

**Rob Mathis
Rose Hill Church
Sunday Sermon
July 19, 2020**

“Setting our Minds on Things Above”

Introduction:

I was asked to write a short note about my sermon, to go along with the YouTube presentation of it. I think what I wrote will help set the tone for this morning’s message:

“We live in this world, an often chaotic and ungodly place, to be sure. But as Christ-followers we are admonished to set our hearts and minds on 'things above', meaning that we are to look heavenward for our guidance, our perspective and for our place of refuge. In this message we will look a little closer at what all this means for each of us on this planet called "earth, in this time called "today", for a people called "God's Own Possession".

Let Us Pray:

Our Scripture reading today is from:

Colossians 3:1-4 (New American Standard Version)

3 Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.² ^[a] *Set your mind on the things above,* not on the things that are on earth. **3** For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. **4** When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

The next verse, 5, goes on to tell us to “put to death our sinful, earthly nature”

Background on the Book of Colossians:

- The historical Christian Church has held the Letter to the Colossians as being written by the Apostle Paul, perhaps transcribed by Timothy, “his son in the faith”
- It was likely written around 60AD, while Paul was imprisoned in Rome
- Paul was writing to the Church in Colossae, a Roman city in the Province of Asia Minor, in the Lycus Valley, in what is today Southwest Turkey
- The Colossian Church was being infiltrated by heretical teachers claiming that Jesus was NOT God and causing no little confusion

and conflict there; the Christians were also surrounded by pagan teachings of cult worship, including the infamous Angel Cult; by Greek philosophy and so-called “mystery religions” and just down right decadence.

- As I examine with you what some of the words in this passage meant in the original writings, keep in mind that the writers of the New Testament wrote their works in Greek, what we now term “Ancient Greek”, as this form of Greek is no longer spoken today;

Let’s take apart several words and phrases in this passage:

- **Vs 1a; “Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ”**
- “if” means “since”, “in view of the fact” the writer is assuming this to be the case
- **RAISED UP-in Greek it is SOON EG I RO**
- **This literally means to be raised up together from MORTAL DEATH to a BLESSED LIFE**

Here he is saying that as a believer in Christ YOU HAVE BEEN RAISED WITH CHRIST

- **Vs 1b Keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the Right Hand of God**

Clearly we are to look Heavenward;

- **Vs.2 “Set your minds on things above”; Not on the earth; keep in mind, the Colossians at this time were being torn apart by the enticements not unlike today; sexual immorality masked as “culturally acceptable behavior”, sacrifices to idols, living for oneself and seeking possessions, fame and fortune**
- **The Greek here is “Fron EH O”**
- **This means “Keep thinking”; keep setting your thoughts on God’s Kingdom; this is an ongoing process**
- **Gain Understanding**
- **Direct One’s Mind to a thing**
- **And even “Cherish”**

- **Vs 3; For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God;**

- **This is a literal death**
- **It means to be slain**
- **To be dead**
- **“Ap-oth-nace’ ko**
- **This is the same word used to describe the death of Jesus**

Christ

- **Vs 4-When Christ, Who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory**
- **Who is Your Life:** Dzo ay means “To be of the absolute fullness of life”;
- **Appears-** “fan-er-o’-o” This means “to render apparent”; “to be plainly recognized”, “thoroughly understood for who one is”

I know I am throwing a lot of strange sounding words at you, but I really want you to follow me here: stick with me;

The Meaning of this Passage:

- Since you have (already) been raised up-just like Christ
- Look heavenward
- Keep seeking and keep pursuing God's Will, God's Word and God's Way
- Because as Christ Died You Died
- As Christ rose from the Dead and is alive,
- You now live in HIM
- And you therefore are safe, you are secure, you are "on your way", and one day YOU AND EVERYBODY ELSE WILL SEE YOU FOR WHO YOU REALLY ARE! A precious child of the Triune God!
- **You see, the words used all through these verses are the same for each believer as they are for Jesus Christ Himself!**

So, how in the world do we connect the dots here?

- We are told we have died with Christ
- We are told we have been raised with Christ
- We are told our life is hidden with Christ in God
- And we are told that ONE DAY WE WILL APPEAR WITH HIM
IN GLORY

These statements are profound!

And these statements mean everything for our faith!

Application: How do we live as though dead to sin and alive to

Christ?

- First, and this is critical here; Paul assumes the reader of his epistle is a believer; so that is the first thing first;
- Let us recall the story in John Chapter 3 where Nicodemus, a powerful member of the Jewish Sanhedrin and thus an elite member of society in Jerusalem, pays Jesus a surreptitious visit late one night. Jesus told Nicodemus he had to be born again, be born of the Spirit. Jesus indicated to this Jewish leader that life only comes through the Spirit of God
- I will tell you that I don't understand exactly how we go from death to life spiritually, but I accept it by faith. You see, especially at first, Nicodemus could see only the physical and the material, but Jesus was talking about the spiritual realm.
- How is this new birth accomplished? We cannot inherit new birth. The Bible says that those who are born again "are born, not of

blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of people, but of God” (John 1:13).

