

Good morning. Please turn with me in your bibles to Colossians 3:1-4. This morning we're going to be talking about living as a follower of Jesus. So please turn with me to Colossians 3.

As you're turning there, I want to thank Jessica for stepping up and leading us in worship while David is on vacation. We so appreciate you using your gifts to serve the church, and to help lead us before the throne in worship.

And I also want to remind you that our Family Fridays are starting this week. We're doing 4 of these events in the evening as a way to reach out to our neighbors around us and share the love of Christ. They're going to be a ton of fun, and I'm really excited to be able to provide an opportunity for families in Tipton to enjoy spending time together and to get to know more of our community.

So first of all make sure to be inviting your friends and neighbors. And second of all, we still need some help. The sign up sheets are still at the welcome center. Remember I challenged each family in our church to commit to going to one of these, and we still need lots more people to sign up, so please remember to do that after the service.

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.

<sup>2</sup>Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. <sup>3</sup>For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup>When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Let's pray.

*Father, we praise you this morning for making a way for us to be raised with Christ. Even before the foundation of the world you knew every way we would sin against you, you knew every way we would want to be our own gods, and yet you made a way for us to be forgiven, to be made clean by the blood of your Son, Jesus. We praise you for that this morning. Open up our eyes to see it even more clearly. Through this text, I pray that we would stand even more amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene. How marvelous, how wonderful is your love for us, God.*

*I pray that we would be a church that reflects that love. Help us to see how we are new. That your love changes everything. Give us a passion to tell our neighbors, our coworkers, our family, our friends about the incredible love of Jesus. Give us a passion to go to the nations, God. To go tell people who have never heard—who have never had the opportunity to hear—about our great savior. You say that the harvest is plentiful and the workers are few, so we pray that you would send out more workers, God. Use us as a church to that end.*

*Father, in this text we are called to set our minds on things above, not on things on earth. Lord, you know how each of us in this room is struggling right now to do just that. So I pray that you would speak to us now through your word, and that we would glorify you as a result. In Jesus' name, amen.*

It is no secret that we live in an age where there is much confusion about what is good and what is right. Our culture couldn't be more confused about what is valuable, what is worth pursuing, and what is the best way to orient your life.

## Christ Changes Everything

What ends up happening is people start orienting their lives around any number of things: whether it's a political party, a social cause, climbing the corporate ladder, or a hobby, etc.

None of those things can ultimately satisfy anyone. But when you're pursuing those things—when you're pursuing fulfillment apart from Christ, you always believe happiness is just around the corner.

If I can just get that job; if we can just elect this political candidate, or get that one out of office; if everyone would start believing this; if I could just get my hands on that, if I can just win this argument on twitter, then I'll be happy.

Our culture is confused about what is right, and how to live.

It's tempting to think that this is something that's unique to our culture, but it's not. This has been a problem throughout history. I just finished 2 Kings in my bible reading this week, and I read about this king named Josiah who was king of Judah during a time where no one had worshipped the Lord for many generations. And they ended up finding the book of Deuteronomy and someone read it to him, and after it was read, he realized, "You know what, we should really get these prostitutes out of the temple. And we should probably get rid of those shrines to other gods too." Imagine the moral and cultural confusion for the people of God to think that those things were right and worth pursuing in the temple of God of all places!

Mankind, because of sin, is predisposed to seek after anything but God; to live for anything instead of the one true God. God created us to be in perfect harmony with him, and when people chase after other things, it naturally causes great confusion about what is right, good, and worth pursuing.

But if we're being honest, even after becoming a Christian, it can be kind of hard to know how to live. We can say, "Ok, I'm a Christian, now what?" We know we're supposed to follow the bible, but the Bible is a really big book, and parts of it are kind of confusing. (I just read 9 chapters of genealogies in 1 Chronicles.)

And not only that, but last week we talked about legalism and we learned that it's sometimes possible to do something that *looks* right, but to do it for the wrong reasons.

So how are we, as the people of God, supposed to live? In a culture that sends us a million messages about what's right and wrong, with a sin nature where we can't always trust that our desires and motives are going to be pure, how are we supposed to live?

This is the question that Paul addresses in this passage. In these four verses, Paul tells the Colossians, and us as a result, how they are supposed to live in light of Christ. He's just spent telling them how *not* to live in the letter, and now he's shifting into telling them how they *are* supposed to live.

And the bottom line is this, for the Colossians and for us: Christ changes everything.

Christ changes everything. Once you become a Christian, everything about you changes.

These four verses give us two specific ways that Christ changes everything. Lest you think Pastor Mike always has three points, I have two this morning. To ways that Christ changes everything.

**(SLIDE)**

## Christ Changes Everything

The first one is this:

### Christ Changes Your Priorities

Look at verses 1-2:

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.  
<sup>2</sup> Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.

