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Spring Clearning

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We've all had that moment where the house finally looks clean. The drawer that wouldn't close can finally shut or might now even be empty. The cluttered corner is cleared. The junk that's been piling up for months—gone. The surfaces are wiped down, the floor is clear. For a brief moment you stand back and you probably think, *“Ah.... That feels better.”*

There's something satisfying about removing what doesn't belong. And over the past couple of weeks, we've been examining what doesn't belong. First, we had to open the drawer—taking an honest inventory of what's actually there in our lives. Then we started clearing the clutter—letting go of things that were taking up space in our hearts and minds, things that were weighing us down more than we realized, giving up room to grow. But if you've ever done a real deep clean, you know something else is true: it's one thing to empty a space... it's another thing to decide what goes back in.

As our kids have grown through different seasons of life, we've replaced old things with what fits the next stage. The baby swing got changed out for the exersaucer, which then

became a highchair at the table, then bikes in the garage, backpacks by the door, and now it's becoming car keys and many shoes by the door. Each stage brought something new — not because the old things were bad, but because growth meant making room for what was needed next. An empty room doesn't stay empty for long. Just like an empty life doesn't stay empty either. Something always comes back in to fill the space. So, how do we actually grow in Christ now that the clutter is gone?

And that's where we come to the final step in this series. Spiritual renewal isn't just about subtraction. It's not only about removing what doesn't belong. It's about reordering our lives around what matters most. If all we ever do is clear things out, we can still end up distracted, still end up disordered, still end up filling our lives with things that don't give life.

So the question isn't just: *What do I need to remove?* The deeper question is: *What is going to take its place? How do we cultivate spiritual growth daily?*

This is where we can hear the words from Paul in Colossians 3. He doesn't start with behaviour. He doesn't start with rules. He starts with identity. He says: *"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ..."* In other words, before you ever clean anything up, you have to know who you are. Remember what we heard in Psalm 139:13–16 at the beginning of this series: "For it was you who formed my

inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes beheld my unformed substance. In your book were written all the days that were formed for me, when none of them as yet existed.”

So, what are you here for? Now, I don't necessarily mean, sitting in the pew you're in, in this building, at this moment, though that is definitely part of it, but what are you here on Earth for? Think of that for a moment...what would be your response?

As a preacher once wrote in the 1970's, “The two most important days in your life are the day you are born and the day you find out why.” Now, I'm assuming you know the day you were born, it's on your birth certificate, you've probably celebrated it many times as a family throughout your life. But, do you know why?

I would argue the day you find out why is even more important, and this comes with your walk with Christ. When you realize that God, the God of the universe made you, and made you for a purpose, your entire life changes. What is that purpose?...to praise and worship Him. It isn't about the career you hold, your status in society, the

amount of money in your bank account, the titles before or after your name, the number of followers you have, the approval of other people, your accomplishments, your popularity, your possessions, or even how successful the world says you are. Your purpose is deeper than all of that. You were created first and foremost to know God, to love Him, to reflect Him, and to praise Him with your life. And so, once you take away the clutter from your life, what you put back in, is it to know God? Is it to reflect Him? Is it to praise Him? Is it to love Him?

Paul continues saying to “Set your hearts on things above, where Christ is...set your minds on things above,” because your true life is now found in Christ. When you discover *why* you were made, everything begins to reorder itself. Your priorities change. Your perspective changes. What once seemed ultimate suddenly becomes secondary. And that’s exactly where spiritual renewal begins—not just when we remove clutter, but when Christ takes His rightful place at the centre of our lives. Growth happens when we remain rooted in Christ. A garden does not grow simply because weeds are removed. Something new must be planted, watered, nourished, and exposed to sunlight. In the same way, spiritual growth doesn’t happen automatically just because the clutter is gone. We must intentionally root ourselves in Christ and we do this not by our strength alone, but by the Holy Spirit, who continues

the work of renewal within us. So, what might God be calling you to give up? What currently occupies most of your thoughts? What consumes your attention when your mind is unoccupied? What fills the space you cleared? Following Jesus isn't about cleaning up your life. It's about bringing your life under new ownership. It's not just about removing sin—it's about replacing it with Christ. Not just emptying the house, but filling it with something better.

We hear in the second part of the Sermon on the Mount found in Matthew 6 -7 Jesus teaches that life in God's kingdom is shaped by heavenly priorities rather than earthly ones. He calls His followers to store up treasures in heaven instead of on earth, because whatever we value most will ultimately shape our hearts. He warns against divided loyalties, to not live anxiously, to not seek material needs but to trust the Father's care, seeking first the kingdom of God. He teaches to live with humility, mercy, wisdom, persistence in prayer, and love towards others. That true discipleship is not merely outward religion or words but obedient living that produces good fruit, urging people to build their lives on His teachings. These words of Jesus are right after He teaches them to pray, what we call The Lord's Prayer. In the Lord's Prayer the third petition says, "your will be done on Earth as it is in heaven," which emphasises living in a heavenly way while on Earth. Jesus is explaining what this part of the prayer looks like by

teaching what heavenly living looks like on Earth. Jesus is telling his followers to live according to heaven's values while still on earth. Obedience to God reflects our identity as members of God's family, and the teachings in this section show how God's future kingdom should shape our present lives. Treasures that are "stored up" are not by performing acts but by belonging to and living by the priorities of the kingdom of heaven. And this is what Paul is reiterating to the Colossians.