- That means each of us must come to God just as we are and ask God to take hold of us and raise us from the dead and make us alive in Jesus Christ.
- One of the most well-known and beloved American preachers and evangelists of the 20th Century and into this century, The Reverend Billy Graham, said this; “I was born and reared on a dairy farm. I had to ask myself this question living out there with all those cows; How can a black cow eat green grass and produce white milk and yellow butter? Billy Graham said, “I don’t understand that, and therefore I might just as well say, “Because I don’t understand it, I’m never going to drink milk again.” And you’d say, “That doesn’t make any sense”. It is the same with the things of the Spirit. Just because we don’t understand all this doesn’t make it so...or mean we shouldn’t be open to His leading.

- So, first we must be born of the Spirit
- Second, Colossians Chapter 3 tells us that because we are born of the Spirit we are alive to God!
- And we are to render ourselves dead to sin;
- That my friends is a life-long process with a fancy name called **SANCTIFICATION**; where we continually choose to walk away from the darkness of sin and toward the Light of Jesus Christ.
- Like the Prodigal Son, we turn toward the Father, not away
- Like the Disciples in the first churches we devote ourselves to the study of God's Word, we pray, we ask, we learn, we fall down and get back up
- We remind ourselves and our fellow God-Seekers that we are indeed dead to sin and alive to Christ;
- We find like-minded people to learn from, to share with, to encourage and be encouraged by;

And these are the things to remind each other of:

- The arrest, torture, crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ are facts;
- His resurrection is a fact
- Therefore our death and resurrection in HIM are facts
- So, what we feel at any given time, about ourselves, our faith, or anything else, doesn't make or break our faith. Our faith is not dependent on us;
- You see, Hebrews 12 tells us that Jesus is the Author and Perfecter of our faith
- We are not
- So, when we doubt, we doubt. But our doubt does not mean the facts have changed. Only that we are struggling to understand something that only the Holy Spirit can reveal to us!
- There have been several very successful and prominent Christian ministers and famous Christian singers who have of late renounced their faith; saying, "I am an atheist", "I am an agnostic"; I no longer believe in Jesus Christ. "I don't feel God anymore."

- Here is the deal; mark my words, we are promised hard times, trials, struggles and a world full of people hell-bent on living however they choose.
- In fact, the Apostle Peter told us we would have tough times. He said, “do not be surprised by the fiery ordeal you are experiencing”; **1 Peter 4:12 says these things will happen**
- Is Covid-19 testing your faith to the limits?
- Are the protests, the riots, the terrible sense of unease in our country worrying you?
- Do you have trepidations about the upcoming election?
- Are money challenges seeping into your gut and dragging you down?
- Are you worn out physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually?
- We are all in this together! All of us struggle, have doubts, hurt, get confused.

- But what we are talking about here, this thing called faith, this thing called being spiritually alive in Jesus Christ; this is REAL. HE is REAL. And HE is not far off. He is not impossible to reach.
- You do NOT have to feel Him. You do not offend Him by doubting. He is NOT disappointed in you. He is not angry with YOU. He is saying, “Come to Me all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest”. Period. Like the story HE told of the Prodigal Son; just turn back to Him today. Turn back to Him every day. All day. In the morning. When you fail. When you fall. When you lie, or cheat, or steal or mess up in 10,000 other ways. I am not saying sin is no big deal. It is. But you cannot dig your way out of the hole your sin puts you in. It doesn’t work that way.
- Before I found Jesus Christ I was digging a hole so deep I think just maybe I was close to coming out the other side of the earth!
- There was no way I was getting out on my own.

- But in the end, not only does Jesus Christ reside in those who call out to Him, who invite Him in, but He has sent His Holy Spirit to touch us, change us, make us new in HIM.
- That is what the Fruit of the Spirit is all about; as we continue to grow in Jesus He tends us like a garden, and raises us up to live and be who He created us to be
- What people everywhere, you and me and the person next door and down the street; what we are desperately looking for is actually right here...those fruit of the Spirit! Oh, my goodness! The richest people on earth desperately want what God gives away for free; These fruit are listed in Galatians 5; love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control...
- And to “get these”? Simply ask; simply turn toward instead of away; James says, “draw near to God and He will draw near to you”. Keep knocking, keep seeking, keep asking. He knows right where you are. Right what you need. In fact, He knew you before you were even born, and He delights in you, for you are His.