

A Hidden People

Colossians 3:1-4

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- I. Redeemed Reality
- II. Perfect Peace
- III. Safe Souls

Our family is kind of a games family. Myself, my wife and our three daughters love playing games. It doesn't matter what the game is, Connect Four, Uno, Memory, Monopoly, Charades, LIFE, Clue...you name it, we play it.

But above all the games there is one game my girls have always loved the most...Hide And Go Seek. We've been playing it since they were little and even though my oldest is now in middle school, we still all love playing it.

Part of the problem we discovered is that we've been playing for so many years in our house that the game started to not work anymore. Everyone knows every hiding place. So I came up with a new version.

My kids have like way way way too many of these little stuffed animals called "Beanie Boos." So what we do now is each person picks out their animal for their turn and hides it. We call it "Animal Go Seek."

This is my animal. His name is Leo. I always pick him and hide him because a long time ago lions became my favorite animal when I began to see and believe in the Lion of Judah.

I told you all that story today because we're back in the book of Colossians today in the Bible, reading and talking about a small section of it together which talks about how Christians' lives are hidden by God. Pastor Buss and I are kind of doing this tag team thing this summer, when I'm here I'm preaching through Colossians and when I'm not here he's preaching through Malachi.

Why don't you stand with me as we read this section from the Bible, which we believe is God's message and gift to us.

Colossians 3:1-4

"1 If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. 3 For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory."

- Pastoral Declaration: This is the Word of the Lord.
- Congregational Response: Thanks Be To God.
- Pastoral Prayer

If you happen to be new or newer today, we're super glad you've come and I hope you have a great time here today receiving from God and His Word. My name is Duane and I'm the Preaching and Vision Pastor here. As you can hopefully tell, we're pretty laid back here. It doesn't matter what you look like, what you're into, what you're wearing or where you're at spiritually, you are welcome and wanted here. Personally, I'm super stoked it's summer now so I can wear surf trunks on Sundays!

If you're new and want to chat a bit after service, meet me out at the Next Steps sign by the gate and we can hang and talk for a bit. And make sure to grab one of those gift bags on your way out because everyone in San Diego needs sunglasses for summer, especially cool Resolved sunglasses!

I've got three points for us today from our text, "Redeemed Reality", "Perfect Peace" and "Safe Souls." Let's jump into it.

I. Redeemed Reality

I'm taking this first point mainly from the first verse here in Colossians 3. What it clearly says and assumes is that if you are a Christian...meaning you've come to acknowledge that there is a great God over all, the Creator, who came to earth as a God man who lived a perfect life, then died for all the sins of the world both cosmic and personal sins, was dead three days in the ground, then rose again to new life with a perfect immortal body. Then for forty days He promised that all who believed in Him would not only have all their sins wiped away but would also receive new bodies like His. Then He ascended on a cloud going up into the air saying He was going to His heavenly kingdom and promised that all who believed in Him would meet Him there one day.

Now that's a lot, a lot to believe. But these are the core components of the Christian faith. Christianity is all about the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and what that means for all who believe it.

Here's the thing though, the wonderful thing. Christianity does not only provide a coherent worldview or system of philosophy that has good evidence and reasons behind it but in addition it adds a test of truth in our personal experience. And the first thing our text drives at today is this reality.

It says for Christians, for those who believe in Jesus Christ, in who He is and what He did that they are then "raised with Christ." Verse three says they have not only been raised but that part of them has died. And then if we go backward in the book of Colossians looking at things it's already said, verse 12 of chapter 2 says we've "been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him..."

So what we're seeing and hearing from the Bible today is that if you are a Christian there is this mysterious connection between us as individuals who believe and the person of Jesus Christ. Really, what our passage from the Bible today is trying to answer for us is the question, "so what?"

The core and heart of Christianity is the Gospel message, the good news that Jesus is the Christ who lived, died and rose again. So what? That's great for Him but what does it have to do with us?

What our verse for today is saying is that those who believe enter into a kind of union with the person of Jesus. Jesus physically died, so when we believe a part of us dies. Jesus physically rose, so a part of

us rises. And because Jesus did both of these things literally and physically, our dying and rising is not just a spiritual metaphor but something that is actually anchored in reality. And that's a big deal.

