



Sermon – May 16, 2021
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Verses Covered This Week

Colossians 3:3 – 4

2 Kings 11:3

Let me invite you to open your Bibles with me to Colossians chapter 3, verses 3 and 4. This will be our passage this morning as we prepare to celebrate our high school graduates; recognize and commission them off. That's why we had Robyn Higdon and our team that leads our high school worship leading us this morning. Weren't they great today? Just reminding us of that living hope that we have in Jesus. What we'll see right here in the text. And if you're a guest with us this morning, whether you're watching online or you're gathered here in room, welcome home. Every week we come to the word of God because this is where we find our hope. And it's the kind of hope that we experienced earlier this week on Wednesday when we gathered for our Central Family Celebration. We just got a chance to look back at all the Lord has been doing to recognize that, to celebrate it. We got to officially bring Arturo Peña on as our full-time minister. We got to ordain Justin Graham. It was just a great night. For those of you that were there, you probably enjoyed that experience. And I want to challenge you. When we do the next one coming in August, you make the plans to be there. Because you're going to see glimpses of God's grace at work in our midst there that you may not get to see in any other way. It's the type of grace that we see Paul speaking of here in this text. So let's think about what's happening.

Last week we saw the way that Paul called us to set our hearts and minds on things above. In other words, he was speaking last week about our view of God in Christ. Well, this week he's going to do the reverse. Instead of speaking about our view of God in Christ, he's going to speak now of God's view of us in Christ. The way that we should understand this is through the important doctrine of our union with Christ. And here's the way that Paul talks about it in Colossians 3, verse 3 and 4.

³For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Let's pray together.

Father, in this moment, may the distractions fade and may your Spirit fall. May you show us afresh the truth that we are hidden with Christ. That we are seated with Him in heaven. That You have changed our lives forever and may the way that we live reflect that in all that we do, in all that we think, in all that we speak. And we ask these things in Jesus name. Amen.

Well, John Poe had probably been on many train rides before. After all he was a successful businessman in the state of Louisiana. But I imagine he had never been on one quite like this. He'd coming into Texas, stopped over, switched trains in Beaumont. It was now headed West across the Bolivar Peninsula for his destination in Galveston. In order to get across the bay, in Bolivar, he would have to leave the tracks, the train would leave the tracks and come aboard a ferry for a period of time that would take it across the open water in order to connect it to Galveston to continue the trek. But instead of being met there in Bolivar point by that ferry, it was instead met by the greatest natural disaster that's ever struck the United States. Because he was travelling back in September of 1900 when the 1900 Galveston Hurricane struck. Their train was surrounded by wind. It was surrounded by waves. It was surrounded by water. And when they got up to the water's edge, the ferry tried to fight across the bay to get to them, but it couldn't make it so it turned back. And at that point, John Poe and the nearly 100 passengers there recognized that they were stuck. As the train tried to move in reverse to begin heading back to Beaumont, the carriages began to fill with water. And every passenger in there, just like John, was faced with a choice. Do we stay on the train or do we seek safety somewhere else? Well, for most of them that were on there, they decided their best solution was to remain on this train. I mean, after all, this was one of the biggest, most powerful, most significant modes of transportation ever developed by man. It was the epitome of man-made strength. If you were going to endure the storm, maybe that would be the best place to find safety. But John and about 10 others abandoned the train. They trudged along rising waters across the ground with one destination in mind. You see, he had seen in the distance the Bolivar Point Lighthouse. And his hope was if he could make it there before the storm waters rose and sealed it off, maybe he would find safety. Maybe he could hide himself in there and find deliverance from the storm. And when him and those other passengers trudged their way over there, they were the last ones to make it in the doorway of that lighthouse before the waters rose around it and sealed it shut. They spent that evening waiting out the storm. You can imagine the waves crashing around them, the water dropping over top of them, the winds shaking things. But because it was built on a firm foundation, or as Colossians 1:23 has already told us in this passage, it was both stable and steadfast. They were sustained in the storm. Those that remained on that train, they didn't make it. In all its manmade strength, the storms of this world washed it away. It was only the one that was built on the solid rock that remained. Because our foundation makes the difference on how we weather life's storms.

