**Colossians 3:12-17 (ESV)**

**12**  Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, **13**  bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. **14** And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. **15** And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. **16** Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. **17** 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.

**“Christ Born In Us”**

 Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen. Since many follow the tradition to pack up their decorations the day after Christmas. It is not surprising to see that the holiday “niceties” between people go away just as well. Even the news took time to be lighthearted on Christmas, but the following days returned to the heartaches that keep viewers watching. December 25th is a special day for our society, but thankfully, Christmas is a whole season in the Church. It might only be a couple of weeks long, but extending out our celebration teaches an important point. Where there is birth. There is life. God’s love in the manger was not temporary, but His life among sinners.

 Simeon noticed how Mary’s child was far more promising than the picture of purification at the temple. Jesus was the love of God made flesh for this sinful world. His life would shine into the darkness exposing all lives to truth of the Gospel. Simeon said, “Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed**…**so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.” Christmas reveals the One born, is the One life set upon the cross calling all to repent and believe in Him. St. Paul preached to the Colossian Christians this birth given by baptism in to Jesus. Rather than a momentary washing of water, God’s life was at work in them. Salvation is not a stagnant solution as some see it. Christ born in us is our blessing for life.

 This is life where love comes from Christ. “Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.” As in the winter months, a jacket brings warmth to the body. The warmth of Christian living at the present resides in these words from St. Paul. It stands out in this cold-hearted world of sin, death, and the Devil. The appeal made by Lutheran World Relief for the Malaria project is in-line with putting on this New Man made out of baptism. “Christ’s call for unconditional mercy forms our Lutheran response to malaria. He calls us to work with the most vulnerable and to give love, care and help to those suffering among us” (LMI Brochure)

 Love is what stands between others and us as Christians. As we heard, “And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.” This love does not rest in sinful man’s definitions or trying to measure the success of our love. Instead, what binds the Christian life together comes from Jesus. He already made us God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved. It is this child born of Mary whose life stands out in love for sinners. As our Lutheran Father state, “Our love does not free us from shame when God judges and accuses us, but faith in Christ frees us in the midst of these fears because we know that for Christ’s sake we are forgiven” (Tappert 141:239). Such forgiving love from the Father in His Son is the foundation, the walls, and the covering that brings perfect harmony to how we love as the baptized. As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved. We despise our self-love to put on love made right by the Savior.
 This is life where peace is in Christ. “And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.” This is the peace that comes about by terms of a relationship. God showed such a peace given when He delivered His people Israel. It is what they were to teach their children saying, “By a strong hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery.” Simeon saw the same peace at work in the face of Mary’s child saying, “Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples…” The peace of Christ is not run by an external order of men. Instead, it is when God brings His life as comfort against sin, death, and the Devil.

 Peace is hard to come by now days, even among Christians. The heart of man is naturally unstable since the fall in to sin. In addition, what rules the heart ends up as no comfort to sinners be it the Law, works, or self. In contrast to this Isaiah declared, “You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you” (Isaiah 26:3). In baptism, the life of Jesus is peace poured upon our lives. It is not solving all the problems as we see them, but God giving the gift He sees in His Son. Christ rules the heart of His Church, His baptized, with peace built upon Him. It is not worshiping the body, but “…holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God” (Col 2:19). Christ established this relationship by His sacrifice as what stands against the violence of sin, death, and the Devil. Luther tells us, “Though the peace of the world and the flesh abides not, though you must witness the forces of discord and disruption, nevertheless let your hearts have peace in Christ” (Postils Vol. 4 86).

 This is life where thanks is over Christ. “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.” If Christ is to rule in hearts, He does this by dwelling in lives. The Word made flesh gave a reason for Simeon to sing thanks to God after seeing Mary’s Child. We take up the same song of Simeon after receiving the Word made flesh at the Lord’s Supper seeing His true body and blood given and shed for the forgiveness of all our sins. God wants to dwell with His people to be our salvation. To have the Word of Christ, the Word of God, is life among the baptized. Jesus says, “Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you” (John 15:3). Christ dwells by His Word to saturate our whole life to be in Him.

 Thanks is always over what God gives by His Word. It does not add to life but Christ continues to be born in our lives. As we say in the collect for today, “Grant that we may ever be alive in Him who made Himself to be like us.” It is the Word that remains as life for the baptized. St. Paul says, “Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. (Colossians 1:28). There are many ways to look at life. As a plan to be managed. As a possession belonging to me. As a journey with no destination. Yet, these all end in death apart from the Word that reveals Jesus. Baptism declares life to be before God by virtue of His Son. “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.” Christmas is about celebrating what God has done and still does for us. Christ born in us is our blessing for life. Amen. Now may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting, Amen.