

Christ is Your Life

THE READING OF THE WORD – COLOSSIANS 3:1-11

If then you have been raised with Christ, **seek the things** that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 **Set your minds** on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. 3 For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

5 **Put to death** therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. 6 On account of these the wrath of God is coming. 7 In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. 8 But now you must **put them all away**: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices 10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. 11 Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.

WARM UP

Thank you for joining us this morning. My name is Eric Mattie and I serve as one of the Elders.

This summer the Elder Council is preaching through the book of Colossians. And today we are in a passage of Scripture that for me is very personal and meaningful to me.

You see outside of memorizing Luther's small catechism with the Ten commandments, Lord's prayer, the Apostle's creed in my confirmation years, Colossians chapter 3:1-17 was the largest section of memorization I did in when I became born again a few years later. It was a big task. And I'm unsure I could recite it today. But to take weeks to memorize and think about these concepts really helped me to get the Word in me.

It was very personalized, yet I never actually studied- like I need to when I teach or preach on this.

One concept that always kept me wondering what it meant was verse 4: When Christ who is your life" What does that mean?

I remember subscribing to Charles Stanley's In Touch Magazine and reading an article about Christ who is our life. I would slowly read that article over and over again. Praying I would understand what that meant. I just wasn't getting it.

Those younger years where I struggled to understand That phrase "Christ is my life" I entered into adulthood and eventually into a family man, I read Christian books, giving wise advise to be careful what I centered and pursued in my life. Because they said what I focused on is what I became.

In fact even today I hear what people focus on when they summarize what their life is.

- It sounds like this: "My job/ career is my life" "My fiancé is my life" "My Family is my life" "My children are my life" "My grandchildren are my life" "My loved one is my life." "My dogs are my Life"
- It can also sound like this: "Traveling is my life" "Star Wars is my life" "Gaming is my life" "Eating is my life" "Running is my life" "Music is my life"

This speaks to the widespread belief that a person's life is bound up with some external object. For Paul, that is not the idea here at all when he says to the Colossians, and subsequently us, that Christ is our Life.

So what does it mean: Christ who is your life? Let's dive in to this passage
The Title of my message is **Christ is Your Life.**

INTRODUCTION

Let me give you the :10 context of where things are at in this letter:

After tearing down the arguments of the false teaching, Paul now enters into an extended section of his letter in exhorting the Colossians in applying and living out the positive aspects of their union with Christ

There it is. 10 second summary...

Over the entire body of this letter Paul is calling for Jesus Christ to be kept at the center of the Colossians Christian experience. He's warned them of the false teachers that are promoting Christ as less than adequate for life and their speeches of legalism, and visionary experience that rob them of true freedom they are looking for.

Paul's call is not too different from the call, we as your pastors are calling this body to this summer. Keep Jesus Christ at the center of your Christian experience. Keep Christ as Supreme and put your hope in the Hope of the Gospel.

- Hold out hope that the Gospel message is stronger than our cultural or political message.
- Hold out hope that Christ, - who is our all in all... is today. more than sufficient, in being the solution and solace of what we are facing in our homes, in our hospitals, on our Facebook pages, our work places, our family members. and our church services.

In Chapter 3 Paul is showing the Colossians how their identification in Christ leads to a new way of life.

For Paul, He is saying that our life is bound up in Christ who has done an inside work on giving us new life.

In verse 1-4 Paul says to adopt a mindset that reflects our new identity- our new life- in Christ.

In verse 5-17 he elaborates this new way of thinking by contrasting between the old way of life that we are to put off and the new way of life we need to put on.

So Paul summarizes that our life is now

A union in Christ Resurrection v 1,2

A union in Christ's Death v 3 and

A union in Christ appearing v 4

In our time today I'm going deal with what Paul says about the last two point and then continue next week to talk about the first one.

I'm going this route because Paul's explanation of this union in Christ's death in the first sequence of explanation so that's why we are starting there.

Let's go

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

- This verse has an "already – not yet" overtone. It has a past and future truth expressed here. And as a result both have a present day implication.

