

1/7/24 - Col. 3:14-17 - "Will You Let God?" (Vision Sunday)

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[0 : 00] Please turn to us now to the Word of God, Colossians chapter 3, verses 14 through 17. And above all these, put on 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 body, in one body, and be thankful. Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. Word of God.

This is the Word of God. Amen. You guys awake today? All right. Praise God. Amen to that.

Today is the first Sunday of the year, and so it's exciting to think about that as a church, and so we're going to give us a chance to unite together in what this year is going to hold.

And I want us to think in a certain way as we look at this passage, because I think one of the most consistent metaphors to describe the Christian life or even God's people has to be related to agriculture. It has to be the most consistent throughout Scripture. I mean, Israel was related to as referred to as the vine. Jesus gave the parable of the sower. John 15, Jesus spoke of the vineyard, the vine and the branches. And even Paul to the Corinthian church said, who is Apollos? Who am I?

[2 : 08] You know, who is Paul? Who is Apollos? It was us who watered, but God gave the growth. And even to Colossians 2, in the book that we're in right now, he talks about this church in Colossi being rooted and built up in Him. So consistent. It's simply biblical consistency throughout all Scripture.

You got a seed, you have growth, and you have a harvest. It reminds me of Romans 8, 30, where it says, those whom He predestined, He also called. And those whom He called, He also justified. And those whom He justified, He also glorified. However, the one thing that makes the agricultural metaphor so profound in my eyes is the fact of perseverance over a span of time. This relates not only to the crop to persevere over that span of time, but even a farmer's perseverance over that span of time.

The period between planting and harvest is called the growing season. It's also called the crop period. And it is here where perseverance is essential. From continual irrigation to the crop to protecting from insects and diseases. And even if growth does begin, it's not time to celebrate and go sit down on your lawn chair with an iced tea. There's threats of hardships, right?

There's issues that surround that crop that have to be protected and guarded against. Crop period. From the planting to the harvest, the crop period is difficult.

The labor and toil is daunting. Waiting for fruit to sprout is faith testing. Weeding is never ending. Weeding is never ending. And even if growth begins, hardship is ever threatening.

[4 : 30] And pruning is ever painful. Now for a Christian, regardless if you're a new Christian or maybe you've been a Christian for many decades and you're a seasoned Christian, we are in a crop period in our lives. It doesn't matter if you're a new Christian, even this morning if you've given your life to Christ. Welcome to the crop period.

And it's been laid upon my heart to turn to Colossians 3 as we start the new year together in this first Sunday in January as we look to 2024 as a crop period in our lives.

Now Paul is in his writing to the Colossian church and he's in the practical application portion of his letter to them. He just went through, starting in chapter 3, a bunch of vices to put off and virtues to put on, sort of like putting off a coat and putting on a coat or clothing.

And he turns his attention from the individual life of a Christian of vices you need to put off and to put on. And he's turning now in verse 14 to the corporate church life. And so we see here that when we start the new year off, I desire for us to start together and to ask three questions as we kick off this new year. And what we're going to see in this passage is that in the crop period of our journey this year, God invites us individually and corporately to follow him well.

It's what this passage is all about. And so before we dive in, I would like to present a sermon title simply to resonate with you, Will You Let God? And I'd like to pray.

[6 : 51] Please join me in prayer. Almighty God and most merciful Father, we humbly submit ourselves, Lord, to you and fall down before your majesty, asking you from the bottom of our hearts that this seed of your word may be sown among us, that it may take such deep roots, that neither the burning heat of persecution cause it to wither nor the thorny cares of this life choke it. But that's as seed is sown in good ground, it may bring forth 30, 60 and hundredfold as your heavenly wisdom has appointed. And we pray this in Jesus name. Amen. Amen, church. All right.

So I have three questions for you as we start the new year off. The first question is simply, will you let Christ's love and peace consume you?

Paul writes in verse 14, and above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And above all these put on love. Paul arrives at this climatic emphasis of what he's trying to drive home to this church, which relates to the virtues that this church is supposed to be putting on and adopting in their life. And guess what it's connected to? Love. Everything. We see above in verse 12, put on then as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another. And if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other as the Lord has forgiven you. So you must also forgive.

He says he's stating that above all of that, above all those things, put on love. All verse 12 and 13 are dependent upon love. And they're foundational, not only for our individual character, but also for our corporate relationships. And it all has to do with love. This climatic emphasis here reinforces the external evidence of health within a corporate crop period.

You get that? Now, love in our English language is confusing at times. At times, void of depth from many other languages. I mean, we say that we love everything from pancakes to our spouses.

