

Sermon Text: Colossians 3:1-11 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. ³ For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. ⁵ Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. ⁶ Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, ⁷ in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. ⁸ But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. ⁹ Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, ¹⁰ and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, ¹¹ where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.

Sermon Theme: Having Become New Creatures in Christ

- 1. Set your hearts and minds on things above**
- 2. Put off from yourselves the sins of the flesh**
- 3. And be renewed in the knowledge of Christ**

In the name of our Savior Jesus Christ, who blesses us with spiritual life, dear fellow redeemed;

As believers in Christ we have in a very special way died and have been raised to life. In listening to what the apostle Paul says to us in our text, it is quite obvious this death and resurrection is not our physical death and bodily resurrection. Rather, speaking in a spiritual sense he is referring to a death and resurrection that takes place in our hearts and minds.

This death and resurrection is apparent in the transformation that takes place in us. Being made spiritually alive in Christ, we become new creatures who possess a new and entirely different outlook on many different things in life. For example, we do not regard the Bible as a human book, but the holy Word of God. We are not afraid of God or Judgment Day, because we know God as a loving and merciful God who forgives us in Christ Jesus and gives us eternal life in heaven. Also, we acknowledge the Ten Commandments as God's holy will for us which we want to live by. You wouldn't find this kind of outlook in unbelievers.

This wonderful transformation in us began to take place when we were baptized. Paul writes of this in Romans, "Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." (6:4) As God worked faith in us through baptism, we became partakers of the many priceless blessings Jesus worked out for us through His life, death, and resurrection. Such blessings include marvelous things like the precious gift of God's unconditional love and forgiveness, the Lord looking upon us with favor and delight, being accepted into the eternal family of God, and having the sure and certain guarantee of going to heaven.

In addition to this, our hearts and minds changed to the extent that we are dead to sin and alive to God. Paul speaks of it in this way, "knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of

sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin.” (Rom. 6:6,7) When we were blessed with faith in Jesus, our sinful nature was put to death, that is, it no longer has the upper hand and rule in our thoughts and lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. We no longer live with the purpose and intent of gratifying our sinful thoughts and desires, for as new creatures in Christ Jesus we love God and want to live according to His holy will.

Paul reminds us that as new creatures alive in Christ we are not to be earthbound creatures, but rather heaven-bound. He says to us, “If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.”

When God first created this world, He intended for people to live forever in a perfect world. All this changed when sin infected this world. Therefore God in His infinite love prepared a life after this world where we will have a perfect existence that will never end.

He made this future world possible for us sinners by sending His Son to live, die, and rise again from the dead as our Savior. Jesus’ sacrificial death and victorious resurrection assures us that when Jesus returns on the last day of this world, He will take us to the new heavenly earth.

Paul tells us in our text, “When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.” On Judgment Day, Jesus will raise our lifeless bodies from the grave in glory. The bodies we are raised with will be perfect in every way. And our souls that are reunited with our heavenly bodies will be free of sin. What a truly glorious eternal future God has prepared for us beyond this sin-infected world.

Since this is our future, we regard our lives in this present world as a short pilgrimage. We are on a brief journey which has as its final destination the eternal habitations of heaven.

In our daily lives whether at home, at work, at school or at play, there is a danger of getting so caught up in the cares and pleasures of this world that the spiritual aspect of our lives recedes into the background. We can so easily fall into the rut of being earthbound creatures who are merely living for this life, instead of being heaven-bound creatures who are living for the life of the world to come.

In today’s gospel reading, Jesus told the story of a man who was earthbound and not heaven-bound. In that story Jesus shows us how vain, empty, and shortsighted this man’s life really was. The Lord tells of a hard working, very successful farmer. No problem with this. But he was working so hard and so long that he had no time for God – no time for the Word of God and no time for the worship of the Lord. There was no place in his heart for God. When he had a bumper crop, he thought he had it made in the shade. He could retire, sit back and enjoy life. But Jesus said of him, “You fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?” This man was a fool, because he had made his possessions his god, living only for them and trusting in them to supply all his needs and desires. He was a fool, because he set his affections solely on the things of this life and looked to them to give him lasting happiness. And because he was not rich toward God, when he died he lost everything, including his soul. Jesus says to this, “What is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Mt. 16:26)

With our eternal fate hanging in balance, John gives us this godly counsel, “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in

him. For all that is in the world -- the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life - is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.” (1 Jn. 2:15-17)

Our daily lives as Christians is to be devoted to living unto God, seeking to bring honor and glory to Him, and to serve Him in His kingdom in our respective callings and stations in life.

