

“How to know if you are really alive”

Colossians 3:1-11 NIV

“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. ⁵ Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. ⁶ Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. ⁷ You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. ⁸ But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. ⁹ Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices ¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

¹¹ “Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.”

Good news, today!

We don't have to feel helpless, powerless, and discouraged by life's distressing events.



We can ease our minds, enjoying peace and love with friends and neighbors.

Today's text shows the way to attaining this serenity, harmony, and calm.

“Bob, how can we be at peace in the midst of such hate, racism, prejudice, violence, and randomness?” you ask.



Some think life was easier and simpler during Jesus’ and the Apostles’ time.

Yet first century folks grappled with the envy, greed, hostility and uncertainty that plague us.

Folks protested, rampaged, acted cruelly, and out of control back then, too.

Earthquakes reduced cities to rubble, volcanoes smothered them; tornadoes obliterated villages.

E.M Blaiklock described the similarity between ancient and modern times.¹

I considered condensing Blaiklock’s words, but I can’t improve his portrayal:

“Wind and wave can be ruthless, and like wind and wave are those gales of emotion which sweep through crowds, and change a group of human beings into a destroying force. A crowd can be carried away by the consciousness of its own power, and the individuals which compose it are led to instincts which, apart and alone, each one might have held in check. It is intensely

moving to read as simple history those closing scenes of Christ's ministry. Nowhere else does such revelation survive.

“Historians . . . seek to understand the enormous tragedy of the Jewish rebellion. We can sense the climate. When the clash came in AD 66, and the awful years of the great rebellion began, it was all because of a crowd, swept by a storm of emotion, fanned to fury by its 'activist' element, which broke all control in Jerusalem.

“We have seen base demagogues use crowds thus in our own century. The priests knew such trickery. They knew that reason dies in such heat, that which Germans call a 'group-personality' emerges, and that this can be a demon which will do the will of its creators. It is all the negation of justice, ordered thought, democracy.

“Tennyson saw the phenomenon emerging a century ago:

¹ *The Compact Handbook of New Testament Life*, E.M. Blaiklock, Bethany House Publishers, Minneapolis, 1979 pp. 37,38

*Tumble nature head o'er heel,
and, yelling with the yelling street,
Set the feet above the brain,
and swear the brain is in the feet.*

The noisy crowd were as spurious (false) when they shouted, 'Hosanna' as when they yelled: 'Crucify'. God speaks to individuals. How often, as the 'demonstration' moves down the street, do we catch the sound of the old evil! It is all in the Bible.

“How shockingly true is the New Testament, reserved, vibrating with reality. It was our world to which Christ came. 'We were there when they crucified the Lord.'”

Human history sadly records life's uncertainty, unfairness, and inequities.

Every civilization deals with it.

All individuals contend with injustice, bigotry, and insecurity.

- If our own faults and our families don't sufficiently test us, the morning, noon, and evening news, Twitter, Facebook, etc.—all incite us to anger.

- Injustices provoke us.
- When we become irate and incensed, we call it **“righteous indignation.”**

➤ **“The world has gone crazy,”** we say.
Thinking about the situation makes us angrier and more infuriated.

Here's a forgotten fact: all reasoning people have the ability to cope with life's harms.

No person has any greater or lesser capability to deal with injustice and unreliability.

In Jesus we can handle these challenges.

Each of us can ably follow his advice.

Our text reminds us of our advantage.

Believing what Jesus did for us and committing our lives to him, we trust our future to him.

Think of these truths:

Jesus the son of God, Created the Cosmos.

He made everything that exists.

He gave us guidelines and principles.

God didn't set standards some whim.

Every God-given law and set of morals benefits us and helps us live better.

But we stubborn human beings think we know better make messes of things.

So Jesus, the Son of God took on human form to live among us and show us how to live.

He committed no crimes and remained totally innocent of wrong-doing.

People just like us (our great, great grandparents) envied, hated, and killed him.

To the end, Jesus loved and forgave.

Many who killed him boasted.

Beating their chests like game winners, they celebrated and reveled.

Think of it; our ancestors killed the very one sent to rescue them and us.

Compare it to drowning people killing the life guard who came to save them.

In submitting to death as he did, Jesus lovingly paid for my pride and all my mistakes, for yours, and for everyone’s.
If what he did doesn’t change us and cause us to want live in love as he did, we share in the guilt of rejecting the Son of God.

Three days later Jesus returned from death.

Jesus walked out of the tomb.

He proved himself alive to many witnesses.

Jesus repeatedly confirmed his resurrection. Then he returned to that invisible dimension of the Spirit world and will reappear one day.

He will judge us on our acceptance of him and how we treat one another.

We all fail to live by God’s principles; we “sin and fall short of God’s glory.”

