

Date of sermon: 8/1/2020  
Speaker: Pastor Mark Hanke  
Bible passage or verse: Colossians 3:12-13  
Title of sermon: **It's Time for a New Wardrobe**  
Series: Don't Settle for Normal - #9

**Colossians 3:12-13, NIV:**

**12** Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. **13** Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

Well, good evening, Saturday night! And online! Sunday morning, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday. Or in three weeks from now. I'm glad you're here with us. So, inside track information -- for those of you who have ever known a wrestler, one of the things that they're really proud of is called "cauliflower ear." If you've ever met a wrestler, and you look at their ear and you think, "I want to ask them, 'Were you born that way?'" It just looks like cauliflower, it looks like it's kind of all swollen, it looks like it needs to be drained -- it probably has 30 times -- and they're proud of it. You just ask any wrestler. They are, like -- they wear it with a badge of courage. So, a lot of us weren't wrestlers, so -- the beautiful thing is that you get to identify with them now. Because, I've noticed, my ears are not going back any more. They're just kind of staying out. And so, I now have official "COVID ear." So -- that's just for fun facts to know and tell. And if you don't have it, put your mask on. You'll be glad you did.

Well, we're in a great series. At least, I think it's great. Have you ever wondered if anyone else is enjoying what you're doing? I do. But it's been a fun time. Thanks for the feedback, it's been great. I think it's been timely, as God has laid out some of these things, that we are in this challenge, and so, we're asking the question -- "God, what can we do and how do we get back to normal?" We're never gonna get back there! Ever! I seriously doubt some of the things that you and I kind of grew up with, and some of the things we knew, those are probably gone forever. That doesn't mean you can't live, that doesn't mean you don't enjoy life. That doesn't mean you don't get to go get a haircut, which is one of my all-time favorites. That's one of the reasons why I love Pastor Jeff. There's a million reasons. This is a million and one. Both of us, the day that we get a haircut, we come to the office, and you can just tell. We're all kind of lit up. I have no idea why, but -- ever since I was a kid, getting a haircut was -- I mean, it's like a spa day for a woman! It is! And I don't even need the whole day. All I need is about an hour. It's so beautiful. So, there's still normal things that we can do. And probably one of the most normal, or maybe one of the most delightful things is that we can open God's word and we can study it together.

And so, today, if you would turn in your Bibles to Colossians, we want to look at a wardrobe that I think is a significant wardrobe that is given to us, because he talks about it as a wardrobe. He says, "Clothe yourselves with these things." And I want to talk today about how we can live not a normal, natural life, but a very supernatural life. I want to introduce you to a friend -- he's really not a friend, he was an acquaintance -- so, when I was studying back in Boston, I stayed at this place called the Homewood Suites, and one time I landed in the airport there, and it started snowing. And I was

making my way from the airport; it was a late-night arrival, I think I arrived about 11:00 o'clock at night. I got to my hotel about 2:00 in the morning. And the reason it took so long is, I just went from Dunkin' Donut shop to Dunkin' Donut shop trying to figure out my way to get to the hotel. It was in the middle of the night, and by the time we woke up the next morning, 30 some inches of snow was on the ground, and we weren't going anywhere. So I went down, and -- you know, over the next couple of days, didn't travel anywhere. Did most of our work there in the hotel. And I came upon a guy by the name of Carl. And Carl had been in the Homewood Suites for 14 months. Yeah, just let that sink in. I mean, I know some of you love to travel, and you like to go to a hotel, and you like to go to Cancun, but I don't care what kind of hotel this thing is -- after 14 months, it's not vacation! It's ugly. "Carl, why are you here?" "Well, my condo burned down, and they said they were gonna rebuild it, and they are rebuilding it, it's just taking a lot longer. And this snow is not helping anything." "Well, how are you doing, Carl?" "Well, I'll tell you what -- a man and a woman needs more than a one-room hotel room." "Carl, your marriage not doing well?" He says, "Well, praise God, my wife has a job, or we would've been divorced." "Carl, you retired?" "Yes, I'm retired." "What do you do all day?" "Watch game shows." Like -- what? Oh -- just take my head off, it's horrible! Daytime TV -- have you ever watched that stuff? It would make you shoot the TV. But -- I love his statement. "If my wife didn't have a job, we would've probably been divorced by now." Why? Because relationships are hard. When you're coved up in a little -- you know, one-room hotel room, and the only thing you get to look forward to is what Homewood Suites is serving for dinner, and by the time you finish it you're never looking forward to it -- the fact is, it makes it hard.