As we await the day of Jesus’ return to restore that world of paradise for us, we want to keep ourselves in constant readiness, having a true and living faith in Jesus Christ. Such preparedness involves a daily putting off of our old man and putting on the new man.

While we have died to sin and are alive unto God, we still have a sinful nature to contend with. Since our old Adam will remain with us through out our life, every single day of our life we need to continually struggle with and fight against it, lest it once again gain mastery of our soul. To that end we need to daily put to death our sinful nature through contrition and repentance.

Paul lists in our text some of the sins of the flesh we have to contend against as believers in Christ. He writes, “Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.” This points to all manner of sexual impurities of thought, word, and deed.

Jesus’ description of living in a wicked and an adulterous generation most certainly applies to the times we are living in. In fact, it is becoming increasing more so with every passing day. Leading voices in the government, the church, secular schools, and entertainment industry approve of and try to promote lifestyles that are sexually immoral in the eyes of God. To mention a couple there is hooking up for a one night stand and shacking up for a longer period of time.

The apostle Paul warns that Christians are not at liberty to live this way without suffering eternal consequence. He says to us in our text, “Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them.” He is talking about facing the dreadful punishment of hell for anyone who gives himself over to worldliness and does not repent of it.

Being confronted with the evil inclinations of our flesh and the godless world’s claim that a person has the right to give free reign to sexual passions, we fight the good fight of faith by resisting and suppressing all evil tendencies, and by avoiding the evil influences that surround us.

Whenever any fall into any kind of sin of thought, word or deed, we are prompted by the Holy Spirit to repent of it and rush to the forgiving arms of our loving and merciful God who forgives us for Jesus’ sake. He also fills our hearts with a spirit of love whereby we willingly live according to the righteous ways of God. In so doing we put to death the destructive enemies of our souls.

Our struggle against our old Adam also includes combating the sinful ways in us that would cause us to hurt our neighbor. Paul continues with his exhortation, saying to us, “But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds.”

With the help of God, we cast off from ourselves any hostile feelings of ill will toward

others; rid ourselves of outbursts of rage against our neighbor; uproot the attitude of malice which would cause us to harm people; and remove from our lips any words that are hurtful to others. In place of these kinds of feelings, words and actions the Lord would have us “put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.” (Col. 3:12-14)

The putting on of these and other Christian virtues is the putting on of the new man in us. Jesus made this newness of life possible when He laid down His life to redeem us from a slavery

to sin and the devil. Even as Jesus rose victoriously back to life, so also His Spirit has made us spiritually alive through faith in Him so that we are empowered by His love to walk in His footsteps. The putting on of the new man that conforms to God’s ways is an ongoing process throughout our lives. Although we will never be free of our sinful flesh and our imperfections in this life, nevertheless by the grace of God in Christ Jesus we can grow in righteousness and true holiness.

The process of daily putting on the new man involves our use of the Gospel in word and sacrament. Through the saving Word of God the Holy Spirit enables us to grow in knowledge, faith, and love.

Consider the tax collector Zacchaeus who thought nothing of lying to and cheating his neighbor in order to get rich off them. When Jesus came and sought him out, not only did Jesus enter Zacchaeus’ house, but also into his heart with gracious words and teachings. Through the message of God’s redeeming love Zacchaeus became alive in Christ. And he displayed that new born life by showing love for his neighbor. He stopped lying and stealing. Zacchaeus also gave back what he had stolen, even giving four times the amount he had robbed from them. This was evidence of the love of Christ at work in his heart. He was alive in Christ.

God be praised and thanked for graciously making us new creatures in Christ Jesus through the working of the Holy Spirit and liberating us from slavery to sin, the dreadful power of Satan, and the fate of eternal death. May God help us to continue to put to death our sinful self through daily contrition and repentance. And through His Word may the Lord renew us in the spirit of our minds and hearts so that we grow in righteousness and true holiness for Jesus’ sake. Amen.