

Growing in Faith Together God’s Love on the Loose, the Gospel According to Dr. Seuss HGB 9.13.15

Good morning! It is so good to see you, ALL of you, for Growing in Faith Together. It is a gift to worship God through interactive learning for all ages. We begin today, “Rally Day,” a day to welcome everyone here...whether you were with us over the summer, or not, even if this is your first visit to Christ the King. Today we say (SLIDE) “Welcome” and “Welcome back.”

Did you have a good summer? Amazing things happened. I got married! Remember how I used to joke that I was a pastor, not a nun? I finally got someone to believe me! We did our Thailand Trek through Vacation Bible School and greeted people by saying, “Sawatdee.” We learned that God is real, God is love, God is forgiving, and God is forever. Believe it! Try that with me. Believe it! We did SUNNY lunches, the Block Party, and more. We had a great summer, and now we begin our church-school year.

A special greeting to one of my favorite characters in the whole world. This character is found in a book, and now a movie. Is it...(SLIDE) who...Harry Potter? No. Is it...(SLIDE) Winnie the Pooh? No. (SLIDE) Batman? No. (SLIDE) Nemo? No. It’s not even Jesus, though I’m sure he’s glad you’re here today. Let me show you. First, we start with a bowtie, and then some whiskers, then, some gloves...and perhaps a hat? Who do we get? Cat in the Hat! The beloved Dr. Seuss character. Remember him?

The story goes he came and visited a brother and sister and said, (SLIDE) “Why do you sit there like that?” “I know its is wet and the sun is not sunny. Be we can have lots of good fun that is funny.” The kids’ fish said, “No! No! Make that cat go away. Tell that Cat in the Hat you do not want to play.” (SLIDE) “Have no fear! Have no fear!” said the cat. “My tricks are not bad,” said the Cat in the Hat. Pretty soon (SLIDE) he started to juggle everything he could find, but he came down from up on the ball and they saw all the things fall. It was a mess! Soon came a box (SLIDE) with Thing One and Thing Two, but further damage they did do! After a time of fun, it was time to be done. Quickly everything was cleaned up by the Cat, (SLIDE) and as quickly as he came, he left with a tip of his hat!

Today, we get to channel our inner Cats in the Hat, the spirited, joyful, sometimes helpful, sometimes messy, one in all of us, and explore more of Dr. Seuss. Our worship today has been in the likeness of Dr. Seuss. His books communicate great messages that help us think about God and the ways we follow Jesus.

Dr. Seuss’ stories are ones many of us grew up with, shared with kids and grandchildren, perhaps your favorite book can be recited without even opening a book. Yertle the...Turtle, Fox in...Socks, How the Grinch Stole...Christmas, Green Eggs and...Ham, Oh the Places You’ll...Go, One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish...Blue Fish. We aren’t worshipping Dr. Seuss today but we are using his creativity to help us think about our new theme:

Clothed with compassion. These words come from the book of Colossians. (SLIDE) Read them with me: “As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and

patience.” We will be taking a closer look at these words in the weeks to come, but today we are going to focus on how we are chosen by God and made holy to clothe ourselves with compassion every day. **We are clothed with compassion.**

Clothed is a word that means to wear something. Raise your hand if you put on clothing this morning. We all did, right? Though each of us is unique, every day we get up and put on clothes so we can eat, move, play, learn, and work. We put on...what?...underwear, shirts, ties, pants, shorts, dresses, skirts, socks, and shoes. You can see these things hanging from the ceiling in the hallway, even with the shirts here today. (SLIDE) When we put on clothes they become a part of who we are. They are our part of our identity. They show who we are to the world.

God has a wardrobe for each of us to wear every day. We are **clothed with...compassion.** Now it’s not an actual piece of clothing like a pair of pants or a shirt that we physically put on, though sometimes we put on a t-shirt to remind us, it’s something that we have in our minds and hearts. God says to each of us, “You are holy, you are chosen, you are mine.” One of the ways we celebrate this is in baptism. When we are splashed with water and hear the words, “I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,” God names us and claims us, and even after that water dries, we know we are God’s beloved forever. (SLIDE) *Today you are you that is truer than true! There is no one alive who is you-er than you.* You are God’s holy and chosen ones, wrapped in God’s love! Shout loud, “I am lucky to be what I am. *Thank goodness I’m not a clam or a ham, or a dusty old jar of sour gooseberry jam!*”

No matter what we wear or where we go, we are holy and called to live with compassion. It is a gift! And it is one that keeps on giving. God doesn’t just say, “You have a gift and you have a gift and you have a gift, “ like Oprah, and that’s the end of the story. We are to share what we have, our time, our money, our things, our love and care, with everyone. Our world has a lot of problems in it, and our friends, neighbors, even people we don’t know or like, need our help, just like we need theirs. Like Thing 1 and Thing 2, we are (SLIDE) Chosen 1, and we can think of everyone else as being Chosen 2. We belong to one another. We need each other, and we are to act with compassion.