Just like the couple that came into my office one time. They were coming in for pre-marital, and they were going to get married, but he, in particular, had a really, really, what we call "low idealistic distortion." In other words, he saw marriage for what it was -- great, and hard work. And first session -- "Pastor, what can you do to help us not be a part of the 50 percent?" He didn't even need to tell me any more. I knew exactly what he was saying. You probably do, too. "What can you do to help us not be a part of the 50 percent?" What 50 percent? The 50 percent of people they suggest nowadays that get a divorce. He understood something that was really important, and that is, that when you go to Bed Bath & Beyond, there's nowhere on the list that you can put down there the assurance of a happy marriage together. You can't buy it! Kerri and I've probably been -- well, I've done over 300 some weddings, and so, I would imagine over the years, just because we periodically go to weddings that I don't do -- I mean, I'm sure we're in the 350 range, and I have never gone to Home Depot, Fred Meyer, Bed Bath & Beyond -- anywhere -- where it is said you can buy the couple 50 years. Guarantee you if it was there I'd probably, if I could afford it, buy it! What a gift! But you can't. And as much as you can't do that today, you can't buy peace out there on the streets.

Pastor Jeff is right -- the single greatest problem we're facing today is sin. It's been the single greatest problem, by the way, we've always faced. And because of that, you can't go out and buy unity. You can't go out and buy peace. It's just not there. And that's why you have to make the intentional choice to live a supernatural life. What is it? Read with me. Colossians chapter three, verses 12 and 13. It's short. It's just amazingly challenging to live. "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, I want you to put on every day" -- in other words, "clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience." Here's where it gets really hard. "Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord has forgiven you." [Verse 14] "And over all of these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity." What's he tell us in this text? Number one is, you don't have to do it alone. You can't do it alone. There's no way you can walk out on the streets today, and there's no way you can go anywhere and pull off a successful marriage, successful family, in your own flesh. You can't do it. And you can't go out and draw people of divergent views and pull them all

together and say, "Hey, we need to agree. Let's start with the sky. Anyone think that the sky is anything other than blue?" You probably wouldn't even get agreement on that one. But you don't have to go out in your own flesh. In fact, that's the whole point. He says, "As God's chosen people, this is what I want you to do."

Well, what's he telling you? Two things, at least. Probably more, but let me identify at least two. Number one is, when we love people, when we clothe ourselves towards people, when we bear up, when we forgive, we're doing it from a position of strength. Absolutely, that's who you are. You are from a position of strength. That's the song that the worship team led us in today -- Who do you say that I am? Who am I? Well, the text tells you -- it tells you three things about yourself. Number one, it tells you your identity. It tells you your position. And it also tells you the reception of what you've received, enabling you to give something away. What is your identity? You're God's daughter. You're God's son. That never changes. You wake up in the morning. Every day you wake up, you're God's daughter or you're God's son. Doesn't matter what you did the day before. It doesn't matter. If you know Jesus Christ as your Savior today -- if He has forgiven you, then every day you wake up, God says, "You are my chosen, beloved, dearly loved son." Try starting your day off with that. Not "Who am I?" But "Whose am I?" I belong to God. And yesterday's struggle or yesterday's failure doesn't disqualify that. I'm God's son. God knows me. He knows where I'm at. He knows what I'm facing. He knows everything about you. You're God's child.

Not only that, but he tells you -- you are holy. You are God's chosen people, and you are holy. Yeah, there's a couple ways you can take "holy." Holy is to be without sin. Holy is to be set apart for the purpose of something. And might it be that he doesn't qualify it because it's really both? You say, "Without sin?" Well, no no no, of course you and I sin. But what does it mean to be holy? It means to be sanctified. It means to be set apart. It means to be without taint and without sin or without the mar and the effects of sin. I'm holy. I'm pure before God. I am ready to tackle my day. Why? Because God has set me apart for this day. He has prepared me for this day. He has enabled me to face this day. I'm holy. I'm set apart. I have a purpose, I have a challenge, I have an assignment. I'm God's son, and I'm set apart. I'm equipped with everything that I need to enter into this crazy world and to fulfill God's purpose. I know, my dear friends, some of you wish you were born in another generation. I've heard that more times. "I'm just not made for this! I wish I could've been born in a previous generation!" You do until you go to the dentist! The idea that you wish you could've been born in another generation, before epidurals -- are you kidding me?! Before an anesthesiologist could make a root canal something that doesn't hurt all that bad. Go ahead! Laugh yourself into the 18<sup>th</sup> century! It's garbage.

