

## “Dress the Part”

12-01-13

After all the turkey and the trimmings, after watching all those football games, after standing in line to get those special “Black Friday” deals, today, we begin the Advent season, the true beginning of Christmas! It’s time to prepare for Jesus. It’s a time when we prepare to remember the coming of the birth of the babe born in a manger.

As we think about His birth, it’s also time to remember why He came to this earth. He came to reconcile us to God through the cross. By His death on the Cross, you and I are redeemed and washed clean from all our sin. His death and resurrection brings us victory over sin, Satan, and even our own flesh.

As a result of what He’s done for us, we are called to become disciples of Christ. A disciple is not only a follower, but also one who shows the image of who they are following. When others see a true disciple, they get a glimpse of their leader. It’s to us as disciples of Jesus Christ that Paul’s gives his words in Romans.

Open to Romans 13. The key to understanding what Paul is saying in this reading comes from the first two verses of Romans 12. Listen, *“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.”* That’s what Christian discipleship is all about. As Christians, we’re called not to conform to what the non-Christian world does and is, but to conform to Jesus Christ.

Look at Romans 13:12, *“The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.”* This verse gives each disciple of Jesus Christ two clear directives. First, cast off the works of darkness. The works of darkness in our world today are the works of anger, greed and an uncaring attitude. There seems to be a lack of not only social justice but also moral justice.

The second is to put on the armor of light. The armor of light is the armor of God. Jesus explained Who He when He said, *“I am the light of the world.”* Jesus brought the brightness of God into the world when He came as the babe born in Bethlehem. He showed that light as He taught the people and did miracles. His ultimate showing of this light was in the brightness of the first Easter morning when He rose victorious over sin, death, and Satan.

Open to Ephesians 6. Here Paul tells us to put on the full armor of God and tells us what those pieces are. Look at verses 13-18, *“Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints.”*

This armor of light has everything to do with our lifestyle. We need to have truth and righteousness in our lives. We have to be ready to preach the Gospel to others. We can be built up in faith because we have the assurance of salvation won for us through Jesus’ death on the cross and His resurrection. We need to take time each day to be in His Word and in prayer led by the Holy Spirit.

The Good News of Jesus Christ isn’t only that we are redeemed and reconciled to God, through Jesus Christ, but we are new creations! 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has*

come.” Being a new creation, must result in a new lifestyle! We need to put away ourselves with all our failures and problems and instead, we need to put on Jesus Christ!

When we dress ourselves in Jesus Christ, we’re changed. We’re different from whatever we’ve been in the past. We’re no longer living for ourselves and our own desires, but we’re living for Jesus Christ! When people see us as we live, they not only need to see the babe in the manger, they need to see the Savior.

Dressed in Jesus Christ, our motivation for living changes. Jesus has called us to be His witnesses to a world that’s lost and wrapped up in things that lead to self-destruction. But in Jesus Christ, we have what the world needs. That’s why Jesus gave His commission to us as His disciples. He wants us to witness to the world around us and show Him. When people see you they need to see Jesus!

You’re not in this alone. He sends His Spirit to fill you and give you the right things to say and do. His presence is in you each and every day, guiding and leading. You also are part of the body of Christ where you can be encouraged, prayed for, and supported.

As you’re dressed in Jesus Christ, please know through faith, His holiness in you never fades. Through Him alone, you are a blessing to the world around you. Keep in His Word! Keep wearing His armor! Keep proclaiming Him to everyone! Keep focused on Him, the babe, in the manger, your Savior and Redeemer!