

Somewhat of a This I Believe
Sunday, December 29, 2013
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Here is a news flash for you. I love to sing. I love music. I believe in the power of music to teach us, to guide us, to inspire us. There are many reasons I love both singing in the choir and playing bells. The musical experiences with Al, Mary, and both of the ensembles truly lift my soul. Though they are very different types of group music, they each demand a different part of my experience and ability. They make my heart sing.

But now I have a confession – and I’m not kidding. Every festive holiday season like Christmas Eve and Easter, when I’m playing bells and singing in the same service, one of the reasons I’m happy to be a part of both groups is that I do not have to consider what I’m going to wear to church. I don’t have to give it a second thought. Black pants; white top; sometimes my burgundy jacket so I blend in with the choir robes. Simple.

I am hoping that I will have as easy a time this year as I tackle my new year’s resolution – the first resolution I have made in a very long time. It all traces back to a beautiful passage from Colossians 3, 12 – 17 – a passage familiar to us all and one that we actually just heard as the choir sang one of my favorite (well, one of my many favorites!) of Al Sly’s pieces – “Give Thanks.” Perhaps you have heard this piece often enough that the words don’t fully sink in. So just in case you missed them, here they are from the Book of Colossians, Chapter 3, verses 12 – 17:

As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. 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. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Interestingly, this scripture came to me again recently at my niece’s wedding not long ago. [Often at weddings we hear the familiar words of the scripture that Larry just read from 1 Corinthians 13 – about the power of love.] The minister at this wedding talked to my niece and her almost husband, suggesting that as much as they thought they “loved” each other that day, and as much as they thought that the “love” they were feeling that day would be the same “love” that would last over time, “love” is actually not something you automatically feel every day. Time goes on; life happens; you get busy; we are human. Sometimes, he told them, you actually have to “put love on” as you would any other article of clothing. “*Clothe yourselves with love ...*”

Imagine that. You go to your closet in the morning and you look at what’s there; you think about your day and what lies ahead of you; you choose an appropriate outfit – be it pants or

a skirt, a tie or a more casual button-down. What color is going to help me get through my day? Maybe I need one of my favorite sweaters for all that awaits me outside my door. And as I'm rushing down the stairs and out of the house, I always run through the checklist: earrings, check; watch, check; rings, check; did I brush my teeth? – but you have your own routines, I'm sure.

But think about it. Every morning, instead of worrying about actual clothes, you go to your closet and reach for compassion, you reach for kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. You wrap yourself in these. And as you go through your day, every time you encounter somebody else, you think about what is wrapped around you, and you offer that to the other person. You carry yourself differently, knowing that when people look at you, instead of seeing your clothes, they see your beautiful garments – which make them feel better as well. When somebody tests your limits, you tap into your patience. When somebody treats you dismissively, you look in the mirror and remind yourself of the kindness and humility that you are wearing that day. When you are driving to town, you consider just how lucky we are to live in this gorgeous place – the beautiful hills, the lakes dotting the countryside, the magnificent houses - and you remember that so many others are less fortunate. And you give thanks to God. These outfits will also help you *“Bear with one another, and forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you ...”*

You clothe yourself with love – *“which binds everything together in perfect harmony.”*

“And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” So if you join me in my New Year's resolution, I am sure that we will be the best-dressed church in town.