And that's what we're going to see Paul unpack for us in a spiritual way this morning from Colossians 3, verses 3 and 4. That our foundation shaped our faith. And that foundation he's going to show us is rooted in the gospel of Jesus Christ. What he's going to show is that when the floodwaters of anxiety come, when the tempests of temptation strikes, when the winds of accusation swirl around us, the only way we can stand in the midst of the storm is if we are hidden in a structure that's built on the right foundation. And he's going to speak of the way that's true for us uniquely through our union with Jesus. So think about what's happening here as we continue the beginning of Colossians 3. Paul, throughout this letter, is painting this picture of the centrality of Jesus Christ. And back in chapter 1, he's shown us the centrality of Christ for

God's plans for the world. Then in chapter 2 he showed us the centrality of Christ for God's plan for salvation. And now he's going to show us the way that the centrality of Christ marks out God's plans for our lives. And here's what we're going to discover today. What Paul's going to show us is that our union with Christ means that Jesus is both the foundation of our faith and the focus of our future. So let's unpack that beginning back in verse 3 where we see the way that our union with Christ means that Jesus is the foundation of our faith. He says,

3For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

In other words, the foundation of our faith is our union with Christ. And that union with Christ is connected to our death with Christ. That's why he says, for if you have died. We've already seen this language back in chapter 2 in verse 20 where he talks about how we have died with Christ. There is this substitutionary death that Jesus dies on the cross for you and me. That when He gives up His life, He nails our shame to the cross, sets us free from sin. He ushers in the new creation. He invites us into relationship with Him. And when we trust Jesus for salvation, His death becomes our own. Those of us who are spiritually dead have now been made alive through the death of Christ. And that foundation of our faith is connected as he shows us here in verse 3 to our union with Christ. That's why he says, your life is hidden with Christ in God.

Now there are many parts of the Bible that speak about our union with Christ. You'll see the phrase, in Christ or in Jesus Christ, over and over in the New Testament. But right here in verse 3, we have one of the most unique ways for Paul to unpack it when he speaks about how we are hidden with Christ. So what do we mean when we talk about our union with Christ? What is that? Well, here's the idea. That when we come to faith in Jesus, our union with Christ means that what is true of Him is now true of us. That when God looks at you, if you have trusted Christ, if you've been united to Him, He no longer sees you in your sin. He no longer sees you in your failure. He no longer sees you on the basis of what you have done. Instead he sees you through the blood of His Son. He sees you in His righteousness, in His holiness. Not on the basis of what you have done, but what Christ has done on your behalf. In other words, all of Him reshapes all of us. And that finished work of Christ becomes the transformation of who we are.

And we're right now stepping into wedding season and so I've had the opportunity to do some weddings here recently. And normally when you marry a couple, as the minister, they'll give you a gift in appreciation for what you've done. Oftentimes it might be a little bit of money, but in a wedding that I did not long ago, instead of giving me money, they gave me meat. I got this cooler and it was filled with ribeyes and pork loin and all these amazing things. And I'm like, "Who wants cash when you can have ribeyes instead? This is incredible." And one of the things I love to do right before the wedding is find that groom, find that bride, take a minute to pray with them and their bridesmaids or groomsmen separately in those two groups. Now imagine after I prayed for one of them, I said to the bride, "Hey, what are you excited about for the wedding and for your future marriage?" Imagine if her answer to me in that moment went something like this. "You know what? I can't wait to marry him because then I get access to that bank account and that house and that honeymoon. It's going to change my life. And not just that, he's also just so complementary and encouraging and now he's going to feel obligated to build me up because we're in a marriage." You would look at that and say, "Wait a minute.

We've got a disaster forming here." Right? Because in that situation, she's more concerned about the perks than the person. More interested in the rewards than the relationship. And when our understanding of our union with Christ enables us to do is to realize that we often fall prey to the same viewpoint when it comes to our salvation in Jesus. We focus on the forgiveness, the grace, the mercy, all the benefits, all the perks, all the rewards of our redemption instead of focusing on what Paul calls us to. He tells us we have been hidden with Christ in God. That the main glory of our salvation are not the benefits we receive but the relationship that we enjoy. That we don't just get forgiveness and grace and mercy; we get Jesus in whom are forgiveness, grace, and mercy. He says, we are hidden with Christ as we have been united to Him. He uses this language here of being hidden in Christ and it is the only time in the New Testament he talks about believers being hidden with Christ in God. Why would he do that? Well, remember he is speaking to a church that has been infiltrated by false teachers who are telling them that they alone are the ones who can unlock the hidden things of God. So in contrast to that, he reminds them of this reality that they themselves, because of their relationship with Jesus, have been hidden with Christ in God.