Let's look at what its saying has taken place already

1. Your Life in Christ is a union in His death

"For you have died..."

This verse is a straight shout out and pointing back to what Paul says in chapter 2.

- Verse 20 says "...with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world"
- It also picks up Paul's idea expressed in verses 11 and 12 of chapter 2, "In him also you were circumcised ...by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism." That 's Jesus death he is talking about.. the phrase "circumcision of Christ" is another way to express Jesus' death

Remember, Paul has already mentioned that all believers are filled in Christ. So he is now expressing in detail how believers – who are united in Christ by this fullness- participate in Christ's Death, Burial and Resurrection.

This of course is an inward work of regeneration by the Holy Spirit which results in sinners being drawn to Christ and putting their faith in Jesus work on the cross to save them and is confirmed in the outward symbolism of those who are Baptized in Christ.

Note though: The apostle doesn't just remind them that they died- he reminds of what death effects.... In their life

That was the key I missed at a young Christian. It wasn't just identifying with Christ's death and resurrection what it accomplished in Forgiveness and eternal life. But that the death effected my spiritual being - the real me!

Point:

Paul is applying and saying: "Your life in Christ is a union in his death and That death severs the ties which bound you."

- For the Colossians, those ties includes their old way of life- their empty way of thinking about life and their legalistic law striving after purification.

Picture:

As death breaks the tie that binds a subject to his ruler so dying with Christ, severs the tie that bond the Colossian believer to principalities and powers that deceived them.

It's a spiritual breaking

Paul says it in Romans like this:

How can we who died to sin still live in it? 3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death. Romans 6:2-4

Preach:

Conversion to Christ is not just a decision for Christ.

I mean yes it is an act of willful submission to humbly admit you are a sinner who needs to be Rescued by someone else. It is a decision to trust in Jesus Christ work and not your own.

But conversion to Christ means death.

Our union in Christ's death, effectively severs the tie that binds us to sin and to legalism and

to mysticism and
to worldliness and
to spiritual forces.

In a phrase :it breaks the tie we have to our flesh, the world and the devil
We are dead to the old order of things.

By dying with Christ, we have been set free from the elements of this world, and we no longer therefore "belong" to the world over which they rule.

This union in Jesus' Death is an already done act. So that is the already.

Let's look at the "Not yet"

2. Your Life in Christ is a union in His appearing

"...your life is hidden with Christ in God"

This is the "not yet part of our lives.

To be hidden in Christ is something of a Mystery.

But when I use the word "Mystery" it means that something is not fully understood.

I spoke on this aspect of the very 7 years ago so let me remind us all what I said about this verse.

You and I will walk out of this point not fully know or being able to figure out the mystery of being hidden in God. So you need to accept that now.

But there are clues about the hidden life of the believer which gives us hope that one day, we *will* know.

Look at v 4. **our first clue.**

Clue #1 v4 says that **when Christ appears, we will appear.**

When we say that we are appearing- it implies that we were unseen previously. That we were concealed in some way. Hidden. So really our life will not be fully on display until Christ comes back.

There is something about the Christians' life that is **concealed now (Hidden in God) and will be revealed later (When Christ appears).** We wonder: " what is it?" We ask: "what will be revealed about the Christians' life at the return of Jesus? THE ANSWER: WE DON'T FULLY KNOW. OUR LIFE IS HIDDEN- Therefore even to us it's a mystery.

Clue #2 He is saying to have a heavenly mindset- eternal mindset v 1,2... Because NOW in Christ – is a ***hidden reality*** that is found in our union with Jesus Christ who right now is hidden in God the Father himself.

As one commentator said: “The world knows neither Christ nor Christians, and Christians do not even know distinctly themselves” - Bengel’s Gnomon

- Remember that the Bible says that the world did not recognize Christ when he came. The world did not recognize Christ and it won’t recognize Christians either. When the world looks at us there is something missing that they cannot understand. They can’t see it. It is hidden. From their logic and reasoning.
- There is an element of mystery as to what motivates the Christian to act counter cultural to the worldly ways and dealings. We understand to a degree, that we ***walk as grace empowered Spirit filled people, because we have new grace empowered Spirit filled heart.*** It is a heart that wants to honor God by acting in graceful ways that acknowledge him. It rids itself of bitterness, anger, and greed. It fights against lusts and selfish desires.