We are united with Christ. As we've seen a number of times in the book of Colossians so far, in some way He's IN US and we are IN HIM. Christians have called it having a "relationship with Christ" but even that phrase falls short of this unique union. In his book "Union With Christ" Todd Billings says this,

"Union with Christ is a central New Testament description of Christian identity, the life of salvation in Christ. It entails the giving of a new identity such that in Christ, forgiveness and new life are received through the Spirit. Union with Christ involves abiding in Christ the Vine. It means that through the Spirit, sinners are adopted into the household of God as co-heirs with Christ. It means that God's Spirit is poured out to make the life and teaching of Jesus real to us. It implicates our worship, our vocation in the world, and our witness as the Church. Being 'in Christ' is the essence of Christian proclamation and experience."

Being a Christian means we have permanent connection to Christ, who currently in heaven. Let's unpack it a little more. Verse 1 of our passage uses spacial, geographical language to get at this saying Christ is "above" where he is "seated at the right hand of God." Verse 2 says this place is "not on earth" and verse 4 calls it the place of "glory." So where is this place?

First it's "above." Now that doesn't necessarily mean "up" as though this place is what appears to be up from earth and that heaven is just some other planet in the universe. "Above" here is actually other, it's a higher plane, place or realm, which actually coincides with what we know about the universe from studies of astronomy and isostasy.

"The right hand of God" is king and kingdom language. It beckons the picture of a king sitting on a throne who has His Son at His right side executing His orders and rule. And this "right hand" language is actually special language in the Bible. It comes up a ton, I'll just show you two passages.

Psalms 110:1-2 says, "The LORD says to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool. The LORD sends forth from Zion (the heavenly city) your mighty scepter. Rule in the midst of your enemies.'"

This has been considered for hundreds of years, even before Jesus came to earth to be a promise and a prophecy of a divine King who would rule from on high and bring peace by crushing the enemy, sin and all evil. Jesus came on the scene, extending justice and peace and was crucified with a sign on His cross saying, "the King" with a crown of thorns on His.

Shortly before all that went down Jesus was interrogated by the Jewish rulers and king. Here's how that went down. Mark 14:61-62 "The high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" And Jesus said, "I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven."

So above is this other heavenly realm where Christ sits and rules as the King over all. Then lastly we're told in verse 4 it's the place of "glory." Glory is a big word and concept in the Bible. It literally means "weight." Glory is the physical and spiritual manifestation of all that is true and good, it holds it all,

hence the weight. Images of glory are typically associated with bright light, jewels, immense power, utter purity and most of all it emanates out of the very being of God as its source.

This is where Christ is. In the place of glory, where His glory is unveiled, unshielded and on full display, bursting out from His throne above. This place is the transcendent heavenly realm, the sphere of resurrection existence and the claim of the Bible is that it is real, it's a real place and that those who believe in Christ have a connection with Him and since He is currently there, a part of us is there, so much so that we can conceive of it, imagine it and even taste a little foretaste of its goodness and reality.

You see, there is a connection between what we see and what we don't see, the visible and the invisible. There is a real and true spiritual reality we do not see with our physical eyes and yet we know it's there and that's it's real. It's a real reality.

In the wise words of Optimus Prime, the leader of the autobots, "there's more to them than meets the eye." There's more than we can see and for Christians, because of our connection to Christ there is more to us and what is going on for us and what is ahead of us that we can currently see. There is a redeemed reality that gives life to us, pouring down out of the throne of heaven.

So my first question today is can you see it? Can you see it in your mind's eye? Can you imagine heaven, the place of glory, where Christ is seated and ruling as king? And then maybe a second question, can you taste its goodness? The fresh air, goodness all around, the presence of the good, kind, perfect and powerful king... it's exhilarating.

A lot of times our biggest need in life is to lean into and look at the redeemed reality. For there we find comfort, hope and peace. Let's talk about that a little more in our next point for today, "Perfect Peace."

II. Perfect Peace

I'm taking this point primarily from the direction of verse 1 to "seek the things that are above" and from verse two that says to "set your mind on things that are above, not the things that are on earth."

Throughout the Bible seeking is an important thing. To seek something is to set your mind upon it, to be intentional about the direction of your attitude, affections and disposition. The first seeking in the Bible is actually done by God. In the garden of Eden was where men and women first started running away from God and from that time on God has been seeking us out calling out those same words He spoke in the garden, "where are you?"

Over and over again we're told to seek God.

Moses said in Deuteronomy 4:29 says, "You will seek the Lord your God and you will find him, if you search after him with all your heart and with all your soul."

Jesus said in Matthew 6:33, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all things will be added to you."

But despite God's clear instruction we don't seek. As Romans 3:10-11 in the Bible says, "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God." One might object saying I've tried seeking but didn't find anything, but once we look underneath the surface we inevitably find our seeking is with mixed motives, seeking to get something out of God or an attempt to get Him to prove Himself because we don't believe.