Paul wrote Colossians while in prison. He wrote it to a group of believers in the small town of Colossae. During his ministry in Ephesus, a man named Epaphras had come from Colossae, heard the gospel from Paul, and spent enough time with him to become deeply rooted in his newfound faith. He then took the gospel back to his home valley and planted churches in the closely connected cities of Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis. Paul wrote the letter to address concerns about the influence of dangerous teaching that was threatening the church.

When Paul writes to the Colossians, he tells them to keep Scripture central in their lives. We hear this in Colossians 3:16 "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God." What should be at the centre of our lives? The word of Christ, the teaching about Jesus — his person and his

work — should be something we pursue and endeavor to understand deeply. Remember, when Paul is writing this he doesn't have the completed Bible as we do today. Many of the New Testament books hadn't been written yet, so what does Paul mean when he says let the word of Christ dwell in your richly? Another way to say it might be "Let the word about Christ," this would include the teachings that Christ had given, and beyond that to the teaching about Christ taught by himself and the apostles, the oral tradition passed on through the teachings of those close to Jesus, the Septuagint, early Christian summaries of the gospel message, and early Christian hymns. Examples of these hymns can be found in Philippians 2:5–11, Hebrews 1:1-3, and Colossians 1:15-20, even though we don't necessarily read them as hymns today.

Paul is saying, to let all of the teachings about Christ be the focus on their thoughts and to allow its significance to penetrate deeply into their souls. He uses a metaphor that it should take up residence. Paul wanted the church in Colossae to devote themselves to learning more about Jesus, to meditate on who he is, what he did, what he was currently doing in the church, and what he will do in the future. That all of this should deeply influence every aspect of their life. He was telling them their task was to call people to Christ and away from earthly things. To call people to life. And we are to do that as well, but it's hard to

do that if we haven't done it ourselves.

Paul gets very practical about what that looks like. He talks about what to put off, yes—but also what to put on. Compassion, kindness, humility, patience, forgiveness, love. Sound familiar?! What Jesus was saying in the Sermon on the Mount. It was a completely different kind of life taking shape. So as we step into this final message in our spring cleaning series, we're not just asking what needs to go. We're asking what needs to grow.

Yes, we need to let go to grow, and now we need to let things grow. We have to let God work within us. Spiritual renewal isn't just a cleaner life. It's a reordered life. Many people think following Jesus is mainly about subtraction — stop this, avoid that, clean that up, and sometimes, yes, we ask Jesus to help us with those things, or God may ask us to give up certain things, but we don't empty ourselves to nothing. As Paul describes it, it's a reordering. A life centred not around what we've removed—but around Jesus, who fills everything in every way. A cleaned life without a centered life will always drift back into disorder. But remember through out all of this, Paul started with who we are. We are always God's, and though we may mess up, things will sometimes get disordered, God is always waiting with open arms to help clean up the mess. And as we continue growing, we may even find that some spiritual practices or routines that once helped renew us

no longer fit the season we're in. Just like we replace things in our homes as our lives change, sometimes our spiritual lives need new rhythms, new habits, or new ways of connecting with God. The goal is not to cling to what used to work, but to keep making space for God to continue shaping and renewing us.

There are a couple of rhythms that should characterize our lives. The first are simplicity and solitude. Yes, this may involve not having unnecessary things. But it also means having focus, intentionality. Not being burdened, distracted by the things of this world. But able to give ourselves fully to Jesus and His mission. Simplicity. If we want to reflect the life of Jesus, we are going to have to get away from all the noise. We need to spend time with Him in prayer, to listen to his Word. Some of us have spent so long filling our lives with noise that silence with God feels uncomfortable. Or some of us removed the clutter, but secretly we're tempted to bring it back because clutter can feel familiar. You need to let some of it go, so you can focus on and with Jesus. What might He be calling us to give up so that we can fully gain Him? What if we read the part "Do not lay up treasures" as "Stop storing up treasures." What might God be saying to you?

Another thing we need is fellowship. This may seem opposite to what I just mentioned, but we also need each other. John Krakauer's book, *Into the Wild*, is about a guy

who tried to leave everything he knew, went to Alaska to get in touch with nature and soak it all in. But he realized, he had no one to share the sunsets with, no one to enjoy the mountain views. He ended up dying by starvation brought on by isolation, harsh conditions, and inadequate resources. We are meant to experience community in this life. It's meant for our joy, but also to keep us from danger. As we come to this building, we add our voices together, we hear God's word, we share in the Lord's supper, we pray for each other and those in our communities, we fill up our mugs with tea or coffee, and we fill our lives catching up with our brothers and sisters - it all shapes our heart. It fills up spaces. God uses others to make us about His kingdom and to make us look like our King.

The Bible shows that anything we put in God's hands is an investment in eternity. Giving our all to God includes our time, talents, efforts, and relationships. Every aspect of our lives must be at Christ's disposal; that's what it means to be His disciple. And as Paul says, "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts." So let God's Word, the songs we sing, the fellowship we share, shape every part of your life, and help you to

grow, because when Christ takes root deeply in your life, everything changes - it's a whole new order!

Psalm