

Prayer of the Day:

Almighty God, by the glorious resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ you conquered death and opened the gate to eternal life. Grant that we, who have been raised with him through Baptism, may walk in newness of life and ever rejoice in the hope of sharing his glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit be dominion and praise now and forever. Amen.

Text: 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. – NIV

Verse of the Day:

Alleluia. Alleluia. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia. This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. Alleluia. (Psalm 118:24 cf. NIV)

Sermon Text:

Does it feel like Easter this morning? It didn't for the women as they headed to the tomb. They were filled with doubts and fears, sadness and grief. They had called Him Messiah and Lord. He had been murdered, crucified, buried. What now? Even as they head to the tomb they are uncertain of what will greet them. Unyielding soldiers, an even more unyielding stone sealing the tomb and what of the body they went to care for? What would that look like?

When they get there, nothing is right. No guards, an angel seated at the entrance of the tomb, the stone no match for whoever had decided to move it. Had the angel done all this? If so what could it do to them? What had he done with Jesus? Even after the exchange with the angel, they head back to the apostles a little befuddled, still fearful and frightened, yet joyful as the truth takes hold.

How about you? What's going on in your life this morning? Does it feel shattered for some reason? Troubles and problems still rage in our world. Honestly it doesn't even feel like Christianity is winning these days. Christians are being killed for their faith and if we aren't battered physically, then the world sure seems to assault Biblical truths philosophically. If we dial in the microscope our families aren't perfect, our jobs can be stressed, our friendships might even be struggling. How do you find yourself approaching the tomb this morning?

The Apostle Paul tells us, *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.* An interesting thing happens in hardship and struggle as we undergo trials of all shapes and sizes. We have a tendency to forget the promises of God. It was true of the women approaching the tomb that first Easter morning. It was true of the Colossians who were facing the encroachment of false teachings and the constant annoyance of their own sinfulness. It's true of us as well.

So Paul reminds them. He reminds them that Jesus has already won the victory. Just in case the Alleluias, the choirs, the instruments and the flowers didn't proclaim that loudly enough this morning, Paul says "It's really true Christ has risen from the dead. More than that, He has granted you victory as he does! ¹³ *When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, ¹⁴ having canceled the written*

code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross (Philippians 2:13-15).

Pretty predictably, Satan hates this message so he tries to pry us away from it. He covers over the reality with worldly trouble, with earthly hardships and yes, by lying and trying to change the truth all together with countless false teachings about who Christ is and what He has done. So says, Paul “set your minds on the things above.”

Paul is not saying here that we are to think about how great heaven is and ignore the life we live here. He encourages the Colossians to mind the way they live in this world as God’s people immediately following these words. Instead, He is saying keep your focus on Christ, on His victory that has been given to you personally as God granted you faith in Baptism. ⁹ *For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form,* ¹⁰ *and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.* ¹¹ *In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ,* ¹² *having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead* (Colossians 2:9-12).

Don’t forget, says Paul that as the world comes unglued at the seams and as Satan, the world and our own sinful flesh try to tell us we’ve already lost the battle, we have not. Christ has already won the victory for you!

In fact, he goes on to say exactly that in next verses. *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.*

Your life is hidden with Christ! Have you ever stopped to contemplate those words. I ask because I think we’d complain a lot less if we did. Hidden with Christ implies that as we go about examining the successes of Christianity in this world, they won’t always be evident. Just as it wasn’t always immediately evident that Jesus was winning when He lived and died for us. Just recall those women and the disciples as they slowly come to the realization that Jesus hadn’t lost but won. The same is going to be true in this world for those that follow Christ. He regularly said as much. But don’t forget the victory is as much ours as it was Christ’s every step of His earthly ministry.

Notice what Paul says, having won the victory, having been given the victory by our Savior, our Lord, our Messiah, our Jesus now sits at the right hand of God in glory (we’ll talk more about that at Ascension in May. Watch for that service on the calendar!). What that means is that as we struggle we can go to Him in prayer and ask him for help, help He will always provide in faith strengthened in Word and Sacraments as we focus not on the fleeting and failing philosophies and success of the world, but as we keep our focus on Christ.

And as we focus on His victory, He gives us another promise. He’s coming back. When our life appears, He will once again proclaim His victory in no uncertain terms and you will be victorious, in every sense of the word, standing with God in Glory!

So as you walked in the door it may not have felt like everything was different, but Jesus promises that it is. Our world may try with every ounce of its power to erase that truth from our hearts and minds, but you are hidden in Christ with God. In trial, in tribulation, in every stage of life, the victory is yours. Jesus resurrection proclaims it loudly for all to hear. I guess the angel said it well to the women at the tomb, **DON’T BE AFRAID ... CHRIST IS RISEN!** Alleluia! Amen!