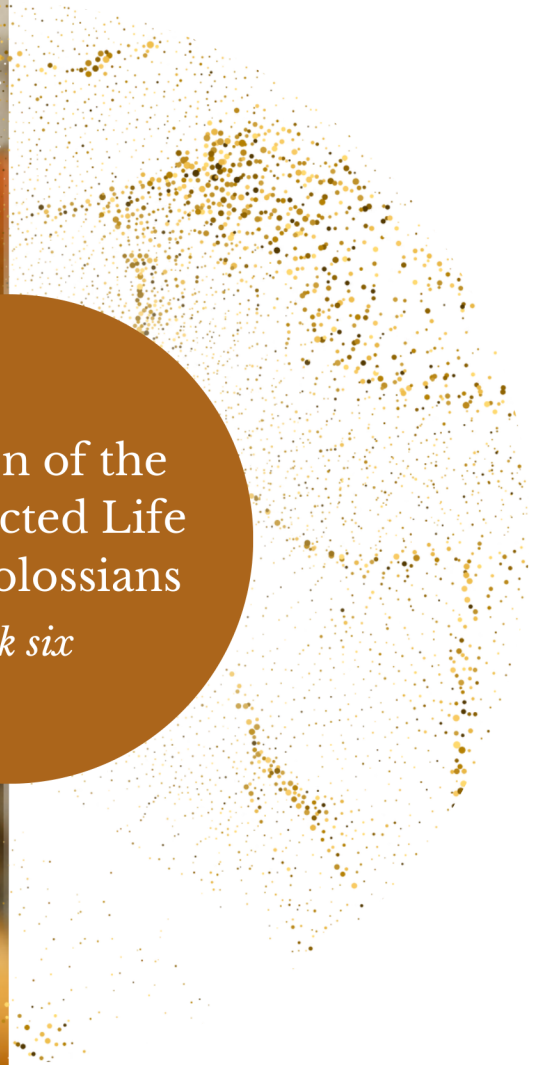




A Vision of the
Resurrected Life
from Colossians

week six



Reading Colossians 3:1-4

1 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)

While Reading...

- 1 PAUSE AND READ AGAIN**
Slowly read through the passage multiple times.
- 2 SKETCH**
Use the space provided to sketch images, symbols, or words that come to your mind as you read this passage.
- 3 PAUSE AND READ AGAIN**
What image pulls at your heart as you reflect on this passage?



Reflection

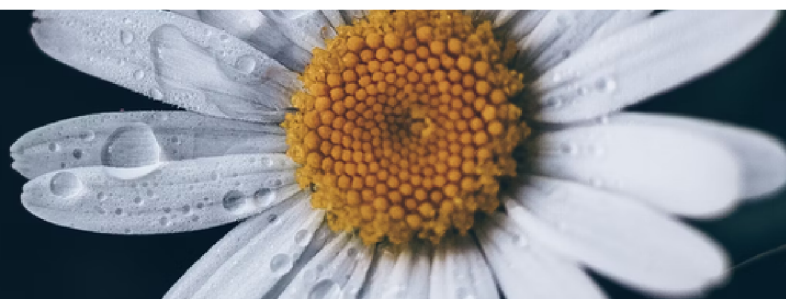
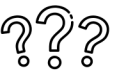
Sometimes it's difficult not to feel consumed by thoughts of earthly things.

Colossians 3:1-4 suggests that our hearts and minds ought to be set on heavenly things because our life is connected to Jesus's resurrection. The remainder of Chapter 3 gives more detailed recommendations for shifts in perspective, but this introductory passage illustrates how our condition is connected with Christ's: we are raised with Christ, our life is with Christ, and we will appear with him in glory. Maybe this illustration of connection can be a source of hope and comfort to us when we're feeling consumed by earthly things.

Questions to Consider with God

When do you notice your heart/mind being set on earthly things?

What do you notice in your heart/mind when you contemplate your connection to Jesus's resurrected life?



Creative Reflection

Have you ever created a vision board? A vision board is a visual representation of your goals, dreams, or hopes. It expresses where you want your heart and mind to focus. Our creative practice today is the invitation to create your own vision board to express the life that you want to share with Jesus. This board can help express what you want your mind and heart to focus on. "Set your mind on things above where Jesus is." Jesus invites us to live an abundant life in an intimate relationship with him. How do you picture the life that you share together?

Create an image or collection of images, words, phrases, shapes, colors, etc. to represent the vision for the life that you want to share with Jesus.

With Jesus, Life is...

