

SERMON - The 26th SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY - 16 NOVEMBER 2008
St. John's Anglican Church, Greensboro, North Carolina

Col. 3:17 (ESV)

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.

This passage from Paul's letter to the Colossians as is all of the Epistle reading for today is from a section on "putting on the new self."

Putting on the NEW self is a key action for all of us in our Christian journey, our life walk with God. Without putting on a new self, our passage through this life will have made no change in us. We will be the same old self we were when we started.

To be a Christian is to change, to be changed by Christ, to become more like Christ.

We hear Paul's words this morning telling us **Col. 3:12 (ESV)** *Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience,* Then we hear, **Col. 3:14 (ESV)** *And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.*

These words echo Paul's description of the Fruits of the Spirit in **Galatians 5:22-23 (ESV)** *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.*

How do we accomplish this? How do we begin to produce the fruits of the Spirit?

By putting on Christ. By putting on a new self, the self of Christ in place of our old sinful, self-centered, ego driven self. **Romans 13:14 (ESV)** *But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.*

On paper, this might sound easy but in actuality this is the hardest thing we will probably

do in our entire life, to let Jesus take over the control of our life.

We all, one way or another, want to keep the control of our own destinies in our own hands. We all as individual egos want to keep control. We all, like old Blue Eyes, want to do it “our way.”

This process that we go through on our walk with God is called conversion.

Unless we are like Saint Paul on the road to Damascus, our conversion is going to be a life long process, a hard life long process full of failures and full of back-tracking and restarting.

There is nothing easy about being a Christian. There is nothing easy about being a Christian if we are truly on our conversion trek with Jesus

In our study group last Wednesday, we were talking about the Resurrection, specifically about the Resurrection of Christ, but also about our own resurrection.

That brought to mind a saying I once ran across written by Barbara Brown Taylor who declared that the road to Easter Sunday ran smack-dab through Good Friday.

Think about this for a moment. If we cannot have the Resurrection of Jesus without the Crucifixion of Jesus, what makes us think that we can have our own resurrection, our own Easter Sunday, without our own personal Good Friday. What makes us think that we can rise with Christ at our own resurrection without dying with him, without our old self dying and letting him assume our being.

To live in Christ requires us to die to self. Then, our individual life in Christ beginning with our baptism, either as an infant or adult, is the crucifixion of our self; a slow, sometimes painful, lifelong process of dying to the world.

Jesus tell us that **Matthew 10:38-39 (ESV)** *whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.*

What Jesus is telling us that our journey, should we decide to go with Him, will amount to an experience of death, death on our own cross, as we shed ourselves of the control over our own mortal life.

But there is a bright side to all of this. Paul says in **Romans 6:3-4 (ESV)** *³Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.*

And again in, **1 Cor. 15:21-22 (KJV)** *For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. ²²For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.*

Our own Easter Morning, our own resurrection, has to begin now in this life with us picking up our own cross and carrying it to our own Calvary.

Amen.