But there's an even more richer, and even richer reality to the language that he uses here. Because in the original language, that word hidden is both in the past tense and in the passive voice. And what that means is in the passive voice, it is speaking of a reality that someone else does for us on our behalf. We don't do the hiding; we are hidden with Christ in God. But it's not just something that is done for us, it's something that's done in the past in a way that has implications in the present. We weren't hidden once and need to keep being re-hidden again. Instead, that is our reality as believers. We are hidden with Christ in God. There's a sense of with Christ in God, this double-divine protection. This double-divine presence that is with us. And as we journey through this month of a focus on prayer here in May, that should have everything to do with the way that you and I pray. Because if it's true that we are hidden with Christ in God, that helps us to overcome some of the main barriers we have for why we struggle to pray. So often it can feel as if God is distant or perhaps He is disinterested. But if the reality is true that we are hidden with Christ in God, then it is showing us that our prayer life should be built upon the promise that in Christ God is with us and for us. That transforms our prayer life. You know, Paul speaks here of this idea of being hidden in Christ. And what comes with it is the picture of safety, of security, of protection. Just like John Poe in that lighthouse, you are surrounded, protected, secure. It reminds you of one of the stories of the Old Testament kings of Judah. A man by the name of Joash. You see, Ahaziah had been the king and he was killed. And then what happened is after he was killed, his mom, Athaliah, went around and killed everyone else in the royal family. You can see this in 2 Kings 11. But in that moment, one of Ahaziah's sisters rescued Joash and she hid him from the judgment that was to come. And look at where she hid him. 2 Kings 11:3 says this:

³And he remained with her six years, hidden in the house of the Lord, while Athaliah reigned over the land.

So where was this one hidden? He was hidden right there in the temple of God. He spent 6 years being rescued from his enemies, delivered from their judgment, by clinging to the safety and security that can only be found in that temple. The centerpiece of God's presence and protection for His people. And that same pattern we see right there in the life of Joash, we see culminating in what Paul is speaking about that God does for us in Christ. That Jesus comes

down, He says, “Tear down the temple. I will rebuild it in 3 days.” He is where the manifest presence of God lives. And when we hide ourselves in Him through our salvation, through our union with Christ, we can stand secure, safe, protected no matter what life brings. See, the reality this morning is every person in this room, every person watching online is hiding in one of two places. We are either hiding with Adam from God or we are hiding with Christ in God. Remember the way that Genesis 3 tells us that after Adam and Eve eat of the forbidden fruit, they hide themselves. In the shame of their sin they, they sew fig leaves together to cover over their nakedness. They try to atone for their mistakes on their own and they hide from God in their shame. And there maybe some of you today that that’s the truth for you as you walk in here. You know that you’re exposed. You’re undone. That your sins are deserving of judgment. And you hide with Adam from God. But what Jesus is giving us here through the words of Paul is a different picture. That instead through the call of the gospel, we are invited to leave the hiding with Adam from God in the shame of our sin and instead now hide ourselves with Christ in God through the salvation that only comes through Jesus. A salvation that will protect us, that will sustain us, and that will be the foundation of our faith through our union with Christ.

But I want you to notice as we go on in this text, when we turn our attention to verse 4, we see a second dimension of our union with Christ when Paul lays out for us that our union with Christ means that Jesus is the focus of our future. That’s why he says there in verse 4,

[4When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.](#)

