

**Colossians 3:1-17**  
**(Psalm 1; Matthew 5:13-20)**  
**“A New Life: The Relational Dimension of Mission”**

**Introduction**

We are seeking to understand the nature of the mission entrusted to us by our great God and Father. At its heart is the call to make disciples, and we must be clear what that entails. We cannot make disciples if we ourselves are not disciples.

We have before us one of Paul’s most comprehensive descriptions of our new life in Christ as it flows out in our relationship with those around us. If Paul’s words seem strange to us, then we have not yet realized what our new life in Christ is meant to be, not merely in theory, but in practice. If Paul’s description seems impossible to us, then we are at least beginning to get the point of the gospel, and to reach the place where we will decide whether to go on trying to live out of our own resources, or will finally cast ourselves utterly upon the grace of God, grace not merely greater than our guilt, but greater also than the power of sin to hold us back from the new life God offers us in Christ Jesus.

Paul opens with this tremendous challenge: “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above ... set your minds on things that are above.” If we are children of God, then we have died with Christ, have been raised with Christ, and our life is “hidden with Christ in God.” But what does that mean? Remember Jesus’ prayer prayed in the upper room the night before he died? He prayed this for all of us who would believe in him: “that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me ... I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and loved them even as you loved me” (John 17:20-23). In our text, Paul is simply saying that God answered his Son’s prayer for us, and that when he saves us, he makes us one with Christ. We are incorporated into Christ and his Spirit is given to us, so that it may also be said of us that he is in us and we are in him, a new creation.

Now what ought to be the implications of such an incredible transformation? What should this look like? Well, one can safely suggest that it should look radically different than the typical life of Christian people in the west today. I will not speak for the church in other parts of the world, but the church in our land does not look radically different than nice people who have no faith whatsoever. That is, in fact, the greatest indictment the world makes against us: that we do not live up to what we profess to believe.

The problem is not new: Paul faced it in the churches that he planted, and wrote as he did to urge them on to higher ground, to see in his words and in his life what life in Christ is meant to be. To understand this text, it is important to remember that by

“earthly things” Paul does not necessarily mean lakes and trees, or business meetings or education. Nor, by “heavenly things” does he necessarily mean Bible study or going to church or pearly gates and streets of gold. One can do business for the glory of God and one can go to church to meet attractive women. It’s not only *what* we do but *why* we do it that makes something earthly or heavenly, in the biblical view of things. Paul will end by saying, “And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus” (3:17).

Look with me this morning at what a disciple looks like in relationship to others.

## **Body**

- 1. First, we must put to death in our daily lives those old patterns of thinking and acting that are part of the old nature and the old life, that died with Christ on the cross (3:5-11).**

*The Lust of the Flesh: Sexual Sin*  
*The Lust of the Eye: Materialism*  
*The Pride of Life: Broken Relationships*

- 2. Second, we must put on, that is we must fully embrace, those new patterns of life that express our new nature, the new Spirit-empowered life we have by grace (3:12-14).**

*The Affections of Christ*  
*The Forgiveness of Christ*  
*The Love of Christ*

- 3. Finally, we must know how to begin living this new life (3:15-17).**

*Let the peace of Christ rule in your heart, with thanksgiving.*  
*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, with thanksgiving.*  
*Let the name of Christ be the key to everything you do, with thanksgiving.*

## **Conclusion**

Our part in the mission entrusted to us begins with our taking up the life and ministry of Jesus. It is not something that we can do without being born again, without being united to Christ by his Spirit living in us. To us today the Lord says exactly what he said through Paul to the Colossian Christians: “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above.” If you are in Christ, then be what you are!

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