Easy to say, harder to do. We sin, we mess up. We hurt one another. We can be mean! We fight, gossip, and judge. We say we love all people and we don’t. We air our dirty laundry, and other’s too. We focus on ourselves first, me, me, me, me, me and what I want, not always thinking about others. God wants more for us *and from us*—not because we need to in order for Jesus to love or forgive us, but because our world needs us. We can choose how to act—we can be crabby, ungrateful, and mean, or we can choose to be grateful, kind, and compassionate. We can listen instead of yell, we can care and forgive, we can be good to

one another. (SLIDE) *You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself any direction you choose. We are to be **clothed with...compassion.***

Jesus knew this. There is a great story in the Bible (SLIDE) about a clever man who thought he knew all the rules for living God's way. He asked Jesus, "What must I do to live forever with God?" Jesus said, "What do the commandments say?" First, love God. Second, love your neighbor as much as you love yourself. The man asked, "Who's my neighbor?" Jesus answered with a story.

A man was traveling down a scary road by himself. All of a sudden, a group of men jumped out. They stole his money and hurt him really badly, and left him by the side of the road. (SLIDE) A little while later, a priest was going down the road. He saw the man, but didn't want to help and walked on the other side of the road. Later, another person did the same thing. Then another person, a Samaritan, came, and saw the man was hurt and stopped to help. He put bandages on his cuts, and took him to the nearest hotel for him to stay and rest. (SLIDE) The Samaritan paid for the innkeeper to take care of the hurt man. He wanted to do anything to help. After Jesus finished the story, he asked "Which of the three men was a good neighbor?" The answer? The one who helped him. Jesus said, "God wants us to help everyone. People of every size, shaped, and color, and from every country are important to God. Now, go and be like the Samaritan and help everyone."

We are (SLIDE) **clothed with...compassion...for everyone!** We are dressed in the outfit God handpicked for us, covered with kindness our neighbors can touch! Called to live humbly we put others first, serving our neighbors who hunger and thirst. These words come from a new song we will learn in a few minutes. (SLIDE) *Just as a person's a person, no matter how small, a neighbor's a neighbor, no matter the call. (SLIDE) Unless someone like you care a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not. We are (SLIDE) to step up with care and great tact, and remember that life's a great balancing act.*

How are we to clothe the world with compassion? The possibilities are endless! (SLIDE) *Think left and think right, think low and think high. Oh, the things you can think up if only you try!* They can be big—like welcoming refugees of war or donating birthday money to a charity. They can be smaller, like volunteering today with God's Work, Our Hands, or sharing hugs. Friends, let's clothe our community with compassion this week. There are paper shirts throughout the church that have ideas. We want each of you to take one! Seriously! Unclip them, and do them. Don't like the idea or find a blank one? Come up with your own. You can tweet or Facebook message a genuine compliment to 3 people, bring a treat to work to thank your colleagues, smile!, put your phone away and join in real conversation, call your grandparents, call your grandkids, do something for a loved one before they ask, like unloading the dishwasher, taking out the garbage, be the first person to put a tip in the tip jar at the coffee shop, buy something for the person behind you in the drive thru!

We also have Chosen 1 and Chosen 2 stickers to share. Take a set. Put one on you, and give the other to someone else this week as reminder that those you love, and even those you are struggling to love, are chosen and holy too.

(SLIDE) You're off to great places. Today is your day. Your mountain is waiting, so get on your way. Like Horton we can listen to the cries of the world. Like the Lorax we can speak for the trees. Like Sam I Am and his Green Eggs and Ham, we just have to try, we don't have to be shy.

And when become like star-bellied Sneetches who turn our noses up at our sisters and bothers, or become greedy like Yertle the Turtle and want more, even if it hurts others, let's tell one another "no," "don't be a silly goose. Remembering Dr. Seuss, let's set God's love on the loose!

(SLIDE) Will we succeed? Yes, we will indeed. And, even if not, today is gone. Today is fun. Tomorrow is another one. Every day from here to there wonderful things are happening everywhere.

Oh the places you'll go with God by your side. We are clothed with...compassion, and have Jesus as our guide. Amen.