In other words, our union with Christ doesn’t just mean that Jesus is the foundation of our faith, but He’s also the focus of our future. So where do we get this idea of focus here in verse 4? Well, when you look back at the text, he speaks of how Christ is our life. So in what sense is that true? Well, don’t you remember what Paul said elsewhere in Philippians 1:21 when he said for me to live is Christ. There’s a sense in which what unites us, what marks us out in terms of our identity is that we are so bound up with Christ that our identity is so overshadowed by His role in our lives that we are indistinguishable from Him. He is our life. He is our focus. He is our everything. That’s the way that Paul speaks of Him here. What a counter-cultural reality that is, isn’t it? Think about it. We live in a culture that celebrates individualism. Where the distinctness of your identity is marked out by how you differentiate yourself from others in what you do, in what you eat, in where you work, in who your friends are, in what you enjoy to do. Our culture around us tells us that our identity should be found primarily in what distinguishes us from others. But Paul gives us a different picture. It’s the reverse of that. That what marks us out, the most true and significant reality of each one of our identities is not what makes us different, but what unites each believer together, our union with Christ. That He is now our life. That we are hidden with Him in a way that changes who we are. I want you to know, you high school graduates, I was thinking about you this week. So I was driving down University, stopped at a light, and I saw a group of people walking across the street wearing Vanderbilt University shirts. And I thought I was back in Nashville where I used to live before I came down here. I was like, “What in the world’s going on? This is an Aggie town. Why do we have this invasion going on?” And then I started thinking, “Maybe they’re athletes. Is there a competition going on?” And it finally clicked with me. This week is the SEC outdoor track and field championship. And then when I began to drive around town the rest of the week, I started to notice little groupings of different people supporting different universities all around our city. It

made me think about y'all. Many of y'all are going off to what's next. Some of you staying here at A&M or Blinn. Others of you going elsewhere. But what was interesting is then I started looking for them. I started to see who could I identify. And some were easy to spot. They had the colors on. They were clearly marked. Others you could tell they were probably connected because they were with those who were marked out in that way. But then there were likely some that I saw that I didn't even recognize because there was nothing to distinguish them from anybody else. Here's my question to you high school graduates. When you go off to what's next for you, will people be able to easily tell that the focus of your life is Jesus? That you are the type of person who is living where they can't help but notice that Christ is your life. That's what Paul is speaking of here when he says that Christ is our life. He is giving us this idea that He is the focus of our hearts in the present, but the way the verse goes on, it shows us that He's not just our focus of our hearts in the present, but the focus of our hearts in the future. That's why he says:

[4When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.](#)

This is the only spot in the book of Colossians where Paul speaks of the return of Jesus, His second coming, that He will be revealed, that He will come back. He speaks of it there as the one who will appear. And what you might miss in your English translation is that if you look at it in the original language, the word he uses for how Christ will appear is actually in the past tense. He's using a past tense verb to describe a future reality. Why? Because that signals its certainty. It's a no doubter. It's a done deal. Jesus is coming back. And when He appears, what is hidden will appear with Him. As many of you now, I'm the class of 2004 from Texas A&M. And the class of '04 is about to re-emerge all around the country here in the next couple of weeks. And it's not graduates from A&M. It's not even graduates from other colleges that finish that same year of my class year. Instead, the class of 2004 that's about to re-emerge, especially on the Eastern part of the United States, is the class of 2004 in the group of Cicadas. So maybe you've heard this happening. Maybe you know what's coming. But if you don't, let me freak you out for a second. Apparently there are these bugs called Cicadas that are a lot like locusts. They're small, they've got wings, they fly around, they cause lots of problems. And the way that they work are on cycles. Where what's happened is when they are born, they immediately go into hiding. They spend 17 years hidden under the surface. You may be walking over them at any given time. And then like clockwork, when the ground surface temperature reaches about the mid-60's which will happen in the next couple of weeks on the Eastern seaboard, what is hidden becomes revealed. What is concealed now is revealed. What's hidden is now appearing. And they burst forth in life. In fact, there're are going to be millions of these things that swarm first, swarm forth all at once. If you were to look down at your feet, you see about a one foot by one-foot space in the places of highest concentration. There'd be about 30 or 40 of them right there at your feet. That's the kind of thickness of coverage that will happen. That's the kind that will all appear at the same time. And the uniqueness of these bugs is not how many of them there are. I mean if you look around, there are probably just as many flies or mosquitoes or any other insect. What's unique about them is not just their size, but the nature of their revelation. That they stay hidden until this unknown time and then all at once they appear in all their glory. And in a spiritual sense, that's the anticipation that Paul is giving us about the return of Jesus. That when He appears, that we will burst forth and appear with Him in all that glory. And when you see the pictures, when you see the videos in the weeks ahead of these insects emerging forth, what I want you to be able to recognize is that that second coming

of Jesus, the swarm of the saints, will be far greater in magnitude than that. Because he tells us there that we will appear with Him in glory.