These four verses are a major turning point in Colossians. Let's think about the overall letter.

Chapter 1 is all about Christ being the ruler and sustainer of everything in the universe. And then chapter 2 was all about how the false teachers were twisting the gospel to fit their own message.

Now we're entering part 3, which is about how a Christian is supposed to live. In chapter 3, Paul shifts to giving instructions on how to live the Christian life.

So this passage is a bridge between parts 2 and 3. What do I mean by a bridge? It's telling the Colossians how to live—which is what the next section is all about, but the way he's doing it is by *contrasting it* to how the false teachers were telling them how to live.

We're going to jump around in these verses for a bit. Look at verse 1: *If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above,*

Now, if you can, try to remember all the way back to last week's sermon. We talked about the worldview of the Colossians, and we said the false teachers were trying to tell them how to do something. Do you remember what that was?

They were trying to manipulate these things they called the "elemental spirits of the world" in order to get access to God. Remember, the false teachers had all these rules about how to punish your body in a way that the spirits would be pleased and give you access to God.

So what does Paul say as a response? Seek the things *above*. Verse 2, "Set your minds on the things that are *above*, not the things that are on earth."

He's taking the false teaching, and flipping it completely on its head. This is where I get excited about the Bible again, because Paul is *brilliant* at taking other people's arguments and turning them on their head.

Remember in verse 18 Paul says that the false teachers were all about having these visions and angel worshiping experiences. To most people it would look like they were already concerned with "Seeking the things above" by trying to manipulate these spirits.

But Paul—and really it's the Holy Spirit working through Paul—is able to see right through it for what it really is.

So he says, "Seek the things above", as in "start from the top down."

Because what the false teachers were *really* saying, was start from the bottom up: they say focus on how you live and that will give you access to God.

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Focus on how you're living—make sure you're eating the right foods and avoiding the right things—Paul says they're not actually seeking the things above, but the things below.

But the gospel is the complete opposite! It's top down! Seek the things that are really above—not the elemental spirits, but as above as above gets, the throne room of heaven!

Don't go from the bottom up, go from the top down! Seek the things above, and that will change how you live.

Ultimately he's saying, don't change how you live so that you can reach God; seek after God, and that will change how you live.

He says it right in verse 1: If then—meaning “since”—since you've been raised with Christ—since you're a follower of Jesus, since you're someone who's been brought from death to life, seek the things above.

Ok that's great, but what does it mean?

Some of you know that our two year old son Owen is *obsessed* with trains. Like, completely obsessed. He doesn't talk yet, but he does a little sign language, and this is his sign for train.

For months now, when you go to get him out of bed in the morning, the first thing he does when he sees you walk through the door is frantically make that sign. He's awake, and he wants trains.

And now that we've moved into our house down the road here, his bedroom overlooks the train tracks. And if he could talk, I guarantee he'd be telling his friends, “Yeah we just bought a new house..got some train-front property...it's pretty cool.”

Whenever a train whistle goes off, everything stops in the Nafziger household and we have to go outside immediately and watch it go by. If you're ever stopped at the tracks out here I can almost guarantee you'll see us.

Trains in the morning, trains all day. He just went to Mr. Muffins trains in Atlanta yesterday, and as soon as he got home, the first thing he said was “more trains.” I'm sure he dreams about trains at night. Trains, trains, trains. My son has set his mind on trains.

And I think that's a great picture for what it means to set our minds on things above.

What are you thinking about during the day. Is it Christ? Ever? Do you ever find yourself just thinking about the Lord, worshiping him throughout the day in your heart? Or is it church on Sunday—check—now let's go back to regular life.

Luke 12:34 says, “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Now that you've been raised with Christ, your mind should be set on Christ. It should be on the very real place where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. That's real. Right now, our Savior is seated at the right hand of God. Do you live like that's a reality?

Now, the thing is, we live on earth. Seeking the things above mean you just check out on this earth and say, “sorry I'm not going to work, I'm seeking the things above.” There are bills to pay and mouths to feed and diapers to change.

But it does mean that my *orientation* when I do those things that I'm called to do should be godward. My *priority* in life should be seeking after him in the things I do on earth.

We should wake up, and instead of saying “trains”, we should say, “I want to know Jesus more today.” And throughout the day we should be thinking, “Ok Lord, how do you want to use this moment right now in my life for your kingdom.” And when your head hits the pillow you should be praising God for the good news of the gospel, and thanking him for another chance to do his will when you wake up.

I don’t know if this is convicting you at all, but it convicted me this week. I am not doing a good enough job of seeking the things above. My prayer for myself this week and our church this week has been that the Lord would give us a greater and greater desire to set our minds on him, not on this earth.

If your mind is constantly on things on earth, and you never think about the Lord, you shouldn’t be surprised when you start to think, “man, I’m just not feeling it with my relationship with God. What’s wrong with me?”

