



Sermon – May 9, 2021
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Verses Covered This Week

Colossians 3:1 – 2

Psalms 110:1

1 Thessalonians 5:16 - 18

Let's open our Bibles, we're going to spend our time in Colossians 3, verses 1 and 2 this morning. Colossians 3 is where we'll be today. And as we've said already, happy Mother's Day. And if you're a guest with us, welcome home. And what a difference this Mother's Day is from last year, right? I mean, last year we were all sitting at home watching a worship service online. There were no restaurant reservations. Nobody was dressing up to get that perfect picture for social media that it seemed like there were so many things missing. And now we're back together. And many of those normal cultural elements can be a part of this Sunday. But I want to recognize, even as we turn our attention to God's word, that this doesn't feel like a normal Mother's Day for many of you. Maybe you have a prodigal son or daughter that's walked away from your family. Maybe you've lost a child that you wish was sitting next to you. Maybe you grew up in a broken home and the idea of a happy Mother's Day makes no sense to you because of the mom and dad that you had. What we know is that God's word meets us in whatever moment we find ourselves in. And what we're going to do this morning is come to His word to hear it speak to us. And then I want you to know that when we have our response time, I'm inviting you to come down here to these steps to pray. To pray for our families, to pray for that prodigal to come home, to pray for that one who doesn't know the Lord to meet them, to pray that God would keep our marriages and our families strong. And so even now, I want you to ready your heart as we turn our attention to Colossians 3. So think about what's happening. Last week, at the end of Colossians 2, we saw the way that false teachers were seeking to lead others astray. And what they were telling them is that you can find victory in your life through legalism. But what we're going to notice this morning is that Paul is going to show us that the way to victory in our life is not through legalism, but through lordship. It comes through Jesus Himself. And that's why he begins this chapter in verse 1 in this way.

¹If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are on earth.

Let's pray together.

Father, right now we're coming to You to pray exactly that. Lord, would You take our minds off the things that are on earth. Would You set our minds on the things above so that we might seek You with our whole heart? So that we might know You and become more like You by the power of Your Spirit. And we ask these things in Jesus name. Amen.

Well, the oldest person in the world was barely old enough to be alive whenever two men, two brothers, from Dayton, Ohio who happened to own a bicycle shop changed the entire world back in 1903. Now you may be saying, "How would two bike shop owners change the world?" But when I tell you their name, Orville and Wilbur Wright, maybe that rings a bell. Because even though they were bike shop owners, they began to have a fascination with figuring out how it was to fly. And back in 1903 in the area of Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, they were the first ones to successfully fly a plane. Now I don't know how much you can even call this a flight, the first flight that they succeeded in only went 120 feet. They didn't even get above 10 feet high off the ground. And there was such a headwind against them that the actual rate of speed that they were travelling was 6.8 miles an hour. But it was that first flight. And they'd worked for years on it. They'd done all the research, all the hard work, there'd been so many failures and setbacks and it seemed as if it would never happen. But the only way that they were able to achieve that mission, is because they were relentlessly committed to continue to seek it until they found it. And when we come to Paul's words this morning to us, he is giving us the same spiritual instructions. That we may face spiritual headwinds in this world. But if we are to follow after God, if we are to find victory in the Christian life, the way that it comes is through a relentless seeking of our Savior who is in heaven. And that's why we come to this text this morning. Colossians 3 is like a turning point in this book where Paul has talked about the excellencies of Christ. He's spoken about the danger of the false teachers. And now, in the second half of this book, he's going to turn his attention to what these things mean for us in the Christian life. What does it mean that Jesus is seated at God's right hand? And how does that set the stage for the way that we should live out our faith?

So here's what we're going to notice this morning, church family. When we look at Colossians 3, if we want to experience lasting victory, here's how it comes. It comes by setting our hearts and our minds on Christ. So notice the way he begins this text. We see the way Paul calls us to set our hearts on Christ right there in verse 1 when he says, if you've been raised with Christ, seek the things above. Where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. So we saw last week the way that he told, that these false teachers were