Yet Jesus promised that if we trust God, live in love as he did, and accept his free life offer, he will take us to share in that new dimension.

Only the Creator of the Cosmos can make that promise and deliver on the future.

He formed all life here.

Every living thing here is no more permanent than the leaves we’ll rake and burn in the fall.

All the past’s great people died and rot in their graves as will today’s brash folks, including all politicians.

When we believe in Christ and change our attitude by dying to anger, lust, greed, pride,

worry, and envy (those things which bring such anguish and pain to us and our loved ones), God will raise us as he raised Christ.

We die to our former selfish pride in baptism—becoming one with Christ, and being raised with him, and putting on his new outfits that identify us as his people. That new wardrobe includes thinking of love, joy peace, patience, self-control, etc.

This morning my daily Bible reading included Psalm 109 and verse 18 stood out:

“He wore cursing as his garment; it entered into his body like water, into his bones like oil” (NIV).

So we are dressed in our new God-given apparel and the bad news folks arrive.

Where will your mind go?

Will you worry, fret, become defensive, possessive, proud, and insulted?

Or will you confidently, humbly trust God, who will righteously judge all flesh?

Romans 8:5 uses the same term as Colossians 3:2 in reference to *thinking* or *having one’s mind set*

“Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.”

We’re not helpless victims of life’s injustice.

Within the minds of Christ’s people is the potential for victory over negative feelings when folks attack with bad news or persecute.

People can shackle and bind our bodies; they can drench us in bad news.

Yet no one can force us to think bad stuff.

That’s why the Bible reminds us to think of Christ, with whom we stand:

“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.”

Recall Romans 8? “Those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.”

Fear and insecurity often arise in us.

About three weeks ago, Norma and I celebrated our 64th wedding anniversary.

We always exchange cards and often give each other money or checks.

We agreed this year not to give each other checks; we were just helping the banks make a little more money.

This year, due to some pictures we have recently seen, I reflected on our wedding.

The ceremony was at my sister’s Marge’s house; mostly family and close friends attended.

Norma and I drove from my sister’s near Portland, to Tillamook, OR on the coast where I had funds for only one night in a motel.

Norma paid for the second night’s motel back in the Portland area.

So this 64th anniversary, I repaid her for that second night—with a little interest.

Think of my potential to support Norma the evening we became one.

I had nothing of substance to offer her for our marriage’s future.

I was broke and had no job.

I wore a brace on my back for a serious spinal condition diagnosed by an eminent orthopedic surgeon.

God had mercy on us opening doors that we couldn’t have foreseen that still amaze us and make us ever grateful.

We see absolute connections between God’s grace and the joy we experience today.

The hope we share in Christ stands in infinite contrast to my shabby, penniless condition on our wedding day.

Christ alone provides our confidence.

Christ permanently controls the Cosmos. God rules the Universe and all things to come.

When the Day of Judgment comes, all evil and evil doers will be out of the picture; the unpleasant players gone.

John wrote: “Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For

everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world.

¹⁷ The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.”²

Those of us in Christ set our hearts on things above not on the world’s misery.

Worrying and fretting over the world’s injustice helps the devil and separates us from God and others.

Jesus expects us to rid ourselves of that wretchedness.

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.”

Do recall what Jesus told us about fear?



“Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy



both soul and body in hell.”³



² 1 John 2:15-17 NIV

When you hear the daily unchanging report on world’s gloomy condition, where will your mind go this week?

The verses following our text give the perfect victory recipe:

- ¹² Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.
- ¹³ Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.
- ¹⁴ And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.
- ¹⁵ Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts (minds), since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.
- ¹⁶ Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one

³ Matthew 10: 28 NIV

another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.

- ¹⁷ And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

Practice the above this week and you will be more alive than you have in years.

And you can share eternity in Christ.

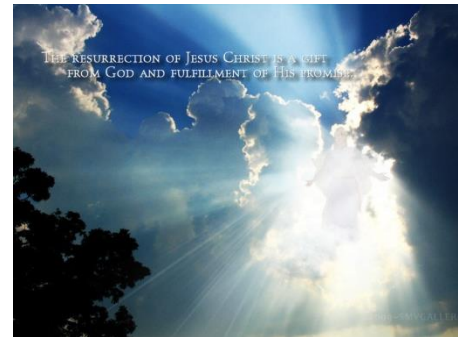
“If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.”⁴

If you wonder on what specifically we should set our minds, the Bible tells us:

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. ⁸ Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable— if anything is excellent or praiseworthy— think about such things.”

**Pray that all of us will alter our thinking.
Praise God in Christ
Choose to love others.**



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**“If we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.”
Romans 6:5 NSRV**

⁴ Romans 8: 11 NIV