Life motivated by **joy and love**; not fear.

Life of **abundance** and not scarcity.

Life of **gratitude** instead of greed.

Life of **relationship** instead of performance.

Life of **peace** instead of worry.

Life **eternal** instead of temporary.

Life of **meaningful work**
instead of running on the hamster wheel.

Life of **generosity** instead of competition.

Life of **invitation** instead of exclusion.

Life of **service** instead of domination.

Life of **freedom** instead of bondage.

Life of **dependence** on the **most dependable**
instead of survival.

by Hannah Parmelee



Reading Colossians 3:5-7

5 Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. **6** On account of these the wrath of God is coming. **7** In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. (ESV)

Reflection

Do you remember the previous profession of Matthew, Jesus' disciple? He was a despised tax collector. He collected money from the Jewish community on behalf of their occupying force, the Roman Empire. It was a job associated with greed and theft. Another tax collector turned disciple, Zaccheaus, admitted to Jesus that he swindled people out of more money than was owed so that he could pocket the excess for himself. Being a disciple of Jesus was a vastly different role, one associated with dependence on the hospitality of others, and a nomadic lifestyle. The disciples did a lot of walking, a lot of serving, and learning instead of accumulating wealth or status.

I wonder if Matthew and Zaccheaus thought about returning to their old jobs after Jesus' death on the cross? Their teacher was brutally murdered by Rome. Would it not be easy to return to a lifestyle in service to Rome instead of rattling the powerful and risk ending up dead? Or had Matthew and Zaccheaus walked

too long in the footsteps of Jesus to imagine returning to their money purses and official robes? Had they traveled too long in the presence of supreme humility to ever crave the comforts of wealth and stability again?

In this section of Colossians three, Paul tell us to put to death the evil that once drove your steps forward and directed your path. The word translated as "walked" implies taking every opportunity that is presented before you to live in a certain lifestyle. Our cravings drive us to seek out objects, people, and experiences that can satiate our hunger. Paul tells us to put these cravings to death. That is a severe invitation. Take the life from these desires and bury them away never to rise again. But despite their burial the paths that we walked, the habits we created to feed our hungers and yearning, are often well worn trails that we can traverse with ease. It is easy to go grave digging, especially when the new path suddenly pivots in a direction we were not expecting.

Were Matthew and Zaccheaus tempted to return to well worn roads? Or did they choose to follow a path paved by their friend and teacher even when they did not know what awaited them just around the next corner? Are we willing to venture on the path with Jesus and leave dead things to their graves while we embrace a resurrected way of walking, a path of life, even when it is unknown? Can we trust that Jesus is on the road with us? Can we match his pace?

While Reading...**1 PAUSE AND READ AGAIN**

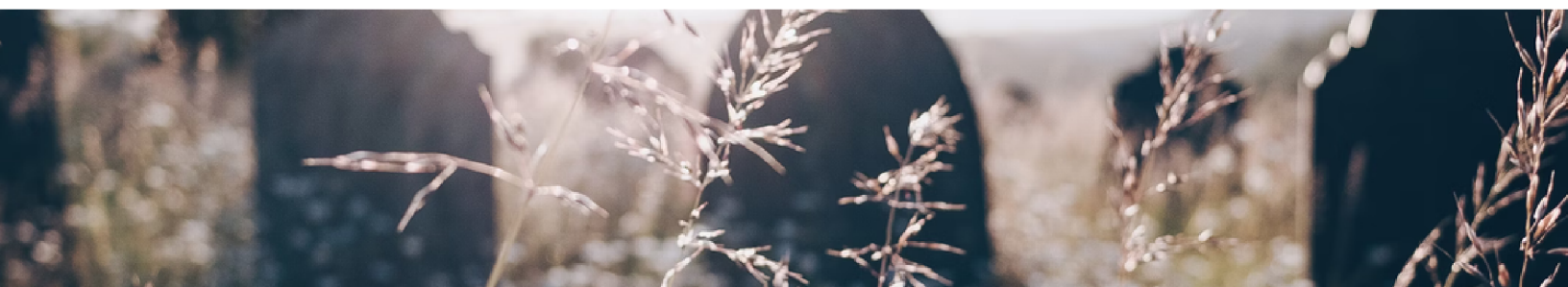
If you are able, read the passage out loud.

2 CONSIDER

What are some words or phrases that stand out to you as you read this passage?

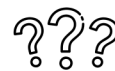
3 PAUSE AND PRAY

Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you as you read.



Questions to Consider with God

What cravings and desires drive you to walk paths of unhealth?