Today's a beautiful day to be alive! Why? Because God chose you, and He set you apart in this moment, on this day, in this season, for this world, to live there. God's chosen people. Holy, and oh -- put this third one in your heart. Dearly loved. What does it mean to be dearly loved? It's the love of a grandmother. It's the love of a grandfather. It's the love of an enduring and endearing parent. It's the love of a person who doesn't quit when you have. It's the love of a person who knows everything about you and doesn't back away. It's the love of a person who will embrace you, warts and all. Dearly loved. You see, my friends, when you are sent out on assignment, God doesn't send you out alone. He whispers in your ear, "You're my son, and I love you. And I'm proud of you. And I know you have an assignment today that is hard, but I'm going to be with you. You are created for this day. You are equipped for this day. You have what it takes for this day. I never send anyone out into war and into battle ill-prepared."

Gracious love is rooted in God's love for us. And the way it works, and the way it acts, is two things. Number one, it demonstrates a nurturing love. When I think of nurturing, we automatically -- I think most of us think of moms, and I think that's a great place to think. But it's not just moms. It's a dad that knows how to nurture their son or their daughter. It's a mom who knows how to tend to wounded knees. It's a person who is sent into this world who knows how to deal with brokenness.

What does nurturing love look like? Well, it has five elements. Number one, he says, "I want you to be compassionate. I want you to clothe yourselves with compassion." What is compassion? It's the ability to feel. It's the ability to feel the hurt, the confusion, and the fear of another person. Compassion is that ability, if you will, to put yourself in their shoes. Compassion is that ability to feel the pain that they have felt, to understand the hill that they're climbing, and to create a safe space of understanding. You don't have to prove yourself, you don't have to justify yourself -- "I'm here. I have sat in your shoes to the degree that I can. I'm not here to judge you -- I'm here to strengthen you." He said, "Every day I want you to put on compassion. And also, I want you to be kind. I want you to offer good will and unmerited by your actions." What is kindness? It's the kindness to another person. It's the act of benevolence to another person that hasn't earned it, and may not even deserve it. It's allowing another person to go ahead of you in a line who has cut in front of three other people, but you look at them and you understand. "I'm gonna give you something you really don't deserve."

Yesterday, my mom and I were in a meeting, and -- they were late. They were just -- they were working hard. These people were just -- I mean, they had kind of the weight of the world on them, and -- they came out, and they were terribly apologetic. "I'm so sorry." And I just said to the individual, "There is not a thing in our life that is so critical that we didn't have the ability to wait for you." I have no idea why those words came out -- because I'm normally not that patient! In fact, I shocked myself! I was like, "Who are you?" Good night! But just watching the person -- literally, she was walking ahead of us, and she stopped and she turned. And -- she was speechless. So was I. I was shocked at myself. That's kindness! Oh, I could've said, "Hey, you know what? You need to plan better! My mom's an important person!" She didn't need that. Maybe she didn't plan her day well. Maybe she wasn't organized. Maybe -- who cares. God says when you move into this world, one of the things this world needs is to be benevolently loved, to be kind, to offer good will. Even when it's unmerited by their actions. It says, "Every day, I want you to put on humility." This is not humility in relationship to other people, but this is humility in relationship with God, which enables you to see other people well. Scripture, as best I understand it, never calls you to live in humility in relationship to people. It always calls you to live in humility in relationship to God. And when I do, when I humbly see myself for who I am and who God is -- then I begin to see people correctly. You see, if I don't ever see myself humbly in relationship to God, I become inflated and I become very demanding how I expect you to behave. But if I see myself in front of God and in relationship to God -- ah, then I begin to see you just like God sees me. Precious child, made in the image of God, who deserves to be loved. Who needs patience. Who is touched by kindness, and moved by compassion.

Next, he says, "Before you leave the door, and before you head out into this world, they're gonna need you to be gentle." It's a delicate consideration for the rights and the feelings of others. I want my hygienist to be gentle. Margaret was intensely gentle. Before she hurt me, she always warned me. Before she attacked my gums, she always braced me. Before she chewed me out for not flossing enough, she built me up. And before she asked me things like, "When you retire, would you like to use your teeth or fake teeth?" -- before she rebuked me -- she would often ask me, "So, how's the church doing?" And I would usually say, "Probably better than my teeth." She was gentle. She

