

Will Jesus Say Amen?

August 7, 2016

Colossians 3:12-17

Let's focus on Colossians three, verse seventeen. "*And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*" Before you say or do anything, ask yourself a simple question. Will Jesus say "Amen" to this?

That's today's main thought. **Will Jesus say "Amen" to my actions?** If the answer is "yes," then go for it! If the answer is "no," then we have some more hard thinking to do.

How do we live the New Life (Continued)? The New Life continues, or it stops being new. The New Life continues with gratitude.

But, gratitude for what? We thank God for our change of address! The Messiah, Jesus—both cosmic and crucified—moved us. We take his Good News into a desperate and dying world.

We can do that work only with good roots. With those good roots we receive power from the Holy Spirit to live like Jesus lives. That's the key to human life that is full and flourishing.

How does that full and flourishing life work out in our behavior? That's what Paul addresses in the rest of Colossians. "Christian behavior...makes you more human, not less. Self-indulgence and habitual anger and lying may seem like fun for a while, but they destroy you sooner or later—often sooner."ⁱ

Will Jesus affirm and bless my action? Or am I saying or doing something that will break my Master's heart?

Will Jesus say "Amen" to my actions?

How do we get better at this? Paul suggests two ways.

Dress for success! Since you are God's chosen and beloved children, Paul writes, "*clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.*" Paul's advice for Christian living is to dress in layers.

I have fished and camped many times in cold and wet conditions. Hard living require layered clothing. First, you need a next-to-skin layer. This layer helps regulate body temperature by moving perspiration away from your skin. This layer maintains a cool body temperature in the summer and guards against hypothermia in the winter.

For Paul, this layer is made up of "heartfelt compassion." This layer helps us regulate our spiritual and emotional temperature as we deal with one another.

The second layer is for insulation. Paul describes this layer as humility, meekness and patience. This is the layer that helps us absorb the difficulties that we can inflict on one another. The material used for this layer is forgiveness. This material is in short supply in our culture.

The outer layer is how we meet the world. It protects us from the bad weather of life. And it is the first thing that other people see on us. That's why Paul regards this layer as the most important. "*Above all,*" Paul writes, "*clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.*"

Will Jesus say "Amen" to my actions? Dressing in these layers means that the answer will probably be "yes."

Where do we find our clothing for the journey? We find these layers in Bible study and worship. "*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly,*" Paul writes to the Colossians, "*teach and admonish one another in all wisdom...*"

I want to be clear about something today. By itself, worship is not enough to allow the word of Christ to dwell in you richly. A ten minute sermon will do you very little good if you have no idea what's behind the message. That background won't seep into you from the pews. A healthy congregation has fifty percent of its adults in some sort of education or Bible study. That's not happening here at Emanuel Lutheran Church.

This fall, you will have at least three opportunities for weekly adult education here at Emanuel. On Sundays, I will lead a study after worship on the subject of forgiveness. I like doughnuts, too, but learning is more important. On Wednesday nights, I will teach a class on Jesus' parables. And our Thursday class will continue the study called "Honoring Our Neighbors' Faith."

"*And with gratitude in your hearts,*" Paul continues, "*sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God.*" Worship is intended to change you from grumpy to grateful. If you come to worship to be seen, or because it's expected, or because it's a social occasion, then you're not getting it. We come to worship so that our hearts will be changed. When our hearts are changed, our actions are right and holy.

Will Jesus say "Amen" to my actions? It's more likely if those actions are shaped by regular Bible study and frequent worship. Sometimes people want pastors to deliver specific instructions on how to behave. You may notice that Paul does very little of that. Instead, he tells us how to choose the right course of action. That involves dressing up in Jesus and being filled with his word.

The result is clear. "*[W]hatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*" Are you dressed up in Jesus and filled with his word? Jesus will say yes to those actions ever time. Let's pray...

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ⁱ Wright, *Prison Letters*, page 181.