

I wondered about the wisdom of the Lectionary Committee in choosing our Lectionary readings today — the Sunday following the two national political conventions! Now, I know these were chosen long before the dates of the conventions were set, etc. But, I always marvel at the work of the Holy Spirit in things of this world. However, the question is not what it means to be a Republican or Democrat but, what does it mean to be a Christian. Or, as Paul says, “to be raised in Christ.”

I see it in terms of our “spiritual” wardrobe. The first is the way of the world or, the way the world dresses. The writer of Ecclesiastes had tried the way of the world. It was a world full of hardship and toil only to have the fruit of that hardship and toil be enjoyed by another who had done none of the work. He saw a world filled with vanity - a “me” world. A world filled with toil, sleepless nights — a world without hope. At least hope in the way of the world.

Paul sees the world in his day as one where getting ahead was the only thing that was important. A world where the concern was only for me. How much more can I get for me. Eugene Peterson in The Message translates verses 5-8 in this way

**And that means killing off everything connected with that way of death: sexual promiscuity, impurity, lust, doing whatever you feel like whenever you feel like it, and grabbing whatever attracts your fancy. That’s a life shaped by things and feelings instead of by God. It’s because of this kind of thing that God is about to explode in anger. It wasn’t long ago that you were doing all that stuff and not knowing any better. But you know better now, so make sure it’s all gone for good: bad temper, irritability, meanness, profanity, dirty talk.**

He goes on to describe the way of the world as “a filthy set of unfitting clothes”. This is not the way of God but is the way of the world.

Paul saw a world of rage, anger, malice and slander (all unChristian). A world that had no regard for the truth. A world filled with “me, me, me”. A world that did not consider the God who created it and who cares for it. These are our old clothes--the clothes of the world.

Our new wardrobe is the one we have found in Christ. Quoting from Peterson again, a wardrobe, “custom made by the Creator.” I am wearing a barong that was custom made for me. It fits almost perfectly - been a few years since it was tailored - the tag in the collar says 9-9-98 and it was sewn by Cora. It fits far better than those I purchased “off the rack”. When we went back in 2006 I went to see about getting another and he still had my measurements on file and pulled them as I came in the door. He knew what I needed and how it should fit. Unfortunately he could not do another in our time frame. Now this tailored one cost 425 pesos (then just a little over \$10 US and in today’s exchange rate, \$8.51).

Paul writes that God has provided us with a new wardrobe, a new life. God knows how we should look before the world - how we should act. It was demonstrated to us by Christ and paid for by him. If you want to know what this new wardrobe (lifestyle) looks like just look at Christ. See how he interacted with the world. See how he saw creation. See what his life demonstrated.

It does not matter who we are. Our lineage or background is no longer important in Christ. It does not matter if we are Jew or Greek. It does not matter if we are circumcised or uncircumcised. It does not matter if we are religious or not. It does not even matter if we are slave or free. There are no longer any distinctions to be made in the household of God.

The British comedy, “Are You Being Served” occasionally poked fun at the “dress” code of the British department store. You dressed according to the position you held. Only management could wear a carnation in their lapels. Only upper management could wear a bowler hat. If you were a woman the number of frills on your blouse indicated your standing. Dress was important - it indicated your standing in the firm.

Paul wants all of that tossed out the window. It is time to stop drawing attention to all our differences. We have been given a new wardrobe in Christ. And this wardrobe fits all and includes: compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. It is the Spirit of our helping one another, building up one another. Learning how to get along with one another.

The world of Paul and the Christians of Colossae was one of divisions and distinctions. Now these divisions are being brought together in One body, the Church. It was a body where no one should be excluded. Those things which once separated them no longer matter. They were no longer to view one another by the status in the world. There was no longer slave or free, male or female. The labels by which they have been defining once another must disappear. In Christ all have been made as one. Love must rule all their interactions.

Now these are not my words, they are Paul’s to the congregation in Colossae - and I am sure Paul would say that these were not his words but Christ’s. It is because of this that we are to give thanks - the walls of separation have come down. Paul wants us to thank God for our new wardrobe — compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience and to toss out our old one (don’t keep it in the closet for another day when you might need it - you won’t!) anger, rage, malice, slander, filthy language, and lying. In Christ we have become one - Paul was not kidding — when will we begin to listen and act like Christians.

We are called to follow Jesus. This is a hymn which Karen found. She likes it because of the tune - I like it because of the words — We Are Called to Follow Jesus.

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NIV, New International Bible Society, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI 1973, 1978, 1985  
NRSV, Division of Christian Education, NCC, 1988  
Eugene Peterson, The Message, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI 2002