[10 : 05] And now, hopefully, pancakes are more appealing or less appealing than your spouses. Whoa, I said that one wrong. Might have to have a date night here pretty soon to earn that back.

It's getting a little hot up here. Turn these lights down. As we said in verse 13, if one forgiving each other as the Lord has forgiven you.

Boy, right? What I'm trying to say is that our English language is completely messed up. I mean, we can't even get the metric system right. I mean, we have all sorts of issues in our country.

And it goes from politics to even metrics. And now to me speaking clearly about love. And so, we say that we love pancakes. And then we say we love our spouse. And I think in many cultures, that can leave people scratching their head. Like, do you think that highly of pancakes? Or do you think that low of your spouse? Right? But at the end of the day, we have one word for it. And we have one word for it in our English translation. And Paul is instilling something here. It's a certain kind of love that's connected to all those things. It's an agape love being that which a Christian is to put on.

A word which expresses each and every virtue in verse 12 to 13. And of which is perfectly observed through the life of Jesus Christ and the death of Jesus Christ. It's a word of self-sacrifice, putting others before yourself. It's supernatural. It produces supernatural unity.

[12 : 08] John MacArthur says that supernatural love poured into the hearts of believers is the adhesion of the church. Agape love. You first love. And though Paul makes it a profound connection between the binding nature of the body nature of love, which not only confirms our individual condition that we are truly saved when we say you first, but it also confirms our corporate condition in crop season, in this crop period. It's profound because it is directly reflected of Christ's work of redemption in all of our lives.

It's a love externally observed in the present that points back to the salvific love revealed at the cross. As Ephesians 5 says, walk in the way of love just as Christ loved us and gave himself for us.

To know how to love in our English language is to look no further than Jesus Christ. If love is to be reigning externally, then not only can the watching world stand back and see, well, if that's the criteria, well, this person looks like a Christian. This church looks like a Christian church.

Well, Paul says that there's another aspect of love that is so important to consider, and that has to do with the peace that's reigning internally. If love is reigning externally for the world to see, Paul is saying that there should be something going on a little bit deeper than what meets the eye within each one of us. There should be peace. He says in verse 15, and let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you are called in one body, and be thankful.

Now, we may think that internal peace here is simply being free from anxiety or stress, but in light of a more biblical understanding of peace, it's even a little bit deeper than that.

[14 : 52] It is calling for believers, one body to participate in a cosmic, universal, all-around-the-world reconciliation brought through the work of Jesus Christ, in which we're ushered into by our faith in Him.

This is huge. This is a huge peace that is resting within each one of our hearts that reflects that of the reconciling power of God that has brought peace between a holy God, as we just sang about, and sinful man. Peace. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts. The internal peace within our hearts rests not in anything that we can do. The doctor can't prescribe it. There's not enough vacations that you can take in order to obtain the level of peace that Paul speaks of here.

But simply faith in what Christ has done, that is the source of that peace. It's not simply just being free of anxiety, but free of the penalty of sin, which ought to alleviate anxiety, might I say.

But it's always a consequence of our reconciled state with the holy God. The object of love, the object of our peace, is Jesus Christ. Amen? There is no other way to put it.

And so while there's many words that we can say for love or say for peace, we know that there's one object that we can point to of the source of both, and that is Jesus alone.

[16 : 54] And Paul is calling believers to live as reconciled people of God. It's a family assembled on self-surrender, expressed from a deep salvific peace in all of our hearts. We are not our own.

That kind of love. That kind of peace is in our lives. And the clearest indication of that being evident in our lives, none other than thankfulness.

Having our lives full of love and peace, it's like filling a water bucket up to the brim. And it just, while you're walking through life, it's just spilling over. What's spilling over in the Christian life? It's thankfulness as a source, as a product of that love and peace. And so the question stands, will you let Christ's love and peace consume you? Key word, will you let it?

The second question that I have for us is, will you let the word of Christ dwell richly in you?

In verse 16, it continues, Paul says, let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing songs and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God. There it is again. You see, the word of Christ is the active agent in crop season. It's the active agent in that period. This is the power of the word that worked in the church in Colossae. In chapter 1, Paul says, the word has come to them, bearing fruit. It's growing.

[19 : 02] Paul reinforces the notion that the word of Christ is able. The word of Christ is capable. It's ready. It's ready to dwell. It's many different expressions of its dwelling in our lives, teaching one another, admonishing or instructing one another. Well, what's the criteria of that teaching? What's the criteria of that admonishing? Well, not a bunch of life lessons, how to be a better you. It's in all wisdom, it says. In all wisdom, this is being done. What does Proverbs 9, 10 say about wisdom?