And as he unpacks this reality, he's showing us another dimension about what it means to be hidden with Christ. We already saw in verse 3 that what it means to be hidden in Christ means that we are spiritually safe. But when you connect that to what he's saying in verse 4, he is showing us not just that we are spiritually safe, but that we are also spiritually strange. There is something about us the world can't understand. Our ways, our motivations, our mannerisms, our methods, our actions, our attitudes, our heart, our voice, they're different. They can't understand it. There's this disconnect between why we do what we do and the way the world see it. They can't make sense of it because their eyes are veiled. But at the coming of Christ, these things will be revealed. We are spiritually strange. Think about the way that that spiritual strangeness showed up in the life of Paul. Here's the one who was a Pharisee. As he talked about a Hebrew of Hebrews. He had everything going for him. But he met Jesus on that Damascus Road. And the light of the gospel pierced the darkness of his heart and changed everything. He walked away from it all. He neglected his Jewish heritage. He went through fiery trials. He even writes this letter to the Colossians from a prison. Why? Because he embraced the strangeness of the Gospel. And here he is. He's writing to this church in the city of Colossae surrounded by a city that probably thinks they're strange. And what he is showing them in this moment is you may be a backwater people from a backwater town, but when Christ who is our life appears, you will be revealed with Him in glory. And at that point, the world around us will see that we are in fact kings and queens of the universe called to reign forever with Jesus Christ. That spiritual strangeness doesn't cease all the way back in ancient times. Just think for a minute of the way that you and I are called to be strangers and aliens in this fallen world. The way that we are called to live in a different way. A way that seems hidden, peculiar, doesn't make sense to the world around us. For those who, of us who are united with Christ, we are so strange that we will even stand for life in the midst of a culture of death. We are so strange that we will spend our lives together with one spouse in a culture of no-fault divorce. We are so strange that we will go to work and go to school and live lives of integrity in a culture that celebrates short cuts. We are so strange that we will do what's right even in a culture that celebrates what's wrong. But if you understand and know the Gospel, you know that what we believe is even stranger than that. We believe a Jewish carpenter rode into Jerusalem on a colt, He died in our place, He defeated the grave through His resurrection, and He invites us into a relationship with Him in fulfilment of the promises of God. That's strange. But it gets even stranger than that. Because what Paul is speaking of here about the return of Christ, think about this glorious reality that is to come, that there is coming a day when Jesus will return. And He will set down the carpenter's hammer that was in His hand and instead take up the warrior's sword in his mouth. And He will walk away from the colt of Jerusalem and instead come riding forth on the horse of heaven. That He will set down that crown of thorns in His humiliation and instead return in a crown of righteousness to bring His people to Himself. And if that reality is true for us, Central family, then He should be the focus of our lives. He should be what sustains us in the middle of life's storms.

After that hurricane passed through Galveston, John Poe and those over 100 that were gathered in that lighthouse were thankful to be alive. Once those waters receded enough that they could again open the door and go out to see what was around them, they were undone by the scene. Of course, they were overwhelmed by the damage and the destruction to all the buildings, all the landscape. But I'm sure what they did not expect to see was the number of dead bodies that they

found including many that were gathered right there around that lighthouse. You see, there were people that when the storm came, they didn't seek shelter until it was too late. And you can imagine some of them, seeing the lighthouse in the distance, and just like John and those coming off the train, racing to it as quickly as possible only to see that the waters of the flood had sealed it shut and there was no way for them to be hidden inside and safe. Scripture gives the same warning to each one of us today. Bible tells us that today is the day of salvation. That if you hear His voice, you should not harden your heart. But instead, look to Jesus for deliverance. Look to Jesus as your safety. Look to Jesus as your protection. Look to Jesus as your peace because as Paul shows us here, He is the foundation of our faith and the focus of our future.

Let's pray together.

Father, as we gather in this room, there may be some in here who feel the storms of life raging all around them. They're unstable, they're unsettled, they're seeking to find their own way of escape, of protection, of safety, of security. Lord, I pray that You would break them of that effort right now and show them that they can only find the spiritual safety they long for through the blood of Jesus. And Lord for those of you that have, those of us that have met You in a saving way, we are crying out to You, Lord, that we can embrace reality, that we are spiritually strange, that all the things that we live for, believe, they make no sense to the culture around us. One day when you return, it will all make sense. These trials will all be worth it. And I pray that You would use that longing for Your return as a fuel for us to walk faithfully in all that You've called us to in Christ. We ask all these things in Jesus name. Amen.