Why do we work toward forgiving and reconcile instead of just get bitter?

Why do we work hard even when we don’t get rewarded materially?

Believers understand to a degree of the motivation- its to glorify God, because giving that credit gives us joy.

“In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” Matthew 5:16

But the world says “I don’t get it. It’s a mystery. There is a hidden reason from their perspective that can only be understood by God revealing it to them.- Just as he does for us.

- Our life is hidden with Christ and that is yet a mystery to us to.

Here’s an analogy from Sam Storms- a Pastor from Oklahoma:

Imagine a flower. “The root system is concealed beneath the surface of the earth. How it derives nutrients from the soil and contributes to the growth of the stem, leaf, and petal is unseen, being something of a mystery. But the beauty of the rose is for all to behold. Its color and fragrance are ever on display for the joy of all people. Likewise the Christian, whose strength and incentive and inner life are "hidden" from view, but whose

kindness, faith, perseverance, and love are a perpetual witness to the glory of God's grace within.”

So the new life of believers in Christ is a **mystery to the unbeliever and in part a mystery to the believer as well.** We will not fully know what is hidden until Christ comes back and our life is revealed.

Clue #3 Look at Eph 2.. very familiar verse because we see the Gospel in it- that is Good News of our saving grace. But pay attention to the last verse.

*But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us **alive** together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— and **raised** us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. *Ephesians 2: 4-8**

God's going to reveal to us the riches of His grace and His mercy. It's going to take ages, eons, a good bit of eternity for you to get into the depths and beauty that is Jesus Christ- who is our life and what ever that hidden mystery is—we will not get bored with it- there will always be more to behold, and worship God about and here in this verse it says it will take ages to show the immeasurable riches of grace.

Now these two great truths—these two great realities-(I like that word better because they are realities for each and everyone of us who are believers) one has already happened and the other has not yet and awaits all believers to experience pleasure forevermore.

These two spiritual realities :

1. our union in Christ Death and
2. our union in Christ appearing

have a present day implication in how we live.

This is the “so what?” part of the message. We have learn these realities of our spiritual life that Christ is our life.

So What?

So Paul tells us:

Verse 5. ***“Put to death therefore what is earthly in you...”***

Put to death

- Rooted in all of the theology of Chapter 1 and 2.... Rooted in the reality of the Colossian Believers union with Christ Death, Paul is calling them... To put to death what is earthly in them

But why is Paul calling them to that? If we are united in Jesus Death and have experience that death why do we have to put to death sin? Why do we have to keep killing sin?

The reason why is Because in our new birth in Jesus, it has broken the bonds and ties of sin, yet this new life - this new creation in Christ has yet to be perfected in this earthly body.

- We are embattled, and yet empowered.
- We are created new as Spirit filled fighters. Enabled to obey and persevere in God's commands.
- Yet we are still developing with a grace driven effort to renew our minds to be sensitive to the Spirit leading.
- We Prayerfully request a work of God to increase our hatred for sin.

It's the call to "Be what you are" I love that summary. It sound very much like something Yoda from Star Wars would say: Be what you are.

Be in your Physical life and existence

What You

Are in your spiritual life and reality

Be in behavior, attitude disposition, feeling and thinking ,person in your repentance

What you

Are in the reality of your union in Christ who is your life.

Be: here and now in our day to day living

What you

Are: in the heavenly reality and legal position in Christ that God sees you as today.

- So this command to put to death what is earthy is not rooted in a moral resolve dependent on our strength.
- That would get them right back to the asceticism of don't handle don't taste, don't touch he just got done arguing over and impressing on the Colossian they are free of that legalism.

