

I want to 'thank you in advance' for listening to this 'ginormous' sermon. I appreciate the way you 'occupy' Gethsemane in such an 'amazing' way. Better than the 'trickeration' of being at home in your 'man cave'. Three sentences in and I've already used six phrases that I shouldn't. They're ones on the list to be eliminated in the coming year because of overuse or inappropriate use. Lake Superior State University has been compiling this list for 37 years. They're usually words people have grown tired of hearing. They've worn out their welcome and must be banished. So goodbye amazing, ginormous, occupy, thank you in advance, trickeration, and man cave. We barely knew you.

Words and their usage do seem to come and go. New words each year are added because of usage. Some make their mark and then fade because of over usage. Christmas comes every December 25th. But it seems like we mark it then it fades pretty quickly. December 26th finds many people putting Christmas trees on the curb. Lights and decorations are packed away. Stores are already putting out the next items for sale. Did Christmas even leave a mark it came and went so fast?

We need to slow down. Before we throw anything out or move on from something as big as Christmas we should make sure we're not packing away something important. Paul wrote to the Colossians regarding what life would mean for them once connected to Christ. It shouldn't be a one and done thing, or a packing up and moving on thing. It should be an ongoing thing.

Christmas makes a mark that lasts
Displaying a Christ like attitude
Living with Christ like gratitude

You count your gifts on two hands. Therefore you had a great Christmas. That's a factual statement with a conclusion. We have the conclusion Paul draws. **"Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience."** But what statement of fact is that based on? Why can Paul say we can clothe ourselves with these virtues? The first verse of the chapter, **"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ ..."** We've been raised with Christ. These virtues are a Christ like attitude. They're not beyond our ability. We're God's chosen people; therefore we can display a Christ like attitude.

Our natural tendency is to not. These virtues are hard to accomplish. Who can have compassion or kindness when you're being taken advantage of and someone is running off with your hard earned dollars? Who can be humble when people at the office are talking up the great Christmas gifts they received? And patience, that's the hardest of them all in the face of suffering directed at us. It's easier to make a show of patience, but stew and wait. Force the person into begging for forgiveness then make a big show of forgiving. If these are the ways you're living today Christmas had little effect on you. You enjoyed the time off, the friends, and the presents but it left no lasting mark on your life because you're not displaying a Christ like attitude.

Eight days after he was born Jesus was still dependant on his mother and father for everything. But already Jesus was demonstrating why he came. The Law of Moses said he must be in the temple for circumcision and naming on the eighth day. So here Jesus was keeping that law. With humility and patience Christ showed an attitude of obedience. He kept the law perfectly and continued perfect his entire life. He did it for you. It wasn't an example to follow, but rather a cheerful, willing attitude that saved you. Christ's perfect obedience allowed God to choose us imperfect beings in Christ. **"Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."** It was because of Christ Jesus' perfection that God forgave you. It was free for you but costly for him.

Christ's attitude changes your attitude. A Christ like attitude is on display in your life. The virtues Paul mentions are achieved with the motivation, love, and peace Christ provides. **"And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity."** Love had Jesus in the temple that day staying perfect. Love kept Christ perfect throughout his life. Love had him on the cross dying. Love is at the heart of what God does. Love is the attitude of Christ. We can display Christ like attitude when we love as he first loved. We want to display it and we can because Christmas makes a mark that lasts.

As you put everything away for Christmas consider keeping something out. What would be the harm in having a reminder that Christmas isn't just for one part of the year? It doesn't have to be the flashiest of Christmas decorations. It doesn't have to be a decoration at all. Christmas leaves a lasting mark. So it could be the change of life brought about by the perfect Christ child doing exactly what needed to be done to save you. As you display that Christ like attitude all year long it'll naturally spill into something else. You'll be living with Christ like gratitude.

Think of the last race you saw. Who won? A clear answer right, the person who crossed the finish line first. Whatever officials were there overseeing the race didn't try and hold a hearing to determine who won. They didn't take arguments from both sides or consult experts who voted for who should be awarded first place. Those officials looked to see who crossed first and that was the winner. **"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts."** That word 'rule' is talking about what a track official does. The peace of Christ doesn't hold a hearing to see what's right or take arguments letting the best expert win. The peace of Christ already rules and judges because the peace of Christ is based on facts. The fact is Jesus died to win peace for the world.

To know the peace of Christ one has to be in the Word of Christ. **“Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom.”** Imagine you don’t take in the Word of Christ. You don’t hear it. You don’t read it regularly at home. It isn’t a part of bedtime with the children or morning time over coffee. You laugh a little when others talk about it in casual everyday conversations. You mock the power the Bible has to change people because you’ve never felt anything. The less you hear it the less you could care about it. Until finally one day it means nothing to you anymore.

Simeon and Anna were not that way. They saw the Christ child of Christmas. God allowed them to know what he would do to save the world. Their faith was strengthened and they left with a permanent mark. Christ motivated them to gratitude. **“Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.”** So far we’ve read three Bible lessons. Confessed sins and received forgiveness. We’ve spoken a psalm, sung two hymns, and recited the Nicene Creed. These are the Word of Christ. This is your connection with the Christ child of Christmas. You hear the words and they sink deep into the furthest corners of your life and heart. They dwell in you richly. In the lyrics and words is Christ coming to you and winning you with his gospel. Your connection with Christ grows and so does your gratitude.

Going from here the lives we live every day, everything we do and say keeps Christ at the center. When we come to worship, when we go to work, even at school Christ is providing us the motivation and the drive for gratitude to God. The Word of Christ finds its way into every part of our lives, into everything we do and say. This demonstrates for others the gratitude we have for the grace of God shown to us in Christ. And their faith is strengthened as well.

You may hear a politician or two use the phrase ‘win the future’ this political season. That was another phrase the study wanted dropped. They said it lost all of its meaning from overuse. That may be true. But in these days don’t feel Christmas has been overused. Christmas is important not just one or two days, but every day. Christ’s attitude becomes our Christ like attitude. His life of perfection to save us motivates us to Christ like gratitude. No matter where we are or what we’re doing with lives centered on Christ Christmas leaves a lasting mark.