

First Sunday of Christmas
Sermon Text: Colossians 3:12-17
Date preached: December 27, 2009

In the name of Christ the newborn King. Amen.

There is times when even in the closest of family's it can be a struggle to "bear with one another." Behind a smile there are those who are thinking to themselves, if I have to hear this story one more time I'm going to scream.

Yet, by the grace of God we get through those moments. The time comes when we or our company return home. We've made it.

Relationships are very hard work. Differences abound which in some cases are humorous and fun, while others are deeply dividing. How we handle such differences are very important in terms of how we live together in the midst of them.

And yet with all the sin and fears that can tear apart relationships, Christ comes to bind us together in a much larger family relationship. Christ comes to bring people with little in common together.

How our Lord does this is simply amazing. It is so amazing that some doubt it is real. Even those who believe in Jesus have their doubts.

The amazing work of Christ is not the wonder of his birth, miraculous as it was. It is not in the teaching with the religious leaders as a twelve year old boy. The amazing work of Christ comes at the cross.

On the cross, Jesus embodies true love for the world. The embodiment of love finds expression in a host of qualities that are shown most clearly by Jesus from the cross itself.

Compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience all are displayed from the cross. Consider the patience of Jesus to endure the mocking of the soldiers at his feet as they gamble for his clothing. Jesus looks with kindness upon his mother weeping at his feet as he says to her, Woman behold your son. And to the beloved disciple he says, "Here is your mother."

From the cross Jesus displays compassion for one who is justly being punished. The one criminal asks for himself, "Free yourself and us if you are the messiah." The other rebukes his fellow criminal and pleads for Jesus to remember him when Christ comes into his kingdom. The compassion of Jesus is extended, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."

He gives his life for the sake of those shouting for his death. He gives his life for those who hide in fear. He gives his life for those who are ignorant of what has happened. “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.”

This is the amazing work of Christ from the cross.

The amazing part of this drama is that it continues at the tomb. The stone covering is rolled away. The body is not there. Angels announce to the women that he has risen. They in turn, announce to the disciples, “The Lord is risen.” And in their midst Jesus stands among them and says, “Peace be with you.”

It is the death and resurrection of Jesus that binds us together into this family of God. In the waters of Holy Baptism we are joined to his death and new life. God’s claim makes us a new creation.

So as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, comes the question, how shall we live? How can we bear with one another in this new relationship?

It is impossible, without the gifts that God has given to make our relationships with each other. As we heard in the reading from Colossians, “...clothe

yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience.” These gifts are just that, gifts. They come to us from God who desires that we live together as his chosen ones.

Our life together includes other qualities as well. Forgiveness, peace, a thankful life, living together in God’s Word that teaches, affirms and when necessary corrects us comprises what it means to bear with one another.

Our life together means we worship together. Worship includes prayer, the reading and study of Scripture, the singing of psalms and hymns all these things and more that we do Sunday after Sunday.

Life together is not always easy. Yet it is a commitment that God has made to us, one from which he will never walk away. As we live with him, which means living together and bearing with one another in love, “do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. AMEN.