

## “Resurrection Perspectives”—Colossians 3:1-4

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Resurrection Perspectives”, is Colossians 3:1-4 → *If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ Who is your life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

Setting our *minds on things that are above* doesn't seem to fit our busy lifestyles very well. Should we drop everything and go off to a monastery or convent so that we can flee earthly things and devote every hour to pondering heavenly things? Should we adopt a certain Christian life-style to make it easier for Christ to be such a part of our lives that the worldly influences can't affect us so strongly? Maybe you should go to church more, pray more and read your Bible more! Maybe those things are needed in your life . . . but they still do not guarantee that your mind will be set *on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.*

The answer, of course, is not to flee this world. That's not what God is saying in our text. In fact, to set our minds on the things that are above is not something that we must do at all. It is something that our risen Christ has **given** us, who have been raised with Him, to do. In reality, we set our minds on the things that are above precisely as we set our minds on things that are below us. In other words, it is as we do all the things our complicated lives demand of us with a new, God-**given**, “resurrection perspective,” that we set our minds on the things that are above. Thus, all that we do is done in Christ, for Christ and through Christ!

This, of course, is something that is rare. As sinners, we are always drawn by our sinful nature to the kinds of evil attitudes and actions mentioned in the words following our text. These actions are specifically forbidden by God in His Law but, nonetheless, are actions which sinners naturally love anyway—sexual immorality, lust, evil desires, greed, idolatry, anger, slander, malice, lying and prejudice. We know that these things are against the will of God, and yet we do them because in our secret heart of hearts we love them and are willing to risk even the wrath of God for them. Colossians 3:6 says: *On account of these the wrath of God is coming.*

But there is a more subtle way in which we Christians think too much on the *things that are on earth.* This happens not only when we actually sin in the ways mentioned but also when we fill our lives with activities, which are not in themselves evil, but fail to see the great value God has given our lives by virtue of His having redeemed us and raised us up in Christ. We simply lose sight of what is really important about our lives. We forget that we *have been raised with Christ.* We lose our resurrection perspective.

We have a hard time keeping our thoughts on the things that are above because we're so busy just trying to make a living, trying to hold down that second job to make the house payments, carting the kids to and from school or music lessons or sporting events, trying to scrape together some time to spend with the family. Are all these things unimportant and to be fled by those who would set their minds on things above? Well . . . yes . . . and no. It depends upon th perspective.

Did you ever think about God's perspective as He looks down from heaven at us? What does He see and think in His great omniscience? Does He see men and women and children who are earthbound in their viewpoints, clamoring after a fleeting possession here or a transitory thrill there? Yes, He does, when He looks upon us in the light of our own works which reveal the depth of our fallen sinfulness. From that perspective, God is hurt by our unfaithfulness and angered by our disobedience.

However, God has a different perspective of us! He has another way of looking at us! Verse 3 of our text says: *You have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.* When God looks at us in the Person & Work of the risen Christ, He sees us through eyes of love because of His resurrection! He sees us as sinners whose sins are covered by the righteousness of Jesus Christ! He sees us in Christ, Who lived and died and rose again in order to restore us to what God intended us to be in the first place—holy and blameless in His sight! By faith in Christ Colossians 3:10 says that we *have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its Creator.* Thank God that He has this resurrection perspective of us and that **His** perspective is that which is most important!

Because of God's different perspective towards us in Christ, our perspectives change drastically too. Through faith in Christ we are given a whole new way of looking at our lives, our relationships and our purpose for living. Because of God's grace and the gift of faith from His Holy Spirit Ephesians 2:10 defines that purpose: *We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.* The announcement of Christ victory for us in verse 1 of our text —*Christ is seated at the right hand of God*—comes to us as a gift, a proclamation of the way things really are in a relationship with Jesus!

It's a beautiful fact, accomplished at the cross and the resurrection and delivered to us in Baptism and regularly in the preaching of the Gospel, the Absolution and in the Lord's Supper. Notice the past tense: *You **have been raised** with Christ . . . you **have died**.* As a result notice the continuing present tense: *Seek the things that are above . . . set your minds on things that are above.* Because of the once for all victory Christ has won for you and His one act of connecting to His death and resurrection through baptism, you can keep on living with a resurrection perspective.

Thus, to *set your minds on things that are above* is nothing else than to set your minds on Christ and His gifts of grace! To think on the *things that are above* is nothing else than to think on Christ and His Word and Sacraments, where He dispenses that grace! This is what it means when verse 3 of our text says that *your life is hidden with Christ in God.*

Setting our minds on the things that are above directly affects those earthly things with which our minds are filled each day. We are to seek the things above in the things and people with which He surrounds us in the daily vocations of our lives. We may see others as His gifts to us in whom we may serve and love Him. This is the purpose for those good works for which we were created in Christ Jesus. So, we don't need to flee the world in order to set our minds on the things that are above. We merely need to look upon our lives, as common and ordinary as they may seem to us, with this new resurrection perspective we've been given!

Aside from hurting our Lord, what's wrong with the evil things mentioned in Colossians 3 is that they are done against those who are so precious to Christ that He died for them! What's sinful about prejudice and hatred is that it is committed against those for whom Christ died and rose again; those with whom He wants to be connected eternally where He is seated in heaven. To act like that with one another is to fail to acknowledge who we are in Christ. To sin against them is to sin against Christ. It would be living in an "old life" perspective which serves our own sinful, selfish desires.

Luther once wrote that "a Christian lives not in himself but in Christ and in his neighbor. Otherwise he is not a Christian. He lives in Christ through faith, in his neighbor through love. By faith he is caught up beyond himself into God. By love he descends beneath himself into his neighbor." To live in Christ is to live in the neighbor: Christ by faith, neighbor by love. To set our minds on the things that are above is to set our minds on the things that are beneath us: on the neighbor or friend or family member or whomever needs us.

So, we seek the things that are above precisely as we take the responsibilities our Lord has given us seriously, and view them as His gifts to us; as we are a loving mother or father, a faithful husband or wife, an obedient child, as we live a sexually pure and decent life and love one another as Christ has loved us.

What is most wonderful of all about this is that this announcement—*You have been raised with Christ*—does not come to us as a duty, but as a gift which we may simply receive from the gracious hand of the God Who raised Jesus from the dead and, with Him, has also raised us! Amen.

**P** Christ has risen!

**C** He has risen indeed! Alleluia!