

# What to Wear

## Colossians 3:12-17

### S.T.O.R.Y.

At a service like this you are no doubt expecting some sage advice as you come to that long awaited moment when you leave school and move out into the wider world.

And there is plenty of good advice out there. I recently read a book by Max Lucado called *Cure for the Common Life* where he suggests that the way to live the life God intended for you, you need to study your Story. He asks:

- what are your strengths, those things that come naturally to you: repairing, running, organising, designing.
- what is your topic? What things are you passionate about? It could be people, animals, computers, drama.
- what are your optimal conditions? Do you love routine or unpredictability?
- what about your relationships? Are you energised by being with people, do you love to lead groups, or do work best on your own?
- what and when do you say "Yes" this is what I love doing.

That his wise advice Strengths, Topic, Optimal conditions, Relationships, Yes. S. T. O. R. Y. Helpful advice, worthy and clever. I have always been impressed with people who can come up with things like that.

Well I'm not going to give you advice like that because what I think really matters is not that sort of self understanding as important as that may be, what really matters is what you wear.

### GETTING DRESSED

Now you may have a couple of problems with this idea. You may think that I have bought into the superficial, celebrity driven mentality of our society which celebrated style over substance and encourages everyone to express their individuality by dressing like everyone else.

Secondly it might be difficult to be taking fashion tips from someone who dresses like this for a living.

But I am sure that some of you have been thinking about it. From Prep you have been told what to wear from the aprons at Anglesea on. But from now on you can tuck your shirt in during summer and have it out during winter. From now on you can wear a jumper without a blazer and you can wander the streets without a boater.

But with this comes responsibility, for you need to choose how you dress and you are responsible for it, no longer because it is a uniform but because this is what you chose to wear. Not all will agree with your choices. You may hear your mum say "You aren't going out wearing that are you?" and your never quite sure if it is really a question. So you spend some time with the mirror making your choice, what is the right thing to wear.

This is not only true of the clothes that you wear but that attitudes that you put on as well. Paul in his letter to the Colossians Christians uses the images of clothes as a series of attitudes that they should wear. He encourages them to get rid of their old uniform of anger, bad talk and discrimination and try on a whole new outfit

He says "as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and

forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love which binds them together in perfect unity."

Lets have a look at this wardrobe which Paul recommends which as one writer puts it "is custom-made by the Creator, with his label on it" (Eugene Petersen, The Message). As we go through we will notice that these attitudinal garments may clash with others that we may have on.

Compassion: genuine sympathy for people in the circumstances that they find themselves. This may clash with the coldness that many seem to have in their attitudes to those who are different from them, such as refugees, and a callousness to those in need.

Kindness: practical acts of care for others. It may be a kind word, an affirming hug, a generous gift. This really doesn't go with can't be bothered apathy which seems so popular amongst so many people

Humility: not putting yourself first but putting the needs of other before your own. This clashes with the brash and loud, "look at me" attitude known as hubris worn by so many

Gentleness: a tenderness in the way that you deal with and talk about people, a much more beautiful adornment than the trinkets of gossip, slander and bad tempered rudeness.

Patience: showing tolerance and forbearance especially in the difficult times, being true to friends and family during all the ups and downs of life. This is an attitude that is designed to last rather than the petty little numbers that barely survive a season.

So compassion not callousness, kindness not can't be bothered, humility not hubris, gentleness not gossip and patience not pettiness.

But the outfit is not complete yet there are two more items.

Firstly forgiveness. Paul spends a lot of time here for forgiveness is perhaps the most difficult attitude to get used to. You know what is like when you start wearing a new pair of shoes at first they just don't feel right, it takes a while to get used to them. It is so easy to have an attitude of revenge, of getting our own back, that the idea of forgiveness can seem unnatural but it is a fundamental part of this outfit with God's label on it, we need to get used to it and walk in it.

But most fundamental is Love. This is the theme which ties the whole outfit together. And example is the Collegiate Claret which brings unity to the uniforms. But there is a better example. I often speak on this passage at weddings, and almost all weddings have a theme, it might be a particular colour, or a particular motif that the bride has chosen. You see it her dress, his tie, the flowers, beautifully binding the whole arrangement together. That is what love is to be for us, to be seen in all our attitudes and actions.

### **THE DESIGNER AND SUPERMODEL**

So this is the outfit that you I want to encourage you to wear: compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness and love. And you'll notice that spells CKHGPFL which is a pity really. It would have been so much more memorable if it has spelt Top Gear or Fashion.

But Paul doesn't need to use such teaching aids because all he really needs to do is to point to both the designer as well as model of this outfit, he wants us to remember God and Jesus.

For in Jesus we see true compassion in the way that went to the outcasts, the way he was moved by those in grief and whose lives were blighted by illness.

In Jesus we see kindness in the way he freely brought healing and hope to so many people, and feed those in need.

In Jesus we see humility as he chose the path of service despite being God's son.

In Jesus we see gentleness as he welcomed Children into God's kingdom.

In Jesus we see patience as he dealt with his disciples who never seemed to understand.

In Jesus we see forgiveness writ large as he offered forgiveness to those who were crucifying him.

And in Jesus we see love for greater love has no man than he gives his life for his friends.

Jesus is the great model, the supermodel; of this divine outfit. But this is not just an example but he demonstrates these things to us. He has compassion on our need of God's salvation and so kindly has done all that is necessary for us at his expense to know God as our Father. He humbly served us by dying for us for our benefit. He is gentle with us calling us his friends and God's dearly loved children, and he is patient with us promising to never leave us or forsake us. Of course in his death and resurrection we are offered forgiveness and all this shows God's great love for the world that he gave his Son.

In Jesus God has shown us saving compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness and love. We should accept these gifts of God trusting in what Jesus has done for us and then try on these beautiful and wonderful attitudes and model them to others.

So as you leave Collegiate it is time for you to choose what to wear and on whom will you model yourself.

While some may look on the attitudes that Paul points us to as outdated or weak, and the world may parade before us a whole array of superficially glittering outfits the resurrection of Jesus shows that these attitudes are truly the design of heaven and are glorious.

No matter what the story of your life from this point on when you clothed in compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, humility, patience, forgiveness and the love spiritually you will be absolutely fabulous because you will look like Jesus.