

The Mask

Colossians 3:12-17

Preface

Illus: Wear a mask to the pulpit to demonstrate point.

People often wear masks to conceal their deepest innermost issues. We hide them from others as we fear their disapproval.

Very often Christians wear masks as well. Often, people feel that they must present themselves a certain way in order to fit in at church.

For example, we wear our religious masks to conceal our guilt and shame. Sometimes we wear our happy mask to conceal our fear, anger, hurt, grudges, worry and even depression.

In truth, church is a place where the masks should come off and we should be genuine before God. God's house is the place where we should bring the undesirable things in our life and lay them before our heavenly father. We should not be concerned about what others think but only about what God knows.

Some observations about the masks wear:

1. We wear masks to conceal things we don't want others to know.
2. Masks are uncomfortable because they force us to stay on our toes and constantly be on our guard of what we say and do.
3. It is extremely lonely behind a mask. They force us to keep our distance. They prevent us from opening up and having meaningful relationships.
4. No one is fooled by our masks. The only person fooled is the one wearing the mask and they are fooled into thinking the mask is working when it isn't.
5. God's doesn't even look at our mask. His eyes are piercing straight into our heart.

Today's text tells us how to rip away our masks and be the person God calls us to be. It tells us of our great value to God and that he has a purpose for our lives.

Scripture

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 whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ¹⁴ And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

¹⁵ Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Colossians 3:12-17 (NIV)

Introduction

Illus: In Basel (*bazil*), Switzerland each year the good protestant townspeople have a festival in which they all don masks and go through the city doing things and going places they would never consider doing/going under normal circumstances. The mask, which veiled their identity, emboldened them to do these things. One year, the Salvation Army, concerned about the abandonment of moral standards, put up signs all over the city, which read, "God sees behind the mask."

In the Bible, Eve tried to mask her selfishness (Genesis 3:1-6). Cain tried to mask his envy (Genesis 4). David tried to mask his lust (2 Samuel 12:9-19). Judas tried to mask his greed (Matthew 26:14-16), 27:3-5).

Truthfully, most of us wear masks. Sometimes, we wear masks because we want to appear more perfect than we are. But the reality of it is, all of us are so very imperfect.

My mother used to tell me, "If you always tell the truth you will never have to remember what you said." Lying is a sin. Wearing a mask is living a lie daily.

So how do we remove our masks and become the person God calls us to be?

Content

1. Recognize God's enormous love for you

Look again at verse 12 which tells us that we are God's chosen people. We are holy, set apart and dearly loved by God.

Illus: When Pam and I were first married we had nothing more than one car and her bedroom suite. We rented a 1 bedroom apartment in Mobile and went out and purchased a barbecue grill. All we had was our love for one another and that love was strong enough to launch a lifetime together.

If all God ever gave you was his love and forgiveness shown through the cross; that would be enough. He doesn't owe you and me anything beyond his love and grace, which is far more than we deserve. Realize that his love is sufficient.

God loves you regardless of your social standing or past. Never let the lack of prosperity be your gage of God's love for you.

I am convinced that most of the things we try to mask can be resolved if we can just learn to understand how dearly; how deeply God loves us.

2. Take your focus off yourself

Paul says we are to clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. This admonishment goes directly in defiance of the teachings of the world. The world tells us to look out for number one (ourselves). Yet God's Word tells us be compassionate and care about others.

Christianity is not just something you believe, it is something you experience and live. Christianity can't be fleshed out in a vacuum or behind a mask. It is only when we take our focus off ourselves and place it on others that we begin to experience the fullness of God's purpose.

Illus: I was talking with someone recently who is faithful in his church and was asked to serve in a certain capacity. He told me that he told them he did not feel that he is spiritual enough to serve. I wanted to say you are missing it. You won't feel close to God until you sacrifice a little for him. You will feel more spiritual when you are more spiritual and you will be more spiritual when you put others above yourself.

If you have ever taught Sunday School or worked in AWANA or served in any other capacity in our church, you know what I mean. The blessings come when we take the focus off of ourselves and place it on others.

3. Forgive those who have wronged you

Very often our mask hides the face of a person unwilling to forgive. I do not know how to state it any more simply than this; "One cannot have a fruitful relationship with God while refusing to forgive others."

Paul not only tells us we are to forgive one another, he says we are to bear with one another. We are to hang in there and continue to forgive.

How much are we to forgive? We are to forgive as God has forgiven us.

Illus: I have known people who went to church together yet refused to speak to one another. They harbored such great grudges that they made everyone around them uncomfortable. They harbored their grudge and hid behind their mask.

Refusing to forgive is disabling. It is like putting a wall around yourself that prevents you from moving forward.

Remove the mask and let the healing power of forgiveness begin.

4. Work at being thankful

Thankfulness has everything to do with happiness. Thankfulness is the preventative medicine that keeps us from being greedy and resentful. Thankfulness keeps us from wallowing in self-pity.

Ignoring past blessings from God causes us to become discontent.

When we lose sight of what God has done for us and we become dissatisfied, itchy and miserable. We want something else but we don't know what.

Without a thankful heart, we focus too much on what we don't have rather than what we do have.

When we stop being thankful, we take our eye off the ball and we become subject to do most anything.

Illus: When I pray, I always try to start off by thanking God for the things He has given me. I reason that if I focus on the blessing I have received from God, the things I want or feel I need, will be less significant.

Be genuinely thankful for everything God has done for you. Do you have a heart of gratitude?

5. Experience the peace of Christ

Do you want to be closer with others? Do you long to remove the mask and have a genuine friendship with others?

Do you long for a marriage relationship that is not distant and filled with resentment, jealousy or fighting?

The solution is to experience the peace that only comes in walking with Jesus Christ.

Christians are called to be unified. This applies to our church family but it also applies to our physical families. We must be in unity with one another. The closer we are to Christ, the closer we will be with each other.

¹⁵*Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace.*

We are to let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts. This means Christ should arbitrate and decide in every debate and conflict in our life.

Too often we feud and fight among ourselves and we try to wrangle out the resolutions. We just make matters worse.

We must put on the virtues of "*compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.*" We must let the peace of Christ arbitrate / rule in every circumstance.

You have heard of Judge Judy. Judge Jesus can arbitrate your conflicts to a peaceful unity.

Conclusion

Someone once defined integrity as "being the same on the outside as you are on the inside."

All people come to God broken. Maybe it's alcoholism, pornography, adultery, selfishness, temper or envy. What it is that hides behind your mask? God calls you to bring it to the cross.

Are you ready to experience the glorious relief of removing your mask before God who loves you dearly?