

INI

St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
November 8, 2015
24th Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture Lessons: Haggai 2:1-9, Luke 13:23-30

Hymns: 3; 408; 398; 409:1 (248:1-3)

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Colossians 3:1-4

If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. ²Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. ³For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ *who is* our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God my Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: How good are you with dealing with distractions?

It is one of the things that is talked about in sports a great deal. You watch a basketball game and all the fans sitting behind the basket are doing everything they can to distract the player who is shooting the free throw. They want him to miss, and their actions, while they may be seen as being less than good sportsmanship, are now accepted as part of the game, at least on the college and professional levels. In baseball, fans and sometimes even players attempt to distract and rattle pitcher, while at the same time the catcher is trying to break the batter's concentration. But in golf,

now there it is considered bad form indeed to do anything that might distract the golfer from attempting to make that perfect drive, or the long and difficult putt. The golfer expects the crowd to give him the upmost consideration so that he can make the shot he is facing.

What about our spiritual lives? Do you think the devil and this world are considerate like with golf, or more like basketball scene where distractions are rampant? Do we even recognize the distractions that would interfere with making progress in our spiritual lives? It is easy to lose sight of what life is actually about, and where our life is centered. In these last Sundays of the church year we are reminded to keep our focus where it belongs, where it needs to be, for we are also living in the last age of the earth, perhaps even its closing days.

While the world we live in makes a lot of noise that can easily distract us from things spiritual we need to remain focused on the truth that --

THEME: Christ Is Our Life.

Since you have been --

I. Raised with Christ Set Your Mind on Things Above.

Our text begins with this concept of being raised with Christ. Jesus died on the cross and rose again the third day. Following His resurrection Jesus lived as our exalted Lord. He rose victorious over sin and death. So our text begins by emphasizing what His resurrection to life means for us and our daily lives.

Colossians 3:1-2 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. ²Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

We have a new life. We have a spiritual life. We have an immediate and direct connection to God that could not be there without Jesus' death and resurrection. It was not there before we were called to faith in Christ Jesus. Apart from Christ we were dead in trespasses and sins, but we have been made alive by the working of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 2:1). So then in our text Paul

is reminding us of this fact of life, “**If then you were raised with Christ,**” and yes, of course you have been, then live according to that truth.

I’m afraid this is still where we have a little trouble with a disconnect. I’m afraid we don’t comprehend that this really does make a difference in our approach, in our attitude, in our goals and ambitions for daily life. We still get too caught up in the material. It’s hard not to get caught up in it. We have necessities for this life that we need to fill, and the God-given way for us to fill them is to work and get paid and then buy the things we need. We need a place to live. We need clothes, and of course at this time of year we are thinking about whether we need a new winter coat, or coats and boots for our children. We need to put food on the table. We need a car and a phone. We need to pay the gas and electric bill. The list goes on. So what is Paul telling us, that we shouldn’t pay attention to these things? Of course not.

Let’s reword this a little. What are you looking for in life? What are you hoping to get out of life? The answer should not be things here below. While we need these things, this is not what life is to be about. This is not what we are seeking in life. If life is only about a buying a bigger house, a fancier car, designer clothing and fine things that will impress those around us, then we are being distracted by the world. However this is nothing new. Jesus warned of this danger to cling to earthly, temporary things in His Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 6:19-21 “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

The devil is having some success in getting us to forget about Christ and the life Jesus has won for us by His suffering and death on the cross. I think we need to acknowledge that. We need to hear Jesus’ words of encouragement from the Sermon on the Mount:

Matthew 6:33 “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”

We seek the Kingdom of God in His Word. We are brought to His righteousness through faith in Jesus as our Savior from sin. This comes first in life! Keeping our priorities straight is important because --

II. Your Life is Hidden with Christ in God.

Again our text speaks to us in mysterious terms.

Colossians 3:3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

A natural reaction this may well be, “No, I haven’t died. I’m still quite alive.” The Apostle would have us comprehend God’s view, and then live according to that view. This is the right perspective for us to have, because the way God sees things is for our salvation.