was. To be gentle doesn't mean that you don't hurt a person. Years ago, I was playing around with one of those little creepers that went underneath -- you know, mechanics use them to go underneath cars. I don't know a thing about cars. I know they have four wheels and a steering wheel. That's it. I guess they have five. That's the extent of my knowledge of vehicles. I don't want to be smart in vehicles; I pay a mechanic to be smart in vehicles. I want to spend my time doing something else. My idea of an automobile is to go from point A to point B. I don't give -- you know, a care, anything else about it. For those of you who love cars -- I love you! Oh, but -- I tell you -- gentle. Yes. Gentleness is the ability to take rocks out of your knees when that little creeper that goes underneath cars -- you use it as a skateboard -- it was never meant to be a skateboard. It has weird wheels on it, and it didn't make sense to me that they should be going this direction and I went this direction with all the passion of my life, and the little creeper went -- it was a creeper -- it went back that way, and man! I used to have a larger nose than I do today. It's hard to imagine, I understand, but I did. And I went in, and I was just scraped up, and my mom says, "Sit down, honey." And she began to just pick out all of the rocks. See, just because you're gentle doesn't mean you don't wound them. It's the care that you place into their life when you're helping them. Sometimes gentleness is helping them see maybe the error of their ways, maybe the difficulty of the choices they've made.

And lastly, he says -- "I want you to be patient." It's the willingness to show self-restraint and not respond in hasty retaliation. Patience -- it is such an other-centered person. It's this -- the willingness to go with the pace of another person and not your own. When I see young parents, and they have a two-year-old, and they're out for a walk. You think, how patient that mom and dad are. They are. Why? Because they're not walking at their pace, they're walking at their little two-year-old's pace. And for the most part -- not always, but usually in public -- they're delighted. They are. They're patient. You learn that as a parent. You do. Or you learn how impatient you are. God says, as He puts all of this together -- "You're not called to be a judge. You're not called to be the referee of life. You're called to put on these clothes, every day. That's what your neighborhood needs from you." The people who work for you -- it's what they need from you. "Oh, but they need my decisive decisions; they need my courageous leadership!" Oh yeah, they do. They absolutely do. And the people who work for you need your compassion, your kindness, your humility, your gentleness, and your patience. Why? Because they're broken, and sometimes they're confused, and sometimes they're scared, and sometimes they've skinned up themselves, and sometimes they've made some really horrible decisions, and sometimes they just don't know what to think, because -- right now, it's a very confusing world. And maybe the best gift that you and I can give them is a gracious love that safeguards through nurturing actions. And secondly, a gracious love that safeguards through forgiveness, that moves from discord to connection.

Bear with each other. Some of you might have a translation that says, "Put up with each other. And forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another." This is gonna be hard, but the reality is, it's true in marriage and it's really true at work, and it's true in the church, and it's true out on the street. You have to be willing, if you're going to be a supernatural believer, you have to be willing to put up with things that we dislike. What does it mean to bear? It's to recognize that I'm dealing with a behavior not necessarily a sin. It means that I relax and give them the sense of warmth and love and acceptance. Bearing is not just putting up with and just kind of placating, but it is relaxing and giving them the sense of safety in your presence. They may have a behavior that's not necessarily a sin, it's just an annoyance. Maybe you married a person that, when they wake up in the morning at 5:30, it looks like they've been awake for three hours, and they wake up, and they're excited, and they just -- their mind is going, and you're the kind of person that at 5:30 in the morning, you're throwing the alarm clock across the room. And it takes you at least 45 minutes,

three cups of coffee, and an outside walk for you to even be coherent. Somebody in that relationship is going to have to bear up! Some of you married a nightowl. At ten o'clock, they become alive! At ten o'clock, you are a pumpkin. Somebody is going to have to bear up in that relationship. Some of you are so organized -- my wife -- and she organizes her organization! And others of us -- well, we receive our wife's love. She's gonna have to bear up. Why? We're different. You don't have to go very far today to find people who are different than you. But if I'm going to bear up, then I'm going to give them the freedom to be their unique self, and I will not judge them for it. In fact, I may even delight in them for it. To bear up is not necessarily just to put up with them, but it's to accept them, and to allow them to feel the warmth of my acceptance, the pleasure of my acceptance, so that in my presence, in your presence, they feel safe.

