

What God's Church Looks Like - Colossians 3:12-17

August 3, 2008 - Skip MacMillan

What God's Church Looks Like--Christian Virtues

1. Common in Scripture:

God's Nature

Exodus 34: "compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness . . . and forgiving" (Matt. 5:9).

Jesus, "perfectly blended . . . character and conduct" -FF Bruce.

Compassionate toward the needy, the sidelined, the unsuccessful, bankrupt, failures, the masses.

Humbled Himself from exalted One above all to servant of all.

God's Church

What does God's church look like? How will it treat others?

What will be the tone and atmosphere of the church?

These virtues are the virtues of God Himself, fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) and you are in the image of God, the loved and redeemed of God.

". . . men and women of the new creation, his choice souls, whom he has set apart for himself and into whose hearts he has poured his love, should inevitably exhibit something of his nature" -FF Bruce.

2. Not for salvation but because of salvation

These virtues are not going to earn your way to heaven or God, proving you're good enough.

These virtues are a calling on you whom Christ has redeemed.

These virtues are "gratitude in action".

3. God

- "as **God's** chosen people, holy and dearly loved . . ."

These virtues begin with God loving you, what He did for you, how He views you, and what He has made you to be.

God chose you, made you holy, without blemish, free from accusation; He has loved you with an unconditional love - *agape*.

He has given you a new nature, new self, made you into a new creation; from this point forward God calls His church to model His very own virtues.

God's choosing, redemption, and love are the motivating factors for the church to model these virtues.

- **Therefore, "clothe yourselves with" the virtues of God**

"Put on a heart" (NAS) or "clothe yourself" (NIV) = "**sink into**" or "**plunge into**" a heart of

These are the virtues of the new self, the new creation in Christ Jesus, God's Church.

You are called not to hide or cover up, but to rip away the old self and plunge your hearts into the virtues of Christ, replacing the old self with the new self found in Jesus Christ.

You have a choice.

Christian Virtues

Virtue: "moral practice, conformity to a standard of divine law or the highest good" -Merriam and Webster.

Compassion

"Pity and tenderness expressed toward the suffering and miserable" -Vaughan.
Compassion toward the poor, lonely, elderly, struggling, huddled masses.
Compassion that takes action.

Kindness

"Goodness, kindness and graciousness . . . sweetness of disposition" -Vaughan.
Be good to people.

Humility

". . . consider others better than yourself" (Philippians 2:3).
Not a virtue in pagan antiquity or today, but Christianity says this is one of the noblest virtues.
". . . thinking lowly of ourselves because we are so."
1 John 1:8 - "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us."
With this truth comes genuine humility in a person.

Listening instead having to talk, positioning yourself in your mind to be on the same level, considering she might actually have something to say on the issue.

God loves the humble and He will exalt the humble.

Gentleness

"Opposite of arrogance and self-assertiveness . . . a sense of the rights and feeling of others . . . willing to make concessions" -Vaughan.
"Look out for the interest of others" (Philippians 2:4).
Ask yourself "is this a heaven or hell issue?"
If it is, then you can disagree in gentleness (without arrogance).
If it is not, then let it go.
No place for arrogance and self-assertiveness within the church.
Gentleness: "against such things there is no law" (Galatians 5:23).

Patience

"Longsuffering, self restraint, to be insulted but not retaliate" -Vaughan.
The patience of Job: he waited, remained, endured to the end no matter what.

Bear with each other

"Put up with things we dislike in others, the things that irritate us about others" -Vaughan.
Get over the extraneous, the peripheral; let it go.
Indicator of true maturity, how we respond to the irritating things about others.

Forgive

"Forgive as the Lord has forgiven you".

Paul mentions this because people are going to mess up in the church.

How many times? "seventy times seven" (Matt. 18:22).

How can we seek God's forgiveness but not forgive others?

Jesus forgave us while we were still a sinner; God is our example.

The Lord's prayer: "forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Matt. 6:12).

Love

Agape

1 Corinthians 13:4-8

Love is superior to all, love is why God sent His Son to redeem the world, love is what covered over a multitude of sin, God is love (1 John 4).

Love is what we want, love is what God offers and what He wants to be the mark of His church.

Romans 13:8-10.

God has dearly loved (*agape*) you so you go and *agape*.

Questions

1. What does God's Church look like?

How much forgiveness was there?

How much compassion for the unsuccessful, the not-so-pretty; how much attention did the un-wealthy receive?

Was there a sweetness of disposition, a concern for the rights of others, overlooking little irritating things, or was there gossiping about them?

Col. 3:12-17 is "What God's Church Looks Like".

2. What are the effects of these virtues:

1. Heals relationships within your own marriage, children, church, and community.

2. Unifies and reduces friction within the home and church.

3. Testimony to the world that God is alive in the lives of those who believe.

4. Challenges you to put your faith into action.

"The man who says, 'I know Him,' but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But if anyone obeys His word, God's love is truly made complete in him" (1 John 2:4-5).

5. Prepares us to do and be the specifics stated in Colossians 3:18-4:1.

3. If this is Christianity, with what is there to disagree?

A perspective to use with a friend who does not believe in Jesus Christ.

What if there was an office, neighborhood, a city, state, country, a continent, or a world where these virtues reigned? What kind of world would it be? What kind of life would this be?

These virtues describe the God of the Bible.

Jesus Christ lived them from the beginning of His life to the very end, without exception.

God calls His Church to live these virtues.

So, what is the problem with God, Biblical Christianity, the Biblical Church?

To Eternal

What kind of effect would these virtues have on our marriages, families, the church, the community and the world?

God has given us His call; this is His call on us: He wants to bring these virtues from the pages of Scripture into His church.

Rid yourself of the old and plunge yourself into God's virtues.