

Colossians 3:1-4 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. ³ For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ this Easter:

Consider these two scenarios:

The first is a man condemned to death. To reach his place of execution he has to travel across the county. Officials transport him in 1st class accommodations: rides in a limousine, flies in a private jet, and sleeps in a 5-star hotel. The whole journey is posh and plush. But it's the most miserable journey he's ever taken, because he knows how it's going to end.

The second scene is of a man going home to his family. He has just fought in a war overseas. His travel is difficult. He rides on a crowded bus, flies on a noisy, bumpy cargo plane, and sleeps on the floor of a terminal. The food is bad. His entire journey is exhausting. But it's the most wonderful journey he's ever taken because he knows how it's going to end.

Knowing the outcome can really affect the trip, can't it? The road we travel together in this world certainly has many potholes, and few are bigger than the one we experiencing right now in our world and nation. But we know how our journey is going to end. Because of Jesus, and because of Easter, we know we are going home.

The Lord assures you through Paul that **"Jesus' Resurrection is Your Resurrection!"** (1) ***A Promise of Coming Glory*** (2) ***A Reason to Look Up!***

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In Latin America many say warmly, "*Mi casa es su casa*" -- "My home is your home." Similarly, Jesus wants us to know: "*My resurrection is your resurrection.*" Paul assures us, ***'You have been raised with Christ'*** (literally, "*co-resurrected*"). Then he adds, ***"When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory."*** To us mortals for whom the death and the grave are menacing, Paul gives needed assurance that there is something beyond it -- something much better.

Death, of course, exists because **sin** exists. And on the contrary, where sin is not, death is not. When, by the Holy Spirit, Jesus came into your life and you became a believer, your sins were erased. They ceased to exist! At that very moment you were ***"raised with Christ."*** You became spiritually alive, given a new life that never ends. Jesus made it so that physical death isn't even a speed bump in our eternity.

A Sunday school teacher explained to her students that during Jesus' ministry he raised three people from the dead: the daughter of Jairus, The widow of Nain's son, and Lazarus. Then she said to the class, "*Do you ever wonder why Jesus didn't raise more people from the dead?*" One student said, "*Teacher, I think I know. It's because he couldn't find any more volunteers! They all wanted to stay where they were!*"

For sure! Who wants to leave heaven and come back *here*? Easter assures us that when Jesus returns we get to stay in heaven and we also get our bodies back -- but in perfect condition! Paul writes to the Philippians, ***"Christ will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body"*** (3:21). The lily bursting forth from the bud; the butterfly unleashed from the cocoon: we see why these are symbols of the great day of the resurrection! Truly, ***"Jesus' resurrection is your resurrection!"*** What joy that gives us as we journey!

In light of our promise of future glory, Paul says, ***“Set your hearts on things above...Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you (that is, your old sinful self) died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.”*** Since you and I are destined for a better kingdom, Paul says, *let’s live right now* like we’re looking forward to that kingdom. It’s like children cooped up in the house on a gray, rainy day, standing at the screen door, looking outside, longing to be outside and having fun! So also we long to be with Jesus. While we wait we do everything we can to live like people who have ***“Set our hearts...set our minds...on things above.”***

It’s not easy for us earthly creatures to set our minds on things we can’t see. Our tendency is to focus on the immediate moment. E.g., let’s say we have a sum of money to contribute to an IRA for our retirement. But then we start to think about what we could do right now with that retirement money. If we dwell on that, it makes it really hard to mail in a check to an account you can’t touch for a long time. What do we need to do? See the bigger picture! Look ahead, understand the future benefits, and then, instead of being impulsive, we learn to practice self-control.

Let’s put that into a spiritual context. With our eyes of faith, God wants us to look beyond the here and now and see the bigger picture! Hebrews (13:14): ***“Here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.”*** In other words, you and I are **in** this world (we live here), but we are not **of** this world (this isn’t our real home). We’re only here a short time -- camping out. Paul once wrote, ***“We fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal”*** (2 Cor. 4:18).

Once again, that’s not always easy. One commentator wrote: ***“Most messages we receive today deal with drawing our attention to ‘earthly things.’ Most schools are secular; workplaces and the marketplace and the media are as well. If we surround ourselves with ‘earthly minded’ people all the time we will be drawn to think and act the same as they.”*** That’s why it’s important to keep our connection with one another and our fellow Christians, and why it’s important to be people of the Word. I hope we don’t underestimate the importance of Christian *friendship, fellowship, and worship*. These three “*ships*” are God-given counterbalances to the secular mindset that permeates our world. We are taking this often-perilous journey together...and it’s a lot less risky to do it as a family or a team. We can help each other to look up, not down.

We often sing together, ***“I’m but a stranger here, heaven is my home.”*** May God help us this Easter and always to keep our eyes fixed ***“not on earthly things,”*** but on our home together in heaven. Jesus reminds us, ***“My resurrection is your resurrection!”*** We’ll see you soon, Jesus. Alleluia!

Amen.