The truth is none of us really seeks Him and as a result we end up getting lost, lost sheep with no direction home. What our passage from Colossians says is the primary deterrent to seeking God is that our minds get consumed by what verse 2 calls "the things of the earth."

So what is that? At a most basic level it's assuming all there is to reality is what we can physically see and test, being consumed by the physiological components of earth and thinking that's all there is to truth and reality.

In its most extreme forms we see it in an over obsession with the earth, projecting human and interpersonal relational characteristics upon it. We call "her" "mother earth" and say it's "inhumane" to kill and eat the animals of the earth. And don't get me wrong I'm not saying we should not be good stewards of the earth and that's it's okay to abuse animals...I'm just saying they are not human and do not have the capacity for the kind of relationship we are designed for and desire.

In addition, I think having our minds focused on the things of this earth has to do with what I call the "world mindset." I call it that because of this passage in the Bible from 1 John 2:15-17,

"15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions—is not from the Father but is from the world. 17 And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever."

The mindset of the world seem to be a clear to me, it's the basic idea that the more money, the more possessions and the more power you have in life the happier you are, so the goal of life then is to get those things and do whatever it takes to get them. Essentially what it boils down to is the desire to be rich kings and queens who have luxurious kingdoms that no one can take away from us.

And this is a very powerful and persuasive pitch. There's something about these ideas that can get ahold of us and make us do crazy things where our whole lives become oriented around the pursuit of them. And we buy into it, seeking these things out instead of seeking God and if we honest, when we do seek God we're just trying to appease Him so He'll give us these things that we really want more than Him.

Not too long ago a guy named, Alan Briggs wrote a book titled, "Staying Is The New Going: Choosing To Love Where God Places You." In it he says this,

"Many Americans seem enamored for the world, to travel widely, cross frontiers and go to new places. Many think we must leave home and go somewhere else to find our life's work. We've become infected with wanderlust, an invitation to disregard the mundane and to see home as a launching pad, never a destination."

I had to look up the term wanderlust. It simply means a strong desire to travel or go live elsewhere. It's essentially the grass is greener syndrome, that life would be better if I left where I currently live, left my current church, or left a current relationship.

Wanderlust. If we're honest I think all of us have a little bit of that. And this might surprise you, I don't think it's all bad and wrong. I think the reason we think and feel that at times is either because we're longing for something better than this world or because we have this connection with have with Christ who is currently seated on the throne in heaven and because of that we know there something better elsewhere.

Think with me just for a minute about the perspective of Christ from heaven, seated on His throne, glory pouring out. In that place Christ is elevated to the position of highest sovereignty over the universe. He sees and rules with a perfect peace over all. It's above, outside space and time so all sin and evil is completely vanquished. All the riches of God's kingdom are there to be enjoyed, the best being the joy that literally radiates out from the throne. It's shalom, peace in every way forever and ever.

This is what Jesus said we're to seek. This kingdom. This righteousness. It is far better and far exceeds anything this earth has to offer.

Jesus had all of it, but gave it all up, coming to earth to tell us about and show us something better by giving up life here in this world to show us the way to a better life in a better place. When we believe in Him and in His promise then something happens in us and we are truly able to seek because we know what we really need and what we're really after, Christ and the glory of heaven.

Paul, who God had write the book of Colossians we're studying talked about this in another one of his books in Philippians 3:12-14 which says,

"I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me...Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." (NIV)

In talking about what it is to set our mind on things above and not the things of this earth one Bible commentator said this,

"Go in for the higher things, higher than rulers of this planet. Don't let your ambitions be set on transitory and inferior objects. Don't look at life in the universe from the standpoint of these lower planes. Look at them from Christ's exalted standpoint. Judge everything by the standards of that new station to which you belong not by those of the old order to which we have said farewell."

We're to seek Christ and the glory of heaven and the way we seek Him and that place isn't by leaving the place God has placed us, leaving our homes, jobs, church and relationships in wanderlust but by staying and orientating our lives for heaven. The more we do that the more we experience the peace and joy of Christ's kingdom! And that's the thing we really want and desire deep down.

I can't tell you how many times this has been a helpful tool to me. So many times it's so easy to just get stuck looking down, immersed in and all wrapped up in the problems of earth. In those moments this verse will often come to mind, "set your mind on things above" and I'll physically look up into the blue sky and the shining sun and immediately recognize glory and remember there is something far better ahead than the piddly problems around me.

I'm tell you friends, this instruction of God's Word today is good, really good for us.

