**Put on Christ**

Based on [Romans 13:8-14](http://biblia.com/books/esv/Ro13.8-14)

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Advent Midweek 1

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Some years ago on the radio, I heard something like 80 percent of Canadians polled "**Feel younger than the person in the mirror**." 80 percent. 80 percent agree that there is a disconnect in *how they look* (old) versus *how they feel* (young). You look in the mirror and think "**I don't feel that old**", It prompts the question...how the world would you know how "**that old**" feels. You've never been your age before.

I looked it up and 28 percent said aging makes them feel less secure. The biggest concerns were weight gain; women were concerned about wrinkles; men, of course, hair loss. But here's another thing...59 percent try to regain a "feeling of youth" by purchasing new clothes.

Do you see the pattern? Everyone says they already "feel young" until they see themselves in the mirror. Then they "sober up" and feel old, and so they go out and purchase new clothes to regain the "feel young again"...and I suppose that lasts until their clothes feel old and they look in the mirror again. Sounds a lot like a cycle of addiction.

And it is. Mankind has been trying to hide his shame since the beginning. At our first sin, Adam and Eve's first instinct was to go out and find new clothes because they felt exposed. And that wasn't a bad thing to do...to try to hide their ugliness. God made them clothes of animal skins, because people should care about what they look like. Only a slob would do otherwise.

In today's epistle, St. Paul reminds us that the world is older than it was yesterday. It seems like an obvious point, but we do evidently, go to great pains to make ourselves look younger, after a while we might begin to believe it. You're not getting any younger, neither is the world. And as Paul says, "**salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed.**" The world is dying, so are you. That's what the mirror is *supposed* to show you.

But someone might say, "You are only as old as you feel"...that's a sentimental falsehood. You are as old as you are, and probably as old as you look like in the mirror first thing in the morning. *Everything else is what you “put on.”*

Now, there's nothing wrong with wanting to look and feel better than you are. It's just sad that people run to the shopping malls and the plastic surgeon to do it. It is the hope of every Christian to look and feel better than you are. You are after all, a sinner. And let's be clear, that doesn't mean you just make well intentioned mistakes. Our hearts are curved inward. And if there's any doubt about it, God's word says so.

We are by nature sinful and unclean. So, if you go to the mirror and expect to find your beauty there, you're going to be among the 80 percent who are shocked to see how many wrinkles and flaws they have. You will be among the 80 percent who are shocked to see that their spare tire is now a full-size, and their hairline has receded. If you go to the mirror to find your righteousness, you are only going to be disappointed.

Do you want to know why the world feels so depressed, today? It's because we teach people to believe in themselves. We teach self-esteem. The world teaches that the answer to our happiness lies in ourselves, and so it's constantly telling us we should be pleased with the person in the mirror...but their wrong. If you look to yourself to find happiness, you will only be driven to despair.

Despair is the natural state of the human being in a sinful world. That's why Paul reminds us of two things in this epistle. (1) This sinful world is going to die, so don't be surprised to see signs of its aging and yours...that just means the end at hand, and with it, the new beginning. (2) Be prepared for the day to come by putting on the armor of light.

This armor is not something that you can buy at the shopping mall. This armor of light, is the light of the world. The light that shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot overcome it. The armor of light that you put on is the full armor of God. The belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the boots of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit which is the word of God. Your flesh is weak; so you need God's armor.

You know, that survey had one more disturbing statistic. Only 10 percent of those polled about how they look said that the reason they wanted to look good was ***for other people***. **90 percent** wanted to improve their appearance to feel good ***about themselves***. Isn't that astounding? I mean since the 60s, modern education has been teaching kids to "believe in yourself", and society has pushed a huge campaign for teaching people "self-esteem." And in spite of all this indoctrination...90 percent of people still need to look good to feel good. You can’t change human nature with a slogan.

Truth is, there is nothing good but God. If you want to look good, you have to look like Jesus. I don't mean long hair and sandals. And I don't mean doing a whole bunch of charity work either. The world teaches you to look into yourself to find what is right, but that only makes self-rightous people. **Self-righteousness is the problem; Christ rightousness is the answer.** In order to look good in God's eyes, the only eyes that matter really, you need to be covered with Christ.

And so, Paul **says put on the Lord Jesus Christ**. How? In your baptism. Most people think that you become like Christ by copying him, and yes he is our example. But we cannot act like him without first having been covered by his righteousness by grace through faith. You become like Christ by wearing his baptism, and the repentance and faith that comes with it, everyday. Paul says in Galatians, "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." When you remember your baptism, then you have the mind of Christ. Then you may walk properly in the daylight.

So what shall we say? Go out and shop to find new clothes, so that you can look good for other people, for the sake of your neighbor? Sure. But don't shop for clothes to *fool yourself* into thinking your younger or better than you are. You have **one set of clothes** that you put on every morning when you wake from sleep. You put on your baptism. You remember that Christ is your salvation.

When you look in the mirror and see how old you are, there's only one way to feel better about it. Cast off your works of darkness and put on the armor of light. That means repent and remember that you have been covered by Jesus Christ, and be mindful of what you think, say and do—that it is in accord with sound doctrine and a good spirit. To do this, you need to look in the mirror...not the one in your bathroom, but the mirror of the Law.

You need to consider God’s commandments and how you have fallen short of them. You look in the mirror just long enough to remind you that your salvation is not shown in your appearance, physical or spiritual. It is show in the mercy and forgiveness of your sins in Jesus Christ. Repent, turn away from the mirror and fix your eyes on him. He is the only righteous one. And at your baptism he sanctified you, and cleansed you by the washing of water with the word, so that you don't need a nip and tuck; and you'll never need another set of clothes when you stand before god; because the bridegroom has presented you, his bride in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, so that you might be holy and without blemish.