



A Sermon for Praise Appeal Sunday

Grace to you and peace in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

It is a pleasure to greet you this way, and I thank you for participating in this year's praise appeal. The theme for the 2021 Praise Appeal is *Do Everything in the Name of the Lord Jesus*, based on Colossians 3:12-17. The text reminds us that in all we do in word and deed, to do it in the name of Jesus.

The text also describes for us the clothing we should wear as God's chosen ones. No, I'm not talking about designer brands or the year's hottest trends. The clothing described in this passage refers to compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, forgiveness and most of all, love.

This clothing will not get you on the cover of Vogue or GQ, but there are some real advantages. For one thing, if you share my dread of trying things on in fitting rooms, or if you have lost or gained weight during this time of pandemic, you don't have to worry. It is truly one size fits all. In fact, it is going to be too big for all of us to wear. Like a hand-me-down sweater from an older sibling, we may need to roll up the sleeves and tie a belt on lest we trip over it. Why? Because this clothing is the righteousness of Christ that we received in our baptisms. It is not our garment, it is Christ's and we spend our whole lives trying to grow in discipleship to more closely conform to the image and modeling of Jesus.

They say that clothes make the person. Well, when they are talking about a well-tailored suit, I don't think it's true. But this clothing does make us into "little Christ's," and reminds us that we are beloved children of God.

This clothing, which is really a way of being, is not just to be worn to church, or only at home. This is to be our constant companion. Why? It is a way that we proclaim to the world in word and deed that we are followers of Jesus.

As a part of a national church body like the ELCIC, we are part of a community that can help each of us enhance our spiritual wardrobes. Imagine it as a kind of nation-wide clothing exchange which itself is connected to other global exchanges. Our individual offerings become gifts that enhance the witness of others. And we in turn have access to gifts and blessings that would simply not be accessible to us as unconnected individuals.

The hymn from the 60's says, "They will know we are Christians by our love." So how are you doing in this calling to proclaim the love of Christ in all you do, in word and in deed? Are you showing your compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, forgiveness and most of all, love?

It's all a part of how we communicate to the outside world and each other that we are disciples of Jesus.

Joan Rivers used to say, "Can we talk?" But talking isn't the only part of communicating. There is listening and reflecting, questioning and answering – all these and more are part of our oral communication process. But we also communicate with our body language, our actions, our written words, our gestures and hand signs. We communicated through written word and pictures, through social and traditional media.

I want to highlight the importance of the work of the National Office in communications, helping us to share in words and pictures, what we are doing together as a church. Whether it is through the stories told in *Canada Lutheran*, helping us live out initiatives such as the four-year Living our Faith focus by sharing this work out in our electronic newsletters and on social media, the production of videos, the coordinating of resources such as the Summer Sermon Series, or by working with the media to help us share our stories with the wider - the work of communications is vital to all of the other ministries of our church. Communications tells the story of how we live out the call to work in reconciliation, in partnerships in Canada and around the globe, the ways we work to strengthen discipleship, and so much more.

Your financial support of the National Church through the ELCIC Praise Appeal helps us to continue to work on communicating the gospel message throughout our church, across Canada, and with our partners around the world.

We are currently half way through the four-year program Living our Faith initiative. This program is a way that we as a whole church we are helping each other to grow in discipleship. We began in the fall of 2019 with a year focusing on our prayer lives. In the fall of 2020 we turned to the reading of scripture through participation in a Bible Book Club. This fall we are looking at how we worship, individually in our devotional lives, and corporately as we gather together in congregations or online. I invite you all to use these resources to help us grow in discipleship so that we *Do Everything in the Name of the Lord Jesus*.

My prayer for you is that you will continue to grow in discipleship so that you will be blessed and you will be a blessing in our world. Amen.