



Sunday, December 17, 2023  
“Better Than an Ugly Christmas Sweater”  
Charlie Berthoud | Colossians 3:12-15a

On Friday evening, we had a staff Christmas party at a local restaurant. We were strongly encouraged to wear Christmas sweaters by Bailey, our Church Administrator and party planner.

I don't have a Christmas sweater, but my wife rescued me, after a trip to the thrift store, where she found matching holiday attire for us. (For just \$11!)

Believe it or not, this relates to our scripture reading for today, which comes from the little book of Colossians.

Listen for the connection between our clothes and the peace of Christ. Hear now God's word, from Colossians 3.12-15:

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.

During Advent our focus is peace. Two weeks ago, we pondered peace in the world, thinking about the middle east and Guatemala. Last week we pondered peace in our divided country and community.

Today, we ponder peace with our families and friends. Our scripture reading invites us to ponder our clothing—to clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness and love. In the coming weeks, many of us will be gathering with extended family.



Some of us are blessed to be part of families where everyone is happy and healthy and kind and gracious, and in those families there are:

- no lingering resentments or petty rivalries,
- no political disagreements and no alcohol problems,
- no arguments about what to watch on TV or whether or not “Die Hard” is a Christmas movie
- no broken relationships or generational challenges

That’s *some* families.

For the other 99.99% of us, in the midst of good food, festive parties, and gift giving, we will be facing those resentments and tensions, all that stress and awkwardness that comes when our families gather.

Years ago, I realized that, at my family gatherings, it is all too easy for me to fall into negativity and bitterness and ungraciousness.

So, I have found this **reading** from Colossians to be helpful—especially at family gatherings—reminding me to clothe myself with God’s kindness, compassion, and love.

I’ve also found Christmas **music** helpful, to really listen for the angels’ song of peace and good will. We have wonderful music coming up; may the song of peace enter more deeply in our hearts.

And I’ve learned that I needed to **pray** before family gatherings, to help me remember God’s love and God’s call.

Let us pray.

*Loving God, in the birth of Jesus Christ you have come to be with us, to walk with us and lead us and show us the way. You have come to forgive us, to renew us, to wake us up for faithful living. We thank you.*

*As we celebrate this season, as we put on our Christmas jammies or our ugly Christmas sweaters or whatever we wear, we pray that you would clothe us anew with compassion, kindness, and love, and that you would fill our homes and our world with your peace, the peace that Jesus came to share. Amen.*