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Colossians 3:12-17
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Binding Wounds, Building Wisdom

Hallelujah, Christ is born to us. Our savior and king rests in a manger, a child of the poor who feels our pain and knows our sorrows. Hallelujah!

Good morning Church. This Christmas Sunday we're going to try to figure out the true meaning of Christmas. Is it a kind of holiday cheer, buying gifts for one another, or something else. I hope that we can dive deep into Colossians, to discover what it means for us to be clothed with love. And become a community of healing and building wisdom.

Please pray with me. May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts be pleasing to you. Our rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Do any of you here have a holiday tradition of watching Christmas movies or books during the month of December? I've watched my fair share of Christmas movies, but when I figured out that my girlfriend, Ellie, was starring in a community theater production of the Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens. So, if you know anything about me, you know that I quickly went through and read the book. A book written almost exactly 178 years and a week ago, so I hope you'll forgive me for spoiling the plot. This is the book with Ebenezer Scrooge, the greedy meany, and his conversation with the spirits of Christmas past, present, and future as they convince Scrooge to be more generous to the poor, spend time with his family, and pay his employee better, so that little Timmy can live.

What I was struck by most is Scrooge's path to redemption, which shows how he fell into this greedy meany ways in the first place. Yes, Scrooge had difficult home life and social anxiety, but his real mistake that he feels most sharply is when his fiancée ends their relationship because he clothed himself with money so tightly, that he no longer

loved her. In fact, this greedy meany behavior is literally displayed by chains, when Scrooge's business partner comes in, clothed in chains, that he made himself of his own freewill. And if Scrooge does not quit his greedy meany ways, his fate will be the same. A not so subtle warning of damnation for Scrooge's economic sinfulness. Thank you for coming to my ted talk.

And I know that real life is much more complicated than the smooth and easy prose. I could tell you some stories of my own family. How some of the Marks got so obsessed with greed and perfection that they pushed away everyone they loved. Likewise I have other stories of people who aren't perfect, but surrounded themselves with community and found belonging there. What stories do you have of your own family, friends, or even yourself? When have you witnessed someone being so consumed by a passion that they ignore all other things like family and friends?

But today I have two things to tell you about how Scrooge and Colossians agree. It matters what you let rule your life. And if you let Christ and love rule your life, then you have the necessary ingredients for a healthy community built upon healing and wisdom.

So what rules your life? This is more than just being kind to people or generically being a good person. But instead what is the underlying logic that dictates your life. For greedy meany scrooge, he was ruled by his fear, the world is hard so he used money to protect himself. But no amount of money can ever protect him from everything, and in the end people celebrated his death because of all the pain his greediness had caused people. I too have witnessed this in my own relationships.

But if we let compassion rule our everyday lives, then we will open our hearts. If I let compassion rule my life then I would not be able to accept other families suffering, something I would not choose for my own family. Do to others what you would have them do to you. In this way, we become a community of healers, binding up the wounds of all peoples.

Letting love rule our lives is not a ruleless wishy washy command. But a difficult road to travel, which is why, thanks be to God, we don't walk this road alone.

We get to figure this out together. Bear with one another. Forgive each other. Teach and admonish one another.

I do not believe that Christ is calling us to be perfect, Christ is calling us to struggle together. The assumption in the command to forgive one another is the acknowledgement that we're going to mess up . We're going to disagree on what clothing ourselves with love means. Because let's face it. This Christ following stuff is hard. We're going to have to learn it as we go, we're going to learn from one another. This community of Christ followers is built up by wisdom.

And as we celebrate Christmas together as a community of healing and wisdom, remember whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Amen.