We start with the reality of what sin brings upon us. God said, “**The wages of sin is death**” (Romans 6:23). That is a fact. Sin brings death. It brought spiritual death to all who are born into this world, so we live under a death sentence for our sins. It condemns all to both temporal and eternal death as well as the spiritual death that infects all by nature.

This is where Jesus’ death on the cross comes into how God sees things regarding you. Let us remember the second half of that Bible verse I cited above: “**the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord**” (Romans 6:23). God sees that you have died. God counts Jesus’ death on the cross as your death penalty being fulfilled. God says you have already died for your sins because you believe that Jesus died **FOR** you, even as God declared. Therefore God says **YOU** died, and the life that you have now is much bigger and better than the life that we see in our daily temporal life. What is hidden is all that this new life includes which Christ has brought to you by His resurrection. We don’t see that yet. Right now we don’t see with our eyes the power of the Holy Spirit and how He continues to work in our hearts, and how He empowers our lives to live in faith and hope, to live to our Savior’s glory.

The eternal life that we await in heaven is also hidden with Christ in God. We know more about what it isn't, than what it is. We know there won't be any more sin. There won't be any more sickness or pain or death or tears. All those things will pass away. But we are so limited in our experience of glory that we can't envision how wondrous and glorious that life is going to be. Now we have trouble and struggles and disappointments, but it is not always going to be that way. We live for that life, that hidden life that is yet to come. Let us recall Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 4:

2 Corinthians 4:17-18 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding *and* eternal weight of glory,¹⁸ while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen *are* temporary, but the things which *are* not seen are eternal.

How can I look at the things that are not seen? Through faith in the promises of God. He presents us with the hope of glory.

III. We Will Appear with Him in Glory.

Colossians 3:4 When Christ *who is* our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

Here is the verse that set the theme for our meditation today, which the Lord would have set the theme for our entire lives. **Christ is our life.** How can this be when we have never seen Him? It is by faith. Faith assures us that Jesus' words of promise are true. Start with the promise that He made to be with us always even to the end of the world. I believe that to be absolutely true. I am confident that Jesus is with us right now, and that as we leave here today and go our separate ways He will abide with us, all of us, each of us on our way home, and throughout the week. His visible presence is not here, but that does not mean that Jesus is not here with us, watching over us guarding us from all danger and keeping us as His own in true faith.

In saying that we might say that Jesus remains very much a part of my life, but that is not the theme of our sermon, nor is it to be the theme of our lives. That falls short. Our text says, "When Christ our life appears." Christ **is** our life, and without Him our lives

would be empty. Without the promise of His return, we would be without hope. But we have that promise. Jesus told His disciples on the night before His death:

John 14:2-3 “I go to prepare a place for you, ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also.”

There is the promise of life, life with Jesus for all eternity. It is hard for us to comprehend this life now because it still hidden with Christ in God. The Apostle John acknowledges that even for himself when he writes in his first epistle.

1 John 3:2 “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”

Now, right now we have life in Christ. That is the real life, the best life that we possess, and it is already now eternal in nature, but right now we don't really know what we will be like when Jesus does come again to receive us to Himself. Our text uses the word “**glory**,” “You also will appear with Him in glory” (v.4). Right now we couldn't look at Jesus in the brightness of His glory. It would be like trying to stare into the sun. The brightness of His glory is pure holiness, and we still possess our weak and sinful flesh. But then, ah, yes that will be wonderfully different. We will be raised in glory, we will be changed in the twinkling of an eye. We shall be like Him.

That is the life that you have in Christ right now! It's the life secured for you by Christ, given to you through faith, and reserved for you in heaven. Keep this as the focus of your life. Seek those things which are above, and don't allow yourself to be distracted into seeking the things that are below that shall only pass away. Don't settle for temporary, not when we already possess that life which no one can take away from us, because **Christ Is our Life!**

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.