How can you match pace with Jesus and walk with him even when the path ahead is unclear or unfamiliar?

Creative Reflection

I invite you to consider the desires and longings in your life that need to die and be buried. What well worn paths do you return to that need to be left behind in order for you to journey with Jesus? Using the seeds below, assign a desire, behavior, way of thinking, that you want to bury.

If you are able, I invite you to take a packet of seeds and take a walk outside. As you walk, leave behind the seeds on your journey to represent leaving behind these things that you do not want to be a part of your journey any longer.

As you scatter them on your path, submit them into God's strength and ask God to help redeem these things that you want to put to death. Pray that God will help new life grow from the pain and challenge of living in these ways.



Reading Colossians 3:8-11

8 But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. **9** Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices **10** and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. **11** Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all. (NIV)

Festoon this passage...

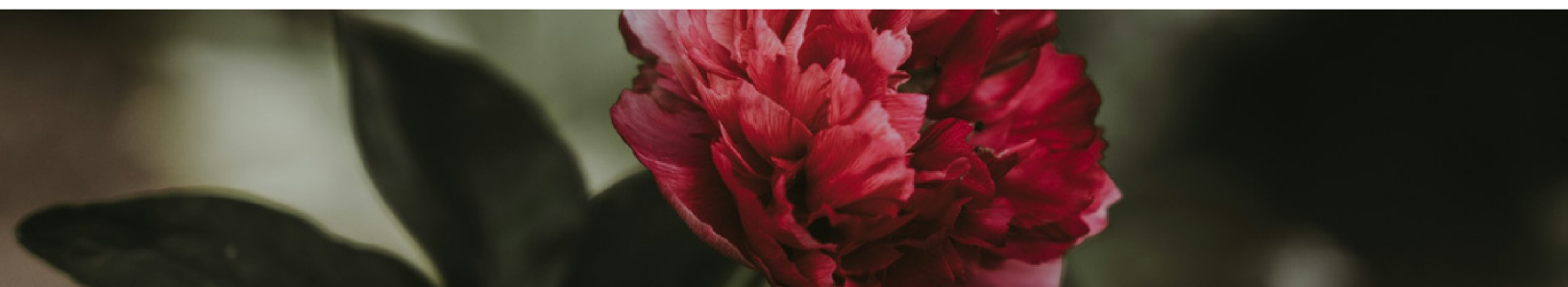
- 1 PAUSE TO BE STILL**
Take a few deep breaths and calm your body and mind before you read the passage.
- 2 CONSIDER**
What images, questions, or musings come to your mind as you read the passage?
- 3 REWRITE THE PASSAGE**
Rewrite each line of passage in your own words.

**Reflection**

What do we lose in the resurrected life?

In the third portion of our passage from Colossians 3, Paul continues to name several of our losses when our old self is buried: anger, wrath, malice, slander, obscene talk, and lies. Unlike the list that Paul uses to open the chapter, these characteristics of a dying life address our attitudes and actions towards others. It takes a simple scroll through Facebook or watching the latest political ad to imagine how slander and obscene talk permeated the conversations between Greeks and Jews, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarians and Scythian, slave and free. These communities or groupings named by Paul represent differences in culture, doctrine, ethnicity, and societal status. As in our era, these differences sparked anger, wrath, and malice between individuals and communities. Oppressive action from one group towards another is still a regular part of our society's interactions.

But this is not the behavior of those who embrace resurrection.



The phrase that is translated as “there is not” in verse eleven can lead to a misunderstanding in what Paul is trying to emphasize about the transformed relationships between these diverse communities. I believe a better translation is “there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free.” What do we lose in the resurrected life? We lose distinctions between one another. We lose a sense of superiority above another culture or ethnic group. We lose power and prestige over those society deems as lesser or undesirable. We lose the perceptions and prejudices that may prompt us to view other ethnic groups with contempt. We lose the a desire to “other” anyone who different than us.

In the resurrected life, we do not lose our cultures, our ethnicities, our languages, our heritage. Look again at the vision of the great multitude from Revelation. “After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands...” Revelation 7:9.

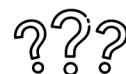
We gain the ability to see all people as a part of Christ’s own body. In every culture, we can discover Christ’s presence. Every ethnic group is a reflection of Christ. “Christ is all and in all.”

What we lose in the resurrected life is nothing compared to the diverse community that we gain as our kin, our family.

Questions to Consider with God

Do you still carry in your heart anger, wrath, malice, slander, or obscene talk about a community that has a different ethnic background or economic status than you?

