

Patches Pals

Clothing Ourselves With Christ

August 18, 2024

Today we're looking at the difference between imitators, imposters, and impersonators!

So: **Who are you wearing?** It's a common question for stars; and a couple Sundays back, we saw that God is called "the Father of lights" (Jms 1:17) because we're called His shining stars, because:

Those who lead many to righteousness, [shine] like the stars – Daniel 12:3 NIV

For they [those needing our leading] being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. – Romans 10:3-4 NKJ



[And so] I put on righteousness, and it clothed me – Job 29:14 NKJ

For [God] [through Christ] has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness – Isaiah 61:10 NKJ



Obviously, when stars are asked *who they're wearing*, it isn't *literal*. It means: **Who's inspiration and work are you showcasing with your clothing?** Because it's a big deal when stars cover themselves with a chosen designer's creation, **to become a walking display of their work to the world.**



So then let us [shining stars of righteousness] cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. ... [In other words, since Jesus is the Light of the world] Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, [and display His work] and [make sure you] make no provision for the flesh – Romans 13:12-14 ESV



Because, **a believer who leads a double life, is an imposter.** Pretending (mostly to themselves) to be something they aren't. **Behaving differently depending on the setting or situation.** Which we all do, to some degree, but as a rule, **dearly loved children sincerely imitate their parents.** So, do you wear Jesus wherever you go? Because, **if you lead a double life, you'll lead no one to the Light.** To authentically "put on" Christ is to consistently ...



Clothe yourselves with *compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience*. ... and forgive ... as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, [because "God is love" (1 Jn 4:8)] – Colossians 3:12-15 NIV



Any Patches Pals here? J.P. was a childhood role model for me. I got that autographed photo at a Father-Son Banquet at the Elks Club in the 60s. And in the 70s, I got to go on his show. Twice! And I helped him save Tyky Turkey from Boris S. Wort. **J.P. had many J.C. qualities.** He was kind and caring and patient; and tireless in his fund-raising efforts for the Seattle Children's hospital.



And in the 80s, he got to come to the Ark. And it was surreal. Especially when Gertrude tearfully thanked us for shaping children’s lives in a godly way. And when J.P. passed away in 2012, I felt compelled to make costumes for Shar and myself for Arktoberfest. And I’ll confess, I went a bit nuts with the accuracy of the details. But that’s because, **I was honoring him by portraying him as sincerely and correctly as I could.** It took a lot of effort to “put on” J.P. Patches, but **it wasn’t a chore, it was a joy and delight.** Because, **it was a labor of love** for a man who holds a significant place in my childhood memories.



[And] When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. [But] When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. – 1 Corinthians 13:11 NIV

Remember what Jesus asked His “patches pals”?



“Who would patch old clothing with new **[unshrunk]** cloth? For the new patch would shrink and rip away from the old **[worn out]** cloth, leaving an even bigger tear than before.” – Matthew 9:16 NLT



Jesus didn’t go to the cross just to provide a patch on a worn-out way of living a comfortable double life. He died and rose to replace it with His “armor of light”. He came to comfort the afflicted by calling sinners to repentance. So, **salvation is a call to action!** And it’s all or nothing.



Old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. – 2 Cor 5:17 NKJ

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ – 2 Corinthians 5:20 NAS

[And] “I now send you ... to turn them from darkness to light” – Acts 26:17-18 NKJ

Ambassadors are messengers who make their home in a foreign land (like down here) without compromising allegiance to their homeland (like up there). And an ambassador’s purpose is to faithfully represent their true ruler. So, **do you try to patch Jesus onto your life, or fit your life into Christ?** Because that first way – patches pals – will pull you in two directions till it tears you apart.

For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. – Galatians 3:27 NIV

And it’s just not possible to weave an old sinful or self-centered lifestyle into that fabric.

[So] Put on the new self, created to be like God – Ephesians 4:24 NIV

I loved Noah’s analogy about how improve actors will transform into a character the audience shouts out. And he said to **picture ourselves shopping for fruit, or buying shoes, or calling tech support – and then someone yells, “Now do it like Jesus!”** Because, that’s what the real you, functioning 100% in your created purpose and capacity looks like: **you acting like a Christ-like you.** A standard routine for imitators is to ask something like: “What if Robert De Niro worked in a complaint department?” “You talkin’ to me?” **Well, picture this: what if Jesus was you?**

[Therefore] Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. – 3 John 11 NKJ

Do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations – Deuteronomy 18:9 NIV

Imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. – Hebrews 6:12 NKJ

Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. – Hebrews 13:7 NIV

Therefore [Paul said] I urge you, imitate me. – 1 Corinthians 4:16 NKJ

Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ. – 1 Corinthians 11:1 NKJ

But [even] Jesus [the ultimate image of God (Col 1:15)] said ... “The Son does only what He sees the Father doing, because the Son does whatever the Father does. – John 5:19 NCV

