

Colossians 3:1-11

August 4, 2019

“Look Above to Christ”

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church

8th Sunday af. Pentecost

Pastor Hartwig

Grace, mercy, and peace from God, our Heavenly Father, and Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen! Dear brothers and sisters in Christ –

[Introduction] Fifty years ago...

Fifty year ago, it was the biggest news on earth.

Then last month — for the fiftieth anniversary — it was big news again.

On July 24, 1969,

Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin, and Mike Collins
returned safely to earth after man’s first moon landing,
and they were the toast of the planet!

For a brief time, the entire human race was on the same page,
looking beyond the wars and distrust and economic worries
down here — to gaze at and dream about — something way up above.
Look above...

OH! But how quickly we all come back to earth.

As important as it was—and still is—it’s easy to forget.

As Christians, living in this fallen world,
it is important to remember that

we have things above to — which we can always look
—*and we’re not just talking about the moon.*

Unlike the world’s focus on the moon fifty years ago,
our focus as Christians isn’t primarily on a place.

Our looking to things above
is looking to a person — Jesus Christ.

That means we can look to things above every day,
not just for the then and there,
but also, for the here and now.

AND When we forget that — we forfeit so much of the joy God intends for us today.

In our text, St. Paul encourages us to

keep seeking the things above—where Christ is.

Look forward to your glory above to be revealed in Christ (vv 1–4).

You see, ***the whole point of the Letter to the Colossians is that Christ is the whole point.***

That is so important, I want to say it again.

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[*Colossae*]

Colossae was a little town sandwiched between two mountains.

It was a little town that used to be on the main road,
but the Roman interstate bypassed it.

Nevertheless, the Word of God reached it.

And the Colossians celebrated our risen Lord and Savior.

But heresies – false teachings – also reached it.

You see, heresies had been distracting the Church from Christ—to worldly things.

So...

Paul responds by putting Christ on the appropriate pedestal, above all things (v 1).

Paul tells us to seek the things that are above, where Christ is,

seated at the right hand of God.

Neil Armstrong said:

“That’s one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.”

Christ came to be seated at God’s right hand after one giant leap for mankind.

First his leap from heaven to live among us down here on planet earth.

Then all those small steps as a man that included

perfect keeping of the Law to the tiniest degree,

and culminated in those strained, struggling, stumbling steps to the cross.

And then finally that huge leap from the grave

to his resurrection and ascension back to heaven,

one man going ...

where now every man and woman and child can go.

YOU SEE That’s our destiny—to be with God.

By our Baptism, we died to this world and have been raised to heaven (v 3a).

Baptism shows that earthly things, including our sinful flesh,

have been drowned and that

a new heavenly man or woman has risen from the water.

Baptism creates faith in Christ, and all who believe have a place in heaven.

They have a place without even the smallest step on their own parts.

You see...

The challenge is to remain focused above (v 2).

LOOK ABOVE...

It's so easy to forget about things above — when so much here presses hard against us.

When money is tight...

It's tough to think about the eternal future when you've got bills now.

When money is plentiful...

It's tough to think about the eternal future when you've got so much to spend.

When you're young and prospering—the family's growing, the career's taking off—
spiritual blessings don't seem to glitter as brightly as earthly ones.

When you're old and retired—there is so many things to do,
travel and trips to take—

spiritual blessings don't seem to glitter as brightly as earthly ones.

For now, the heavenly things are so easily hidden (v 3b).

It's easy to give up and give in to the earthly.

[Paul Reminds Us]

That is why Paul reminds us that the things of this world — are not what life is about.

Our life *is* Christ (v 4a)! LOOK ABOVE...

Even while in this world,

it's the things above, from where Christ is,

that count,

that are always good,

that are always in rich supply.

We like to say to each other “***Good is good.*** All the time. ***All the time.*** God is good.”

At the LCMS Youth Gathering as we walk the streets, we like to say this chant.

God is good all the time!

This year we have focused on how this is always true!

God is always good because he gives us

the forgiveness of sins, salvation and life everlasting.

That is his good and gracious will and because of that we can always...

REJOICE!

AND it is true — one day the glory of those things above — will be revealed for us.

“When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.” (v 4)

Now we are talking about heaven.

At that moment, everyone will see just how mundane

the things on this earth have been

how quick the months of tight money,

how short the years of pain,

how fleeting the material successes have been.

[Live it Now]

Living the life of things above is something we do now.

It's like an unborn baby:

It's not a "potential life" or a "life-to-be."

He or she is a life in the fullest sense, but just can't be seen yet.

We are living the life of things above right now, ever since our Baptism.

We just can't yet see them fully.

Because of that

we're called to make that life as visible as possible,
to be different from lives lived for things below.

Paul lists a host of sins that reflect what is earthly:

"sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. . . . Anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk. . . . Do not lie" (vv 5b, 8b, 9a).

Each of these is a gratification of some earthly desire—sex, self-indulgence, selfish ego.

We — you and I — are *NOT* above such sins.

We are to abstain from them.

And we are to confess them!

And we are to give them to Christ,
leaving them at the foot of the cross.

As Christians,

we have wonderful reason to be different!

We are to seek the things above, where Christ is.

[Conclusion]

BUT I certainly can't pretend

that I always set my mind on things above,
any more than I consider every day
what an amazing thing it was for us
to put a man on the moon.

So tell me the truth:

Did you ever want to be an astronaut?

Did you ever want to go to the moon?

I tell you the truth,

as Christians, we're destined to go farther.

LOOK ABOVE...

We've been raised with Christ. Now look above to Christ. AMEN!

REJOICE always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances;
for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. AMEN! (1 Thess. 5:16–18)
