

Sermon 4: God's Glorious Plan for the Church: Colossians 3:1-11

Text: Colossians 3:1-11 "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all..."

Introduction: The mystery of the church and missions

- **The church is a beautiful union of formerly estranged peoples: 1:20-22**
 - **Estranged from God: Colossians 1:20-22** "Having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself...you, that were sometime alienated and enemies...now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death..."
 - **Estranged from one another: Ephesians 2:11-16**
"Remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh...at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity...to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross..."
- **It is established and built through the preaching of the gospel: 1:25-27** "I am made a minister...to fulfil the word of God; Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory..."
- **Every generation must embrace this duty:**

- Paul and the other apostles took the gospel to the nations
- Their disciples took it and taught their generation.
- Each generation after them has the same calling.
- **The motivation to embrace the duty:**
 - We must understand who we are in Christ.
 - We must understand how that union reorients our lives.
 - We must long to see the gospel transform broken lives.

Summary: A life united to Christ will be radically transformed by that union enabling it to be used to transform other broken lives.

Proposition: We must understand and embrace who we are in Christ.

Truth 1: Missions starts with our union with Christ: 3:1 "If ye then be risen with Christ..."

- **Three key pieces:**
 - **Condition:** "If..."
 - **Reality:** "Risen with Christ..."
 - **Logical response:** "Seek those things which are above..."
- **The significance of our union with Christ:**
 - **This union unites us to His death and resurrection: 3:3** "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God..."
 - The old man is dead.
 - We are new creatures in Christ.
 - **We are called to walk by a new way:**
 - **3:5** "Mortify therefore your members..."
 - **3:8** "But now ye also put off all these..."
 - **We are empowered to walk in this new way:**
 - **Romans 8:3-5** "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit..."
 - **Galatians 2:19-20** "I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God..."
 - **Romans 6:5-7** "If we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that

henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin..."

Truth 2: This union liberates our affections: 3:2 "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth..."

- **We have a new, living source of affection: Romans 8:4-5** "They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit..."
 - **We were dead to God and alive to sin:** Our affections were consumed with self and this temporal world.
 - Our identity was disordered.
 - Our passions were disordered.
 - Our pursuits were misguided.
 - Our gods were idols.
 - **We are now alive to God and dead to sin:** Our new affections drive us to God and His purposes.
 - Our broken identity has been restored in Him.
 - Our broken passions have been redirected to Him.
 - Our empty pursuits have been replaced with His pursuit.
 - Our idols have been replaced with the true and living God.
- **We must choose to set our affections on things above:**
 - **Colossians 3:2** "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth..."
 - **Romans 6:11** "Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord..."
- **There is both a positive and a negative side to this choice:**
 - **Put to death disordered affections: 3:5** "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry..."
 - **Put off disordered responses: 3:8** "Put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth..."
 - **Consider yourself dead to sin: 3:9** "Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds..."
 - **Be transformed through the renewal of your mind: 3:10** "Have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him..."

Truth 3: Godly affections produce transformed lives: 3:11 "Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all..."

- **Gospel transformation reorders our core identity:** As we grow, we will more fully realize who we are in Christ and reflect that reality.

- We are image bearers not animals.
- Though image bearers, we were enslaved to our sinful passions.
- These enslavements were destructive and dehumanizing.
- They caused us to fall short of our God glorifying purpose.
- The gospel transforms what is broken in us.
- **The things that identified us before our conversion fall to the side:**
 - **Our ethnic identity: 3:11** "There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian..."
 - **Our social identity: 3:11** "Bond nor free..."
 - **Our sinful passions: 1 Corinthians 6:11** "Such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God..."
- **Wherever people lack access to the gospel, they stumble in spiritual darkness: Ephesians 2:1-3** "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins...in time past ye walked according to the course of this world...fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath..."
 - Under God's wrath.
 - Slaves to their lusts.
 - Blind to the truth.
 - Defined by their ethnic identities.
 - Defined by their social identities.
 - Defined by their sinful passions.
- **God moves His people to take the light into the darkness: 2 Corinthians 4:6** "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ..."

Application:

- **The personal implications:**
 - **Non-Christian:** Come to Christ and find the true freedom that your soul longs to experience but will never find outside of Him.
 - **Christian:** Embrace who you are united to Christ.
 - Embrace the reality of that union of death and resurrection.
 - Cultivate the new affections that are stirred up by the Spirit through the Word.
 - Put off the old affections and ways and replace them with a vibrant well-ordered Christian life.
 - Embrace your true identity as a redeemed image bearer.
 - Submit to God's tools as you grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord.

- Remember the gospel has made all the difference.
 - Let that fact motivate you to take the gospel to those who do not have it.
- **The corporate implications:**
 - The concept of the church is one of the most powerful testimonies to the power of the gospel.
 - When the church is vibrant, God will use it to draw people to Himself.
 - We should embrace the beauty of the local church.
 - We should contribute to its health and unity by being healthy gospel-centered Christians.