How has the resurrected life changed your attitudes and perceptions on communities that are distinct from you?



Creative Reflection

Make space to learn more about a community who shares cultural, ethnic or societal differences from you.

Consider doing research about the communities that live near you. Learn more about their history, their unique wisdom, and their challenges. Find a book by an author of a different culture to read about how they perceive and experience the world.

Where do you notice the presence of Christ in this community?

Reading Colossians 3:12-14

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. (NIV)

Reflection

Observing the Stations of the Cross is an ancient Christian practice. The stations serve as visual representations of the final moments of Jesus' life. Despite growing up hearing and reading the story of Jesus' death, it was not until viewing the stations that I noticed a particular moment in Jesus' final hours. Matthew 27:28 says that "they stripped him," They, being the soldiers who were responsible for Jesus' torture, stripped Jesus of his clothing. Jesus was naked among the soldiers until they mockingly adorned him with a red robe and crown of thorns.

Being stripped naked, to have your body exposed to the eyes of strangers is an incredibly humiliating and dehumanizing experience. When many victims of the Holocaust arrived at a concentration camp, they were first forced to strip, have

their heads shaved, and be hosed down in front of guards, staff, and their fellow prisoners. The lynching of a black man was often preceded by a deplorable spectacle of torture that included stripping the man in front of a jeering crowd. Our clothing serves as a final protective barrier against abuse and is an external expression of our identity. We choose what to wear based on how we want to present ourselves to the world around us. All remnants of safety and personhood are taken from you when you are stripped naked and laid bare for the eyes of others. Jesus knew this pain. When he was stripped by his captors, Jesus shared in the suffering of all those who are stripped of their humanity.

Jesus is so unlike his abusers.

Instead of stripping us of our identity, Jesus covers us with the dignity of those who are "holy and dearly loved" by God. Jesus places on our shoulders robes that identify us as sons and daughters of God. There is no hint of mockery from Jesus. He does not humiliate us, he reveals our true nature as children of God. He invites us to clothe ourselves with traits that can never be taken from us, the characteristics of love: compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Jesus asks us to wear forgiveness just as he wore it even while he hung naked from a cross and asked God to forgive those who "divided his clothing among them."

Jesus allowed the oppression and violence of our world to strip him of everything. In the resurrected life, Jesus wants to clothe us. Jesus offers us safety, warmth, expression, and personhood in the form of eternal garments that adorn our souls in the rich fabric of love. We now have the opportunity to participate in Jesus' work and cover others with what we have received from Jesus.

While Reading...**1 PAUSE AND READ AGAIN**

If you are able, read the passage out loud.

2 CONSIDER

What are some words or phrases that stand out to you as you read this passage?

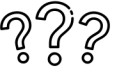
3 PAUSE AND PRAY

Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you as you read.



Questions to Consider with God

What strikes you about Jesus being stripped and his invitation, through Paul, to clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience?



How can we wear the characteristics of love and restore dignity and safety to others, especially those who have been dehumanized and stripped by the violence of our world?



Creative Reflection

There are many people who struggle to clothe themselves. When facing the need for food or shelter, clothing can be the last concern on someone's mind.

I invite you to consider how you can physically clothe a fellow human. Either by donating your own clothing or purchasing new items, make time this week to provide garments for your neighbor. In doing so, you practice clothing your own soul with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, and, above all, love.

Below you will find a list of organizations that you can support to help clothe others.

Threadz | tempecommunitycouncil.org/threadz/
Welcome to America Project | wtpa.org
Tempe Community Action Agency | tempeaction.org

Reading Colossians 3:15-17

15 The peace of Christ must control your hearts—a peace into which you were called in one body. And be thankful people. **16** The word of Christ must live in you richly. Teach and warn each other with all wisdom by singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Sing to God with gratitude in your hearts. **17** Whatever you do, whether in speech or action, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus and give thanks to God the Father through him. (CEB)

**While Reading...****1 PAUSE AND READ AGAIN**

If you are able, read the passage out loud.

2 CONSIDER

What are some words or phrases that stand out to you as you read this passage?

3 PAUSE AND PRAY

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**Reflection**

On a recent trip to the Costa Rican rainforest, my husband and I eagerly signed up for every nature tour we could squeeze in. We studied towering exotic plants and learned about obscure insects. We had breathtaking encounters with furry, feathered, and scaly friends. As the guides spoke, they consistently referred to the interdependence of all those life forms upon one another. These symbiotic interactions are everywhere, from "host" plants providing structural support to smaller plants (pictured left), to insects and birds feeding on plants and scattering seeds throughout the forest as they wander. As I thought about this delicate balance, it reminded me of the interconnectedness we are called into as the body of Christ.