[And therefore] “Whoever has seen Me has seen the Father.” – John 14:9 ESV

And that’s because:

[You were] created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. – Ephesians 4:24 NIV



But, hold the phone! The oldest temptation in the book (*literally*) is when the serpent says:

“Your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” – Genesis 3:5 NIV

So, were we created to *be* or *not* to “*be like God*”? Yes. To be *and* not to be. Notice Paul’s qualification: “in true righteousness and holiness”. In a nutshell, Paul tells us to **take on God’s nature by embracing His authority**. Whereas that crafty ol’ enemy tries to tempt us to **take on God’s authority by defying His nature**. Which is called *impersonating* – using someone else’s identity and authority to create a false credibility. **It’s also known as identity theft**. So whenever we try to control anyone or anything in any way *unbecoming* for our Father, we’re falling for the oldest trick in the book: **playing God rather than portraying God**. We’re not called to *be* God, but *godly*. Cuz there’s a big difference between “knowing good and evil” and using that knowledge to put on “righteousness and holiness”.

[So] Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and [joyfully] live a [single, consistent] life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. – Ephesians 5:1-2 NIV



In my experience, **children offer two basic fragrances**. Nothing is more pleasing than a freshly washed and powdered baby. And nothing is more pungent than the reason they needed to be washed.



Now thanks be to God who ... through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge ... For we are to God the fragrance of Christ ... For we are not, as so many, peddling the Word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God [as ambassadors] – 2 Corinthians 2:14-17 ESV

[Because] He is like a *father* to us, tender and sympathetic to those who reverence Him. For He knows we are *but dust* – Psalm 103:13-14 TLB

Well, that's *one* way to *put* it; but I *still prefer* saying: *baby powder*. Either way ...

Regarding your former way of life, you were taught to strip off your old man ... and to clothe yourselves with the new man – Ephesians 4:22-24 ISV

Cuz the old you has the fragrance of an old diaper. But the reborn you, reflecting Jesus, is pleasing as *baby powder*. And remember: **Christianity's greatest confirmation is the new you it produces.**



We were created to bear God's image by maturing in His character. Not out of guilt or pressure or threat of punishment; but joyfully. Like me and J.P. "When I was a child, I talked like a child". Want confirmation? Long before there was a way to record video, we had cassette tapes. And mom recorded the audio of that show. I have a 50-year-old recording of a 12-year-old me and my best friend Steve, marching in to announce the upcoming bicentennial, and to help J.P. save Tyky Turkey! I share all this because I realized I have a unique insight into what it means to put on Christ. Cuz one year after J.P. passed away, on the anniversary, I put on J.P. Patches; clothed myself in his character; and walked around Seattle, imitating his manner. And I handed out cards to raise funds, in his name, for the Children's Hospital. **I just had to go out and do what he did, cuz I just loved who he was.** And, **I didn't want people to see me; I wanted 'em to see J.P. because of me.** And this is the same way we should approach clothing ourselves with Christ. So, **who are you honoring by the way you're living?** Hopefully you've put childish ways behind, and it's first and foremostly Jesus. We've been picturing our planet, sailing through the darkness down here, like a big ol' ship. God's workmanship. And as ambassadors of Christ, the moment we put our feet on the floor, we're on deck! Because **it's not merely about putting on, but taking on** – taking on the nature and character of the Captain of our salvation, by taking up His mantle.

And before I ever preached the idea of walking the deck down here as the captain, I practiced it – to help me act like the real me. And, early on, I was at a grocery store pharmacy, watching a young mom, holding a sick, crying baby, while being berated by a stressed out cashier and an angry pharmacist, over a prescription mix-up. But the mom kept her calm. Even thanked 'em. A little later, as I was leaving, all that kept going through my mind was, **"Who's the captain?" "What am I supposed to do?" "Who's the captain?" "She's long gone." "Who's the captain?" "It's a big store."** But, I went back and found her still shopping (her baby now sleeping). "Uh ... now what?" "Who's the captain?" So this is what ended up coming out: "Excuse me, I saw what happened, and I just wanted to say I'm proud of you." She just bursts into tears. Sobbing! Saying something about her sick baby and her failure as a mom. Now I'm crying. Saying something about God's strength and praying for her. And then I left. And all the way to my car I'm thinking: **"Who's the captain?" "I'm the captain! "Who's the captain?" "I'm the captain! And, I genuinely care for my passengers and encourage my crew in the honor of my Creator and Savior!"**

So, who'll you be wearing, Captain? Cuz that was infinitely more fulfilling than saving Tyky Turkey!

Father God, thank You for loving me in spite of my sin; forgive me and cleanse me by the sacrifice of Your Son, my Savior; and free me and lead me by Your Spirit and Word, as I seek to trust and follow Jesus Christ, as the Lord of my life. Amen.