Wisdom. Wisdom. Fear of the Lord is the beginning of all wisdom. There's a certain quality, a certain criteria of our teaching. And there's also another expression of singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Is it out of compulsion? I'm here singing again. Amen less. Make him happy.

Under compulsion? Under compulsion? No. Under commitment to the word of Christ that dwells richly in us.

You see, a church consumed in the love and the peace of Christ will naturally lead to a corporate life that's consumed in the word. All throughout the Old Testament, songs were a means of which God's people remembered God's mighty deeds and interventions in the people of God's life. And through such deeds, God made himself known. For Paul, believers also need to continue such expressions to remember God's mighty acts through his Son, Jesus Christ. Now, richly makes me question if a one-hour church service on Sunday morning is dwelling richly.

I don't think attending a one-hour gathering is dwelling. And while sermons are a vital component to our life and growth, they just simply aren't enough. Why? Well, because sermons are simply just one form of the word being delivered. You got 168 hours throughout the week and you're saying one hour is going to do it for you? That is not dwelling richly in the word. And notice, you might say, well, I listened to this really better preacher than Brent. His name's John MacArthur and, you know, he's been there for 50 some years. This guy, Brent, has been here for five or six, I don't even know how long, years. And I want you to notice something here. This challenges us in our sort of individualized culture that breathes into the church and sort of infects our mindsets and causes us to get off track. Notice there's a word here.

[22 : 26] Let the word of Christ dwell richly in you. Teaching and admonishing who? Yourself? Oh, let the word of Christ dwell richly in you. Teaching and admonishing, I'll just forget the one another aspect of the crop period. Forget the contents of all wisdom. I just like to feel good.

And I turn on this guy who makes me feel good without any regard for wisdom. Singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Even hearts is plural.

Notice the one another here. The crop period is essential to be done corporately. Having community in crop period. Now, this is something that exceeds any familial emphasis too. Family's important, but it's not the church. And that is something that we need to always remember. And so to dwell as God intends us to, we need to adjust our plans sometimes, our family routines, even our weekly schedules to let God make our plans. The question stands, will you let the word of Christ dwell richly in you? Key word, will you let it happen? And the third question I have is, will you let the glory of Christ motivate you? Verse 17, Paul says, 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.

You see in verse 17, as he says, to do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus is to give thanks to God the Father through him. It's simple as that. It's not like, it's like Paul isn't just referring to the corporate unity here, but he's turning it a little bit broad here for the corporate body being dispersed. A life that is not just a Sunday Christian, but a life that takes what is done on Sunday and taking Christ wherever you go. I have to ask you a question. Have you ever been surprised that someone's a Christian?

Have you ever been surprised? Maybe you're at the checkout line of a grocery store and you're just like, you're a Christian? And now, obviously, you don't have Christian like written on your forehead or something like that, but I mean, ask Wednesday is actually a good indication. That's when the test, that's when you got the mark and you can't escape the mark around, you know, especially with some people and we got your eyes on you, right? But it's those who, I remember standing in the line at Sam's Club getting a cake for, I think it was like Rick's installation or something like that.

[26 : 14] And there was a lady in front of me and she was getting a cake for a church gathering or something along those lines. She had a verse on there and God forbid, the poor Sam's Club worker, God forbid, the word psalm was not clear enough for her. And oh boy, was that a detriment to this lady in front of me. And she let the worker know she paid for this cake and she wants the cake to be redone and yada, yada, yada, and yada, yada, yada. Have you ever been surprised in your life that someone's a Christian? Maybe it's the people that just coming out of church go over to Bob Evans, like myself, saying, woe is me, my food was undercooked. Well, this is going to reflect on your tip.

Where woe is me, my family's in turmoil and just, you get together at your house church, you get together at your church and you're just like, oh, my life, everything's falling apart. The stress of a modern office just weighing on me. There's weather. Do you see the news? You see that pastor up there?

He's walking on my toes. Ah, forget him. What's that young buck got to say to me? Church, what Paul is instructing the church in Colossae to take with them and what to do is not just to be a Sunday Christian, but to take it with you throughout the week so that people aren't surprised that you are a Christian when things don't go your way. It says, whatever you do in the church, in word and deed, whatever, do for the glory of God. Amen? This focuses attention off of our congregational life and sets expectations within each one of ours, myself included, our daily lives from this standpoint.