- Rather this new life of obedience comes from being in union with Christ It comes from Christ being your life. It comes from the gracious Spirit endowment of life found in all born again believers.
- Born again with old ties- broken... born again- with sins power canceled in our lives. Born again- with the new ability to say no to sin
- It's an inside work of God, Not an outside work of man. That is the difference of the Colossian Heretical teaching.

“what is earthly in you”

In the next few verses Paul identifies what exactly we are to put to death. Or in another phrase down below: he tells us what to “Put off”

Paul identifies for the Colossians what is earthly in them. And he goes on to give us these lists, often called the vice lists. (Later on which we will look at next time, he give a list of virtues.)

Time doesn't permit me to go through the whole list and I'd encourage you to look these up some time. But what we are to best understand about these lists, is not their exact content. They seemingly are divided into sins of distorted sexuality and destructive speech that teardown relationships. These are very common for all of human believers.

But these lists are hardly exhaustive and they weren't meant to be.

Paul again is personally talking to them and saying, “This conduct of evil desires, slanderous speech and lust all the like. This conduct belongs to your former way of life. The ties are broken so put them to death in your behavior thoughts and attitudes.”

- These lists were most likely the list of actual problems in the Colossian community.
- He was telling them their union in Christ puts them in a new relationship with these sinful vices. A relationship in which they have Spirit's power that will impact the way they live.

When we see such a clear command like put to death what is earthly in you, We are to ask and meditate on this verse: How do we do that? How do we put to death sin in our lives.

For everyone in here that answer will be the same and it will vary:

It is the same because God tells us:

For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live Romans 8:13

- So the Answer is we will put to death the earthly sinful habits of ours by the living according to the Spirit.

Yet For everyone in here that answer will vary. Why?

Because the practical living out our union with Christ death by the Spirit is tailored to the work of the Spirit that God does in making us more like Christ

That answer will vary based on what kind of sin you need to kill .. sin of the heart, sin of the mind, sinning in action or words. It will also vary based on how entrenched that sin was in your life when you died with Christ. Or how entrenched new sins have popped up in your living and growing older in this world.

Either way, let me give you the common Spirit empowered graces needed to put sin to death.

1. Pray

Pray for a work of the Spirit to develop in your life a hatred for sin and your sin in particular.

Some of us have too much affection for pet sins.

Let me give you an example.

I hate Bats. I have no affect for them. Now I know they are protect wild life. I know I could get arrested and fined and leave my family fatherless for time if I do anything to them

So I'm not going to admit or confess what may or may not have happened a couple of weeks ago. But I tell you what, if they are in my home... they are as good as dead. Because I hate them.

Now let me tell you about our cat Christmas. He's not a mouser cat. In fact he gives that duty to his sister Alex. In fact if the traps don't get them, Alex. But the other day Christmas had a mouse in his mouth. Yet it was alive. And he was play around with. Like for a while. Not killing it all. Until Melanie figured out what was going on and took care of the mouse.

Some of you have affection for sin need to hate.

Some of you love your drink too much

Some of love your porn too much

Some of you love your control too much

Some of you love winning conversations and arguments too much

Some of you love being right too much

Some of you love your laziness and sulking too much.

You need to invite God through prayer to do a work of hating your sin in order to start putting your sin to death start living your life in Christ.

2. Utilize the Sword of the Spirit

That is God's word. I'm getting into that next so just put it down in your notes but let me say: The word will keep you from sinning or sinning will keep you from this word. So get into it!

3. Train your thoughts on things above- another way of saying this is to meditate on godly things things above.

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Philippians 4:8

We are called to put sin death because we have union in Christ death. Paul listed the sinful problems of the Colossian community And made a call for them to put sin to death.

What about us? That is our call in our community of Believers here at LEFC. What actual list of problem sins do we need to address and say to ourselves "Put them to death.

Before we look around, let's look within and deceive ourselves. Look for the log first in your eye that you need to pull out before you try to help others

Are you seeking and setting first your mind and thoughts on things above. Do you value the heavenly values found in this book or are your mind and thoughts on things here on earth?

May God do a revealing a repenting work in our midst this week. Let us pray