Unity in Community

In Colossians 3:15, Paul reminds us the Christian life was not meant to be lived out in solitude. We are the body of Christ, and we are dependent on one another, much like the flora and fauna in the rainforest. When one member suffers, we all suffer. If one succeeds, we all celebrate (1 Cor 12:12-30). In Western culture, independence, individual expression and personal rights are highly valued. Is it any wonder that we also have increasingly high rates of loneliness and isolation? This passage implores us to lean into one another, building up those around us through sharing what God has done in our own lives, teaching others about Him, and even singing our praises communally. Simply put, we are stronger together.

Unity in Purpose

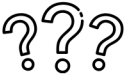
It's one thing to acknowledge the ability of birds and plants working together for survival in the rainforest. But let's be honest even on our good days, putting up with others can be difficult. We have different personalities, different perspectives, different likes and dislikes. Paul gives us the key to living in community in verse 17: "Whatever you do, whether in speech or action, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus..." This common goal of living a life that pleases Jesus transforms our diverse community into a working team. When we have a goal, we have direction. When we are united in our goal, our differences can be celebrated as the unique way God designed each of us to further His kingdom.

In order to remain unified, we must be intentional. Christ's peace must control our hearts (v15). We are to choose peace over defensiveness... peace over fear... peace over strife and division. Can you imagine a world where Christians act this way? Judgment and criticism are replaced by grace and mercy. Christian gatherings become places where you can bring your burdens and walk away lighter, because you know you're not alone. This is not a far-off dream, this is what the body of Christ is called to be.

Questions to Consider with God

List two or three strengths, gifts or abilities God has given you. How are you currently using those to support other members of the body of Christ? If you aren't, in what areas might God be inviting you to do so?

Ask yourself: "Is there anything keeping Christ's peace from controlling my heart today?" Talk to the Lord about whatever comes to mind.



Creative Reflection

Take some time to read through your favorite psalms or browse through a hymn book. What stands out to you? Write out the words of a meaningful song on a card to carry with you today or put it in your work space where you can see it.

Examine your week with God. Use the following prompts to reflect on the previous week with God.

Reveal

Ask God to open your eyes to where God was present throughout the week.

Ask God to deepen your awareness of yourself: your actions, your attitudes, your emotions.



Relish

What gifts did you receive this week? What are you thankful for from the past week?



Replay

Replay the events of the week with God.

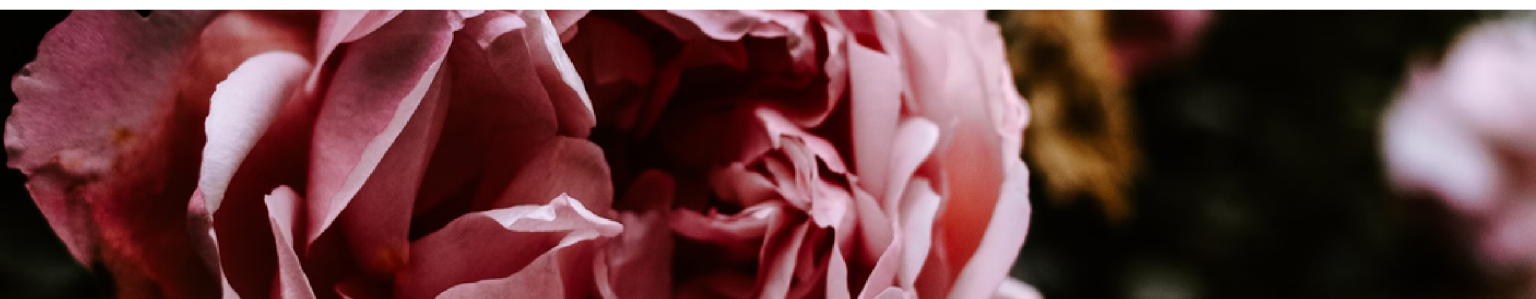
Pay attention to the moments when you experienced strong emotions. Notice where God was present.



Remorse

With grace and compassion, reflect with God over the difficulties of the week.

What actions or attitudes did not allow you to be a light in the world?



Resurrection

Ask God to give you direction on how to walk in resurrected life in the week ahead.



How are you embracing resurrected life?



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

Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. 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.”

Colossians 3:1-17