But he goes the next step -- he goes, "Not only I want you to bear up, but I want you to release them from their offense." This is where it gets hard, it gets really hard. It takes a supernatural effort to do this. "Bear with each other, and forgive whatever grievances you have against one another." Release them. This, my friends, I think is one of the distinguishing factors of supernatural people, people who are walking with Christ -- the capacity and the willingness to release a person. Does that mean you forget it? No, not necessarily. Does that mean you don't acknowledge the wound and the hurt that it caused? No. It means that you're willing to not hold it against them. It means that you're not going to judge them for it. It means you're not going to condemn them for it. And it also means, by the way -- you may not forget it, but you don't have permission to bring it up again. Not if you've forgiven them. You don't have the permission to use it as a leverage to negotiate future behavior. You don't have the permission to use it as leverage to get your way. To release them is to literally remove them from the expectation that they must make good. The root word means "to send away -- to dismiss." For those of you who have ever sat in that experience -- you've been betrayed, you've been left, and you ever had the opportunity to sit with that person, you realize in that moment you are sitting on all of the leverage and power in the world. You are. I think that's why some people won't forgive, is because they realize that if I forgive, I release my ability to hold something over them. But my friends, when you release them -- and those of you who have done this, you'll know exactly what I'm going to say next. When you release them, you're really releasing yourself, because the bondage that is in you to hold and suppress another person never really suppresses them. And number two, it denies the work of grace in your life.

It may not swing well with you, but I think it will work, and just think about it for a moment. When you choose to forgive a person, the first person you're really looking out for is you. Because when I hold a person hostage and I won't forgive them, I'm really imprisoning myself and quenching the power of the Spirit in my life to freely move. Gracious love safeguards by releasing people from their offense. And pursuing a reconnection with them. Does that mean it has to go back to what it was? No. Does that mean that we have to be the best of friends? No. It means that you're willing to do exactly what Christ did for you. It does! It means that you look at the model of what Christ has given to you. That's what it says. Come back and look at that with me. "Forgive as the Lord forgave you." Not only do you have a model, but you have the power. One of my favorite musicians -- he's now in Heaven -- Rich Mullins. He was telling a story one time about one of his road managers, Gay Quisenberry. And Rich and Gay got into this heated, heated battle. They traveled together all over the world. Rich was just a very, very effective and successful musician, Christian musician. And they had traveled all over the place, and Gay had worked so hard, and they had this verbal -- just absolute disintegration of their relationship. And they walked out as harsh words were stated. The next morning, Gay wakes up. She hears this sound outside. She can't figure out what it is. It's like six in the morning. She's wondering, "What is going on at six in the morning?" She comes to the window and she looks out, and there's Rich. Phenomenally successful musician. Multiple albums. Requested

by thousands. He's mowing her lawn. And when he's done, he comes and he knocks on the door. And the only thing he says is, "Would you forgive me?" See, in that moment, Rich did both. "I will not hold you. I will release you and myself, but I will pursue you, because that's what reconciliation looks like." It's the life of Christ in you that enables you to love and forgive like him. Imagine. Just imagine -- if all of our leaders woke up tomorrow morning and said, "I'm done accusing. I'm done blaming. I'm gonna love people the way Christ loved me." Imagine.

There was a grandmother celebrating her golden wedding anniversary. And on that day, they were asking her the secrets -- "How did you make it 50 years?" And she said, "On my wedding day, I'd decided to make a list of ten of my husband's faults for the sake of our marriage I would overlook all of the days of our marriage." A guest asked this grandmother as they were gathered there, what were some of the faults that she'd chosen to overlook? Gramma replied, "Well, to tell you the truth, my dear, I never did get around to listing them. But whenever my husband did something that made me hoppin' mad, I would say to myself, 'Lucky for him it's one of the ten on the list.'" That's how you make 50 years -- you choose to forgive; you choose to love. You don't wait for them. You don't have a list that you say, "You've got to fit this for me to love you." You understand you are God's son, his daughter. Loved by Him, forgiven by Him, and sent into this world. This crazy, mixed-up world.

Do you remember after 9/11 -- September 11<sup>th</sup> -- do you remember that? Do you remember what the country was like? Do you remember the Lee Greenwood song -- "God Bless America"<sup>i</sup> or whatever the title of that thing was? How many people sang that? Do you remember how many flags went up? Do you remember how we talked about each other? It's not happening today. Nobody's playing Lee Greenwood's song. They're not saying "God bless America," they're saying "Damn America." It's a different day today, my friends. It really is. And you can choose to be overwhelmed by it, disgusted by it, deplored by it, angry at it. You can quit. Or you can wake up tomorrow morning and remember who you are. You are God's daughter. And He's equipped you. And He's called you. And He's set the course for you, and me. And He said, "Mark, the thing this world needs more than a rebuke and condemnation is a person who's dressed like Christ." And when you're dressed like Christ, you will live like Christ. And when you do, you will reconcile people. You will love them. And you will build peace. For the whole world? Oh, I don't know. We're not responsible for that. I'm just responsible for the people that God sends my way tomorrow. How about you?

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<sup>i</sup> "God Bless the USA" by Lee Greenwood