

“Puttin’ on the Ritz”

Colossians 3:12-14

Sunday, June 11th, 2023

“Puttin’ on the Ritz” was written by Irving Berlin 96 years ago in May 1927. (The lyrics tell people that if they’re feeling blue they should go “where fashion sits” and “put on the Ritz.” I’m more familiar with the version of this song released in the 1980’s by the artist named “Taco.”)

“The Ritz” most likely refers to the Ritz Tower on Park Avenue in New York City. This is a luxury residential building originally built as an apartment hotel just before this song was written.

“Puttin’ on the Ritz” is an expression that has come to mean ‘to dress, decorate, or do something in a fancy or expensive way.’

We’ve made it to the middle of **Colossians Chapter 3**! Last week, when we studied verses 5-11, Paul included two lists of vices, 5 in each list. One of those lists is in verse 5 and the other in verse 8. Paul wrote of such vices to help the Colossian church distinguish between ungodly behaviors and godly ones. Paul’s instruction to the Colossian church (as well as the modern church) is that believers in Jesus Christ are **to put off the old man** (the garments of old behavior) and **put on the new man** (the garments of new behavior).

And in putting on the new man, in a sense, we’d be ‘Puttin’ on the Ritz!’

In today’s text, Paul includes a third list of behaviors. This list is a list of virtues. GK Beale observes, “Christians must seek heavenly things as a result of having died to the old world and having been raised with Christ into a new world. They (we) must clothe ourselves with the traits of that new world.” (Beale, 293)

Let’s look at today’s text.

Colossians 3:12-14:

(NKJV) “Therefore, as *the* elect of God (His chosen ones), holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility (gentleness), meekness, longsuffering (patience); **13** bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also *must do*. **14** But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.”

Last week, I mentioned **Colossians Chapter 3** was one of my favorite chapters in all the Bible. That’s primarily due to the verses before us today, and verses 15-17 which we’ll cover next time, *Deo Volente*.

In his most recent book, "Forgive", late pastor and author Tim Keller writes of Hashim Garrett, a 15 year old, living with his mother and hanging out on the streets of Brooklyn with a gang, when he was shot 6 times and was left paralyzed from the waist down. For most of the next year he lay in a New York City hospital, fantasizing about revenge. He later wrote, "Revenge consumed me. All I could think about was, 'Just wait til I get better; just wait till I see this kid.'"

But when he was lying on the sidewalk immediately after his shooting, Hashim had instinctively called out to God for help and, to his surprise, he had felt a strange tranquility. Now during his rehabilitation, a new thought struck him, namely that if he took revenge on this kid, why should God not pay *him* back for all *his* sins? "You see six months before this happened," he wrote, "I shot a kid, for no reason except that a friend told me to do it and I wanted to prove how tough I was. Six months later, I am shot by somebody because *his* friend told *him* to do it. That thought was electrifying - he could not feel superior to the perpetrator. They were both fellow sinners who deserved punishment - and needed forgiveness.

Garrett continues, "In the end...I decided to forgive. I felt God had saved my life for a reason, and that I had better fulfill that purpose...And I knew I could never go back out there and harm someone. I was done with that mindset and the life that goes with it...I came to see that I had to let go and stop hating."

As we look again at the verses before us, we first take note how the Apostle describes the Church in verse 12 - "Therefore, as *the* elect of God, holy and beloved," As my granddaughter Georgia would say, "Whoa! Whoa, whoa!" That's how the Israelites were described in the Old Testament. Turn with me to **Deuteronomy 7:6-8**. Moses is here addressing the Israelites:

6 "For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. **7** The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; **8** but because the LORD loves you...

As God is **holy**, we as His people through faith in Jesus Christ must also be **holy** (set apart for Him). It must be the way that we strive for each day, and in every way - the way of holiness. There is a way that is holy, and there is a way that is helly. That's Paul's point in verses 5-14 of **Colossians Chapter 3**. We are to *spurn* the vices, and we are to *spring* the virtues.

How do you react to God being the primary agent in decision-making? He is the **Chooser** (Elector)! Personally, I'm grateful that He is; I would mess it up everytime if He were not the One accomplishing everything on our behalf. *Why is letting God be God so hard for so many of us?* I think it is because we like to be in control; we want to be the one who makes the calls. In **1 Peter 1:2** - we read that God's people are "...elect

according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.” **Ephesians 1:4** teaches, “just as **He (God) chose us (believers)** in Him (Jesus) before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love,”

The third descriptor of the Church in verse 12 is “**Beloved.**” There are nearly 120 uses of the term in the Bible. We’ll see Paul use that affectionate word 3 more times in chapter 4. It’s found 38 times in the Song of Solomon alone! The first use of “Beloved” in the New Testament is when God the Father spoke of His Son, Jesus (**Matthew 3:16-17**), “When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. **17** And suddenly a voice *came* from heaven, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

One side note - verse 16 says that after Jesus received baptism He came up immediately from the water. *Could that mean only that He came up from the water after having his head pushed below the surface of the Jordan River?* Maybe, but it would probably not be the case. It could actually mean that after having water poured or sprinkled over His head isn’t while He stood in the Jordan River, Jesus and John (the Baptizer) immediately walked up out of the water onto the shore.