III. Safe Souls

Well, we've I've got one last point for today and I think we've saved the best for last. So far we've seen that there is an invisible redeemed reality. For those who have believed on Christ, they become united to Him so that in part in some way they are spiritually connected to Him where He is in heaven. The goal of life is for what we subjectively experience now in our relationship with Christ to one day come into full and open manifestation materially when we see Him face to face with our literal eyes...the union of the physical and spiritual.

1 Peter 1:7-9 explains it this way in the Bible,

"... more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire...(is the) praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls."

This includes all of us who are Christians. There is a relationship with have with Jesus Christ though we've never laid eyes upon him and yet we know it's real and we love him and are filled with joy. At the revelation of Jesus Christ, when He returns or as verse 4 in our passage from Colossians says, when he "appears" then at long last our faith will be sight, the visible meeting the invisible, the physical uniting fully with the spiritual.

Between now and then we face many trials, lot of ups and downs and battles with sin, both our own and the ones done to us. In the midst of that having our eyes set on Christ and the heavenly prize and promise provides a great security for our souls.

Our passage begins with a conditional clause saying, "If then you have been raised..." So it's looking backward at what's just been said in the previous verses, summarizing them as part of the reality of being raised with Christ. It was a couple weeks ago when we went over it together but essentially the previous verses (Colossians 2:20-23) were all about how being a good moral person and following spiritual rules as a way of happiness or getting to heaven is a worthless way of life, it literally says it's of "no value" and that if you're a Christian you've died to that kind of life.

We die to it because we recognize we could never do it perfectly and could never do enough good to make up for the bad. Jesus did it all perfectly and then died for all the bad on the cross so we are now completely free of the law on the basis of Christ's work.

The question then is, if that's true what about life now? What if I sin or blow it do I lose Christ or my seat in heaven with Him?

The answer of Colossians 3:3 is a resounding no. It says no, "You have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God." We've died to that old way of thinking and living. Now life is a pursuit of heaven by enjoying Christ and His gifts until we get there.

One Bible commentator said when we submit to outward rules and regulations, like the ones chapter two of Colossians mentioned, like "do not handle, do not taste, do not touch", that they dehumanize the mind, heart and body by prohibiting them from doing what they are made and required to do.

John Stott a favorite commentator of mine said it this way,

"The miracle of Christian conversion is it frees us from religion and the systems of the world instead granting relationship with the exalted sovereign king. Christians only experience joy and life in Christ in so far as they live under His rule of grace."

This line "your life is hidden with Christ in God" is personally a very special verse that got me through one of the darkest moments of my life spiritually. It was a little over four years ago. I had a pretty big breakdown and took an extended leave of absence from work and was in therapy and counseling ever week for a while.

I'll never forget the day. I was in OB looking out over the sand, the sun and the water and I was having my counseling session via phone with my counselor who's from Kentucky. And I remember telling Him that I hadn't felt that from God since before becoming a Christian, which at that point was like 18 years. I'll never forget what He said. He said, "Duane, your life is hidden in Christ. Your soul is safe and secure in Him."

Like a flood of grace being poured over my head those words immediately washed me and freed me. If we believe on Christ, it doesn't matter how far we feel from God, it doesn't matter what our sins are or how much process we've made in battling our own weaknesses or wounds our souls are safe. The place we have reserved for us in heaven with Christ is secure. Nothing we do or do don't do can change that. They are hidden in Christ in a place no one, not even us can come find and steal away.

God's the best at hide and go seek. You can't beat him. And it's His joy to hold our lives safely in His hands.

I'll wrap up this point with one last quote from the Bible. It's from Psalm 27 and it's sweet one.

Psalm 27:4-6 says,

"4 One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple.
5 For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble; he will conceal me under the cover of his tent; he will lift me high upon a rock.
6 And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me, and I will offer in his tent sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing and

make melody to the Lord.”

True beauty and glory is found in the house of the LORD where we will dwell. Until then we are safely hidden in the shelter of His tent standing upon the rock that is Christ. And because of that we simply cannot help but lift up shouts of joy and songs of praise to our God!

When we know that we are safe in Him then it frees us to let go and to simply live life as a gift of His grace. Then we simply receive and receive and receive until we finally enter into the joy and glory He has prepared for us.

Until then we simply fix our eyes on the author and perfect of our faith, trusting Him to get us home.

Conclusion

Well it's been good today. Or at least I hope it's been good for you. It has been for me.

I started out the sermon talking about the game hide and seek. We end today hearing that God is the best at that game. He seeks us out, finds us and then hides our souls safely away in Christ. Knowing that and believing that is one of the most freeing and life giving things we experience. It changes everything and gives us the charts for how to make to heaven where we receive everything we've longed for and need.