you all things for your life, your work, your service. The Lord has given you all things – most importantly, that robe of righteousness put on – like those who were baptized today. So, remember your baptism and how you have been clothed to serve. Jesus had his clothes taken away so He could serve you on the cross – so that He could clothe you with his clothes. That’s the reassuring gift. That’s the life God promises you. That’s what you have. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.