Now, let’s look at the **list of virtues** in verse 12 - “...put on tender mercies, kindness, humility (gentleness), meekness, longsuffering (patience);” These graces are similar to the Fruit of the Spirit found in **Galatians 5:22-23**. Let’s look at them individually.

- **Tender mercies** (Some Bibles have “compassionate hearts”). ‘Compassion’ is our response of concern toward someone else’s bad circumstances.
- **Kindness**. Kindness was featured in this weekend’s *Tabletalk* magazine devotion. Now here it is mentioned again; *perhaps I (we) need to heed this instruction?* It means goodness of heart. It is a gracious sensitivity toward others that is triggered by genuine care for their feelings and desires. It is the opposite of the vice “malice” listed in verse 8. It does not happen naturally.

<p>George Bernard Shaw once wrote a letter to Winston Churchill: "Enclosed are two tickets to the opening night of my first play...bring a friend (if you have one)." (<i>Eek!</i>)</p> <p>Churchill replied: Dear Mr. Shaw, unfortunately I'll be unable to attend the opening night of your play due to a prior engagement. Please send me tickets for a second night (if you have one).</p>
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The human personality does not gravitate toward kindness; it naturally descends to harshness in word and deed.

- **Humility** - Allows us to serve others without caring whether it is noticed or not. God sees what happens and He sees who does it. Sure, the praise of people can be nearly intoxicating in its application, but it doesn't last very long. And much of what we've done is no longer remembered.
- **Meekness** - Is not weakness or spinelessness. It is submissiveness under provocation, the willingness rather to *suffer* injury than to *inflict* it. This Greek word (meekness) was used to describe a soothing wind, a healing medicine, a colt that had been broken. In each instance, there is power: a wind can become a storm, too much medicine can kill, and a horse can break loose. But this power is under control. The meek person does not have to fly off the handle because he/she has everything under control.
- **Longsuffering** (patience). It is willing to endure wrongs. The original Greek word means "long temper." The short tempered person speaks and acts impulsively and lacks self-control. When a person is long-suffering (patient), he can put up with provoking people or circumstances without retaliating.

Having explored the list of virtues in verse 12, we come to verse 13, which was yesterday's verse of the day on Bible Gateway, an Internet Bible software. Virtuous people, who put on garments like the new person characteristics in verse 12, are now prepared to "bear with one another, and forgive one another. Those with a complaint against another must remember that even as Christ forgave them, so they also *must do*, meaning forgive.

Putting up with others (bearing with them) is a requirement for those who have received salvation from Jesus Christ. Paul addresses this with the Christians in Rome - "We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves." (**Romans 15:1**) Paul addresses the church in Ephesus with these words from **Ephesians 4:1-2**, "...beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love,"

The late Warren Wiersbe notes, Forgiveness "is the logical result of all that Paul has written so far in this section. It is not enough that the Christian must endure grief and provocation, and refuse to retaliate; he must also forgive the troublemaker. If he does not, then feelings of malice will develop in the heart; and these can lead to greater sins." (Wiersbe 139)

We come at last to verse 14, and the final verse for our study this morning. "But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection." Love ties all of these virtues together. "We cannot truly exhibit compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience without love. Love maintains the balance, but brings each of the other virtues to perfection." (Garland, 211)

The supremacy of love - above all things - is clear from texts like **I Corinthians 13:13**. "And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these *is* love." Further, "love" heads the list of "the fruit of the Spirit."

Someone has said, "It is possible to have some of the five recommended garments and not have love, but it is impossible to have love and not have all of the five garments." (Anonymous)

We close with a few descriptions of love from children:

"When my grandmother got arthritis, she couldn't bend over and paint her toenails anymore. So my grandfather does it for her all the time, even when his hands got arthritis too. That's love."—Rebecca, age 8

"When someone loves you, the way they say your name is different. You just know that your name is safe in their mouth."—Billy, age 4

"Love is when you go out to eat and give somebody most of your French Fries without making them give you any of theirs."—Chrissie, age 6

"Love is what makes you smile when you're tired."—Terri, age 4