What’s wrong is that your priorities are out of whack.

Seek the things above, and Christ will change your priorities.

**(SLIDE)**

### Christ Changes Your Position

Not only does Christ change your priorities, he also changes your position. He changes your past, present, and future. Look at verses 3 and 4:

<sup>3</sup> For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

<sup>4</sup> When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Two weeks ago David did a great job talking about when you see a “therefore” in scripture you need to ask what it’s there for.

Here Paul gives the reason or the grounding for his commands in verses 1 and 2.

Paul does this all the time. He gives a command, and then he gives the theology behind the command. He explains how our *position* as Christians necessitates that we live out the command that he gives.

That’s what he’s doing here. He commands the Colossians and by way of them, us, to seek the things above and set our minds on things above. And then he gives us the theological reason behind it.

There are three main verbs in these two verses, a perfect tense verb—which we’ll talk about, and a future tense verb. Together, these three verbs show us that everything about us is wrapped up in Christ. Everything about our past, everything about our present, and everything about our future.

There is nothing about us that isn’t affected by the gospel. You can’t set your Christianity over here, and the rest of your life over here. Christ owns your past, present and future.

Paul says, “**For you have died.**” That’s the past tense verb. That’s what happened when you first placed your faith in Christ. We talked about this a few weeks ago in Colossians 2:20, the idea that in Christ our old self has died, and that’s what we symbolize in baptism.

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That's an undeniable truth. You've died. You're not wavering back and forth, you're not kind of saved kind of not saved, you're either dead to your old self in Christ, or you're not.

And then Paul says, “**And your life is hidden with Christ in God.**” This is the perfect tense verb I was talking about. Nothing like another English lesson right after school is out.

A perfect tense verb is something that happened in the past with ongoing implications in the present. We don't really have a special tense for this in English necessarily, but we use context.

So if I say “I spilled coffee,” I could be using the past tense, to just tell you something that happened. But if you're looking at my shirt and you say, “What happened?” And I say “I spilled coffee,” now I'm talking about something that happened in the past but has ongoing implications for the state of my laundry.

That's what's happening with the phrase, “Is hidden.” And it's a beautiful truth for us. He's saying, “When you died,” or “When you first put your faith in Christ,” your life was hidden with Christ, and it continues to be hidden with Christ in God.” Your eternal state is presently secure based on the past action of Jesus Christ on the cross.

And then the future tense verb is at the end of verse 4, “When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.”

Brothers and sisters, this is the gospel. Because of Christ's death and resurrection, placing your faith in him means that your position has completely changed, and now it's completely secure.

Before your faith in Christ, you stood to take the full, righteous wrath of God because of an entire life lived in rebellion to him.

But now, only because of Christ, you have died—your old self is gone, your sin is forgiven, you've been redeemed, you've been washed by the blood of the lamb—you have died. And your life is completely secure.

When your life feels completely upside down, when things don't make sense, when you're tempted to believe there's no way out, you remind yourself of this verse.

You remind yourself, “My life isn't out of control, my life is hidden in Christ with God. And there is absolutely nowhere else I would rather be.”

And that means your hope isn't in your circumstances getting better; it isn't in getting the job you really want or fixing a relationship, or whatever it is, your hope is in the future resurrection.

Which means you remind yourself, “I'm going to appear with Christ in glory. I'm going to have a resurrected body with no more pain or sickness, I'm going to be free from sin and bondage, and I'm going to live with my Savior forever.”

That's amazing! There's no better truth than that! There is no message I could proclaim that even comes close!

I could title my sermon, “The winning lottery numbers,” and actually have them, and that would *pale* in comparison to the awesome news of Jesus Christ. There is no better message anywhere else.

So what do you do? What do you do as a result of that amazing truth that if your faith is in Christ, your past, present, and future are secure in him?

You seek the things above. You set your mind on things above.

Like Owen with the trains. Waking up, more trains. Going to bed, more trains.

You wake up: more Jesus. You go to bed, more Jesus. You pray, Jesus, give me more of you. Give me a greater love for you. Make me willing to sacrifice whatever you're calling me to sacrifice to do whatever you're calling me to do.

### (SLIDE)

Our world is confused. Christ changes everything. If you've been raised with him, and I pray that you have, seek him with your whole heart.

Let's pray.

*Father, we want more of you. We want more of your Son. We want more of your Spirit. And the amazing thing is that in Christ, we have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. We know that all treasures of wisdom and knowledge are found in Christ. We don't need anything else. But we chase after other things so often. Forgive us, God. Help us, as a church, seek the things above. Help us set our minds on you, set our hearts on your goodness, on the awesomeness of your Son. We were once alienated and hostile in mind, but you have reconciled us, God. We praise you. Thank you that our past, present, and future are all hidden and secure in Christ. Help us respond to that truth in worship. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.*