

Grace Lutheran Community, 27th November 2022: 1st Sunday of Advent

The sermon text for today is based on the Second Reading, Romans
Chapter 13, verses 11 to 14.

Provided by The Lutheran Church of Australia

Clothed in Christ

‘Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ...’

(v14a NIV)

God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give us grace and peace.
Amen.

A lot of people say that you should never judge a book by its cover. There’s probably a lot of truth in that when we apply it to people; because there is usually a lot more going on in people’s lives than what we can see when we look at them. However, there are times when you can tell a lot about who people are and what they do by the way they dress.

For example, you can probably tell if people are firefighters by the uniform they wear, and that their job is to put out fires. People dressed in surgical scrubs are probably surgeons who operate on patients to help them recover from illnesses or injuries. Someone in a sporting uniform will most probably be an athlete who competes in a particular sport. Depending on the sport, the clothes that athletes wear might even tell us the position they play or what their role is in the team.

In each of these cases, there will be consistency between what a person wears, who they are and what they do. You wouldn't want a person dressed like a fireman to do surgery in the operating theatre. Cricketers dressed like surgeons won't be able to compete to their full ability. And there is no way you would want to fight a fire dressed like a netballer or a swimmer. What we wear can say a lot about who we are and what we do.

When the Apostle Paul encourages the Christians in Rome to be dressed in Christ, he wasn't giving them fashion advice. Paul was encouraging the readers of his letter to find a new sense of who we are and what the purpose of our lives are through faith in Jesus.

Through his life, death and resurrection, Jesus covers our sin, shame and guilt and gives us a new identity as children of God. Through faith in Jesus, the Holy Spirit washes us clean of everything that makes us unacceptable to God, to others and even to ourselves, and covers us with the goodness, righteousness and purity of Jesus. When God looks at us, he doesn't see our flaws, mistakes or failures. Instead, because we are clothed in Christ, God sees us as his children whom he loves and with whom he is pleased (see Matthew 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22).

In the same way that the clothes firefighters, surgeons or sportspeople wear can tell us who they are, so being clothed in Christ tells us that we are God's children who receive all of Jesus' goodness as his gift to us through the Holy Spirit.

Just as it makes sense that what a firefighter, surgeon or sportsperson does will also reflect who they are, so the way in which God's children live their lives needs to be consistent with being dressed with Jesus and who we are in him.

As surely as it is absurd to think of a fireman in an operating theatre, or a surgeon on a netball court, or a footballer fighting a fire, it makes just as little sense for the children of God to live in ways that are different from who we are as people who are clothed in Christ's goodness. That is why Paul writes,

'So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armour of light. Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy.' (v12b,13 NIV).

Paul is urging us to be clothed in the goodness of Jesus so we live good lives which show the world who we are as God's children.

When we live faithfully as God's children, we bring the light of God's goodness into a world that is often very dark. As we begin the season of Advent, in the coming weeks we will be remembering God's gifts to us of peace, hope, joy and love.

People who live in our world, who live right next door to us, or maybe even live under our own roof, often need a greater sense of peace, hope, joy and love in their lives.

As we live in ways that are consistent with our new identity as people who are clothed in Christ, we can be the means by which God brings his peace, hope, joy love and light into people's lives.

Christianity isn't about following a set of rules to get into heaven, like a lot of people imagine. Instead, the Christian faith is about finding a new sense of who we are as people who are covered by Christ, and then living in ways that reflect our new identity as God's children so God's goodness and love can come into the world through us.

We all put our clothes on every day. This week, as you get dressed, remember that God gives you the goodness and love of Jesus to put on each and every day.

Jesus covers each of us and gives us a new identity as children of God whom he loves and with whom he is pleased, even before we do anything. In this garment of faith we are clothed with Jesus; all of his goodness and purity. And so we live each day as God's children and bring the light of his peace, hope, joy and love into the lives of everyone we meet through all we say and do.

May the peace of God which passes all understanding keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.