

# Raised with Christ

## Colossians 3:1-11

### INTRODUCTION

In the book of Deuteronomy, as the people of Israel prepared to finally cross the Jordan River and claim the Promised Land, Moses reminded them of the lessons they should have learned in their 40 years of wandering in the desert.

- One of those lessons contained a phrase that Jesus quoted during His own time of temptation in the wilderness. You probably recognize this teaching:

(God) humbled you (Israel), causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. (Deuteronomy 8:3)

Jesus knew that every word of Scripture is important. The earliest Christians understood that too, so when the Apostle Paul wrote to a young pastor named Timothy, he urged him to teach his congregation that:

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

All Scripture. Every word. It all comes from God's mouth and that makes all of it important.

- Now, having said that, let me also say that some words deserve some extra special attention as you study the Scriptures for yourselves.
- Not because those words are deep and super-theological, but because they help you as the reader to know when something extra special is being said – some point you should not breeze past or overlook.

For example:

- The word “but” is a key word. It points out a contrast worth noting. For example:

The wages of sin is death **BUT** the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 6:23).

- I like the word “therefore.” Long ago I was taught that whenever you see a therefore you should stop and see what the therefore is there for.
  - Later in this sermon series our text will be Hebrews 12:1. Having just told the readers about the great faith of the Old Testament heroes, the author of Hebrews writes:

**THEREFORE** since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so

easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, (Hebrews 12:1)

This sermon series centers around another one of those key words: **SINCE**. Since takes a statement of truth and then concludes that:

In view of this stated fact, these next statements should be the natural consequences.

In other words ...

It should be common SENSE to pay attention to the common SINCE.

The writer of this third chapter of Colossians follows the typical COMMON SINCE pattern.

- The first two chapters of this book are spent telling us how perfect Jesus is. Listen to this description:

(Jesus) is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. (Colossians 1:15-16)

That teaching goes on. You should read the whole passage for yourselves.

After reminding us that it is this Jesus who died on the cross for us, the writer makes this COMMON SINCE statement:

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ ... (Colossians 3:1)

Now, remember, a COMMON SINCE statement is a truth statement. So here is the truth for today:

If your sins have been forgiven, you have been raised with Christ.

Being "raised" is the way this writer talks about the resurrection of Jesus.

- Chapter 2 talks about how there was once a time for all of us that we were dead in our sins. But because of Jesus, God forgave those sins on the cross.

When you were dead in your sins ... God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, ... nailing them to the cross. (Colossians 2:13-14)

In our Brief Order for Confession and Forgiveness each week the liturgist recites:

If we confess our sins, (God) is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

Now remember the COMMON SINCE truth:

If your sins have been forgiven, you have been raised with Christ.

Let me tell you something true about me: I have been raised with Christ.

- Let me tell you something true about you: You have been raised with Christ.
- Now you tell me something true about you: \_\_\_\_\_

(If I was preaching in a black church today, I could get the congregation whipped into a frenzy on this phrase.)

Every day every forgiven person should pray: "Lord thank you that I am not dead in my sins anymore, for I have been raised with Christ." Isn't that awesome? Wow.

Now with every COMMON SINCE truth statement, there comes a couple of personal responsibilities:

### **#1: ELEVATE YOUR HEART AND MIND**

Look at verses 1-3:

Set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. (Colossians 3:1-3)

Let me show you two photos to help explain what the writer means by this teaching.

- Photo #1: What do you see? A girl. A duck. Some scaffolding. An amusement park ride. Lots of things to look at.
- Photo #2: What do you see? A girl. The rest of it is blurry. It is the same scene. You know what is in the background, but only because I showed you the other picture first.

Here is how the teaching relates. Whether you are a Christian or not, life happens. All the stuff of life is still there, but when you elevate your hearts and minds, those things blur in the background and all you see is Jesus.

- It doesn't lessen the importance of anything back there.
- But what you see first and primarily is Jesus. You aren't distracted by the ducks.

I had a conversation with one of our congregational members recently. She is going through one of those very serious real-life things right now. But she wanted to tell about a "God-sighting" that had just happened in the midst of that event. And she talked about wanting to see more of those.

- That's a real-life example of setting your heart and mind on things above. In the midst of the turmoil, you see Jesus.

I have a confession to make. When I saw the first picture I spent most of my time trying to figure out the details off all the stuff in the background. I never saw the necklace on the girl until the background was blurred.

- I wonder what all we miss when we don't set our hearts and minds on things above?

## #2: ELIMINATE THE GARBAGE

Look at verses 5-10:

Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. (Colossians 3:5-10)

The Apostle Paul loves to use this kind of clothing imagery. You take off one set of clothes and put on a new set. It reminds me of the old story about a beggar who lived near the king's palace. The story goes like this:

- One day the beggar saw a proclamation posted outside the palace gate. The king was hosting a great banquet. Everyone in the kingdom was invited to attend, but there was a dress code. You had to wear royal garments.
- The beggar looked at the rags he was wearing and sighed. He would never be permitted to dine at the palace. Dressed like that, he knew he would never be allowed in.
- Slowly an outrageous idea crept into his mind. He approached the guard at the gate. "Please sir, would it be possible for me to speak to the king?"
- "Wait here," the guard replied. Miraculously a few minutes later, the beggar was escorted into the royal throne room where he stood before the king.
- "What do you want?" the king asked. "Your majesty. I want so much to attend the banquet, but I have no royal garments to wear. Please sir, if I may be so bold, may I have one of your old garments so that I, too, may come to the banquet?"
- "You have been wise in coming to me," the king said. He called to his son. "Take this man to your room and array him in some of your clothes." Soon the beggar was standing before a mirror, clothed in garments that he never dared hope for.
- "You are now eligible to attend the king's banquet tomorrow night," said the prince. "But even more important, you will never need any other clothes. These garments are yours forever."
- The beggar dropped to his knees. "Oh, thank you," he cried. But as he started to leave, he looked back at his pile of dirty rags on the floor. He hesitated. What if the prince was wrong? What if he would need his old clothes again? Quickly he gathered them up.
- The banquet was far greater than he had ever imagined, but he worried about the small bundle of his old rags lest someone else would take them or throw them out by mistake. And because the food was passed so quickly he missed some of the greatest delicacies while checking on the clothes.

- Time proved that the prince was right. No one came to ask for the royal clothes to be returned. Still the poor beggar was doubtful, clinging on to his old rags. He took them with him everywhere he went. He never fully accepted that his new clothes were truly his.

So too with us. The old garments don't belong to people who have been raised with Christ. It's time to get rid of them once and for all. The Message states it like this:

You're done with that old life. It's like a filthy set of ill-fitting clothes you've stripped off and put in the fire. Now you're dressed in a new wardrobe. Every item of your new way of life is custom-made by the Creator, with his label on it. All the old fashions are now obsolete. (Colossians 3:9-10)

### **APPLICATION**

Being raised with Christ sets us free to desire and pursue a life that is truly best – a life that is meant to be.

God in His great mercy has made possible a life that is oriented toward Him.

- It doesn't ignore the harsh realities of the human life around us, but allows us to focus on Jesus in the midst of all that we face.
- Our old life – the life prior to our salvation – would only lead us into a pit of ugliness and despair.
- But when Jesus saves us – when He forgives our sin – WHEN HE RAISES UP – only then can we experience life that is truly alive.

Do you know that life?

Amen.