

# “Six relational graces: Colossians 3:14”

Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost – November 7, 2021

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## Scripture reading – Col 3:12-14

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. <sup>13</sup> Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. <sup>14</sup> And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

## Introduction

- We’ve been examining this text which tells us so much about who we are and how we should live as followers of Jesus. Who we are is detailed in v.12a: How we should act is detailed in vv.12b-14. Today we’ll focus on the list of graces or virtues in vv. 12b-13.

## Exposition: Six ways Christians are meant to relate together

- There are many “virtue lists” in the NT: Gal 5:22-23; Eph 4:32; 1 Tim 4:12; 6:11; 2 Tim 2:22; 3:10; James 3:17-18; 2 Peter 1:5-7; cf. 2 Cor 6:6; Phil 4:8. This one is unusual in that it contains only relational virtues (no joy, holiness, righteousness, faith, purity, etc.).
  - These graces counter the five vices listed in v.8.
  - These six graces get expressed when we “put on” the “new self” (v.10). They grow out of out of our new identity as “chosen, holy, dearly loved” ones in Christ (v.12).
1. **Compassion** is *oiktirmós* – “pity, mercy, compassion; the guts.” Latin *compati*; *pati* – “suffer” and *com* – “with”; “to suffer with.” The idea is that you choose to let your own guts be by the suffering of another. Opposite of apathy. Compassion embodies a deep awareness of the suffering of another coupled with the determination to relieve it. Cf. Mk 1:41.

2. **Kindness** is *chrestotes* – “goodness, kindness.” Ray Stedman: “Kindness is action that reveals compassion, action that arises out of a sense of sympathy. It can take many different forms---a smile, a kind word, a pat on the shoulder, an invitation to lunch, an offer of help. We are to put on compassion and kindness as we start our day and throughout the day.” Cf. Rom 2:4. We underestimate the power of a small act of kindness.
  
  3. **Humility** is *tapeinophrosyne* – “modesty, lowliness of mind; having a humble opinion of oneself and one’s moral smallness.” Cf. Lk 18:9-14. Eng. “humility” – humus, earth, dirt (Gen 2:7). Makes us approachable. Beware of false humility, which is unbelief masquerading as virtue.
  
  4. **Gentleness** is *prautes* – “mildness of spirit, power brought under control.” Not a doormat. An equestrian term referring to a wild horse that has been gentled by its master. Cf. Matt 11:28-30.
  
  5. **Patience** is *markothumia* (*markos* – long, far off; *thumos* – anger, temper; “long tempered or long suffering”). English idiom is to have a “long fuse.” Cf. Ex 34: 6-7. “It reflects an emotional calm in face of provocation or misfortune. *Makrothumia* is the capacity... to bear up under the oversights and wrongs afflicted by others without retaliating.” Unoffendable.
  
  6. **Bear with each other** is *anecho*, Lit: “put up with each other”, “to endure, to hold out in spite of persecution, threats, injury, indifference, or complaints and not retaliate.” To not give up on each other. Cf. Rom 15:1.
- It’s easy to understand how each of these is indispensable to our relationships.