In other words, Christians, you are called not to just assemble in a sacred space ordered around a sacred time. You are called to disperse in the world, upholding sacred lives, guarding and proclaiming a sacred confession. Now, being surrounded in a culture like we have today, we can get confused pretty quickly. It's easy to become desensitized to the presence of idolatry in our lives, which idolatry just meaning excessive devotion to someone or something that belongs to God. And Paul is calling the Colossians to abandon their idolatry and to worship the Lord of all. Church, a universally sovereign God is calling a universally responsive church to prioritize Him over anything that would get in the way of His worship. That includes your family. That includes your preference. That includes any personality issues we have within the body of Christ, bearing with one another, right?

What do you need to abandon? What do you need to rethink? The question stands, will you let the glory of Christ motivate you? Key words, will you let it happen? This is such an important reminder in our lives.

[30 : 50] For Paul, everyday living in worship through thanksgiving is a series of worshipful acts throughout our lives.

Through every part of our being is convinced thoroughly down to our hearts that we are submitting our lives, our plans, our agendas, our plans, our agendas to Christ alone, who is indeed worthy of our worship completely, wholly, and no one else can take that from Him. We are not our own. So don't treat 2024 as if it is your own.

All too often we fail to realize we're in crop, this crop period. We forget to fertilize. We neglect nutrition.

We postpone pruning. And month after month, we feel the inner turmoil and this inner friction of being stuck in our walks with God. And at times we feel like life is just utterly fruitless.

That guy too. But what a reminder that we have through Paul's encouragement. Our level of engagement.

[32 : 52] That little three-letter word that we just read this morning. Let. Doesn't it? That's the most challenging, little three-letter pesky word in the text today that we have to grapple with this year.

Will you let God work in your life this year? Will the crop season's crop period of 2024 be the same old or a renewed engagement and commitment to life and growth?

You see, in the crop period of our journey, God invites us individually and corporately to follow Him well. And so, as a church, growth is at your responsiveness.

It's completely contingent upon your responsiveness to let God. Individually, this might look like simply reading your Bible more.

We're reading through the Bible again as a church body with a little discussion board at the end. It's pretty fun. And get involved with that.

[34 : 15] Individually, read your Bible. Pray regularly this year. Pick up the church directory and find all of our names listed in there and pray.

Maybe pick three people per day and just lift them up in prayer. If the Lord prompts you to maybe give them a call or shoot them a text, do it. Be responsive to let God do that in our church in 2024.

Fast. How often? I would say regularly. Fast. Let your rest and work balance be done God's way.

Not your way. Now, that's individually, but corporately, what could this look like this year? Well, I think it begins with the Lord's Day. The Lord's Day is a gift to God's people.

A gift. It's an entire day from sun up to sun down, instituted by God at creation, morally and apostolically transcendent through all time.

[35 : 30] If you need a reminder, go back to the sermon from November 2022 to get that. What does the Lord's Day look like? What does that engagement look like, church? It begins at 945 in our prayer meeting.

It begins at 945 at our prayer meeting. You think church began at 1030? It begins at 945 in prayer.

But then our assembly, obviously, Sunday morning at 1030 a.m. But then, don't neglect the Lord's second half of the day.

The Sunday evening gathering at 5 o'clock p.m. These are all opportunities to glorify God the way He desires to be glorified.

And then Monday through Saturday, there's weekday house churches. You might say, well, what about a Wednesday Bible study? Well, how about a house church where you do a Bible study in people's houses?

[36 : 35] How about that? Or maybe just reading the Bible one-to-one. Maybe your schedule doesn't allow you to get into a house church because of scheduling issues.

Well, when are you available? Contact a few friends. Let the elders know. And host the house church when you're available. Don't leave it up to the church to say, okay, we're going to do it this day or that day.

Or maybe if you're not available, read one-to-one. Get together with a friend. Go to Panera. Bob Evans. We'll plug them again. And read one-to-one. Just read through the Bible together.

It has a profound impact during crop season. And there's other opportunities that go on. There's men's groups and fellowships that go on. There's women's fellowships and there's youth groups.

We may need to adjust our bedtime. We may need to have to break out of our, well, bedtimes at seven in our house. Well, would it kill you to maybe make it eight?

[37 : 40] Would that be too much for the Lord to ask of you? Might need to adjust bedtime in order to let God. You might need to eat dinner a little earlier or a little bit later in order to let God.

You might need to rethink the idea of relaxation time in order to let God. But the question still stands, church, as we look into a year upcoming.

Will you let God, as the sermon title indicates? Will you let God?