telling us to fight sin, fight for victory through legalism that's based on what you do. But Paul says that's the wrong way to fight for victory. What's the right way? The basis for finding victory in your life is not grounded in what you do, but in where you look. Where you set your focus, where you set your eyes, where you set your heart. And Paul speaks to us here and says that we need to look in a particular place for victory. And where is it? He says there in verse 1, seek the things that are above. This word for seek is to search, is to relentlessly seek out, it's to find, it's to desire, to reorient your life. He's speaking in ways that capture what God does in our heart. That when we seek something, it's an evidence that we have set our hearts on that thing. And Paul is calling us to set our hearts on Christ. But what you may not pick up in your English translation of this word, to seek, is that in the original language it is something that is written in a way where it's not one time in nature. You don't seek it once and that's it. Instead, the command here is to keep seeking. To keep setting our hearts. To keep going after. No matter what spiritual headwinds come against us, we are to be relentless in pursuing Jesus. I wonder if anybody in your house has a reputation for being the one in your home that loses things all the time. Is there that person in your home? Maybe you're nudging who's sitting next to you? It just seems like they can't seem to keep up with anything. And that's certainly the case in most families. And whenever something gets lost at home, there's a couple of different ways you can search for it. Maybe you're like some of the kids in the room who, when my kids lose something, they look in the nearest location and if it's not there, then they call out to mom for help. Yeah, I think on Mother's Day one of those mom super powers, the ability to know where everything is at all times. And so it's just this casual look, it's like, well if I see it, that's great. But if I don't, I'm not too worried about it. But then there are other situations where you lose something and you're desperate to find it. Maybe it's that passport you misplaced and you're looking for it the night before that international trip. Or it's those keys that you can't find and you've got to get out the door to get to that important appointment. And it's not this casual seeking of if I find it great, if not it's no big deal. You know that unless you find this thing that you are seeking, you are undone. You will fail. And that's the way Paul talks about what it looks like to seek the things above. That there is this relentless pursuit, this longing to orient our hearts around Jesus Himself. And what we're going to see as verse 1 rolls on is that Paul shows us several reasons why we should set our hearts on Christ as we seek the things above.

So look at the way the verse starts back there at the beginning. He says, set your hearts on Christ because you've been given a new life. That's why he says, if you've been raised with Christ. Now this is the exact same word he used back in Colossians 2:12. That we have already been raised with Christ. So we see in back to back weeks Paul speaks first about the substitutionary death of Jesus, that He dies in our place. Now he speaks about the substitutionary resurrection of Jesus. That when He is raised from the dead, it is as if we too, when we put our faith in Him, are risen from the dead as well. Now that reality is not yet true for us physically, but what he is showing us here is that's exactly what has happened for us spiritually. Reminds you of the words of the prophet in

Ezekiel 37 when Ezekiel comes upon that valley of dry bones. You remember that one? It's lifeless. It's dead. It's hopeless. And that's the way that we are apart from Jesus. Perhaps even you this morning in the room or watching online, you feel that sense of hopelessness, that lifelessness, that death because of your sin. But remember what happens in Ezekiel 37. The prophet speaks to the bones, the breath of the Spirit blows amongst them, and it makes those dry bones live. It brings them back to life. There is a new life that is given that changes everything. And what Paul speaks here of why it is that we should seek the things above, it is rooted in the reality that we have a new life in Jesus Christ because we are united to His resurrection. But he goes on later in the verse and he says, second, to set your heart on Christ because you've been given a new home. And he talks about that home right there in the middle, seek the things that are above. Our new life with Christ gives us a new home in heaven. And that new home that we have changes the way that we relate to the world around us. It was exactly a year ago right now that our family was swimming in boxes in our new home here. And you know what it's like to move. You've got to make all sorts of changes. You've got to change your mailing address. You've got to get a new driver's license. But one of the ones you may not think about that actually has a significant impact on your lived experience is you've got to update the settings in your GPS app in your phone to tell it you've got a new home. And the reason that your GPS wants to know where your home is, it's because so many of our journeys in life start in our home. They start with where we live. We begin where we find our home and then we travel to somewhere else. What Paul is showing us here is that we have a new home in heaven. That is the ground zero for our life. And the journeys we face, the experiences we have should be grounded in, rooted in the reality that we now are in the heavenlies with Jesus. We seek the things above, that heavenly home where we fix our eyes. But there's a danger that comes with this reality. When we face the challenges in life so often we can turn inward in self-reliance or outward in self-approval rather than upward in self-denial. And that's why Paul is echoing the words of Jesus in Matthew 6:33 in this verse that you know. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you. And that's even a word for you this morning who are wrestling with infertility and dealing with the hardship of Mother's Day. The Lord sees you in your sorrow. And what Paul is calling us to in moments of hardship is to set our hearts on things above. To seek that home. It doesn't make the pain any less painful, but it reminds us that we have a Savior that sympathizes with us in our sorrows, who bears our burden, who reminds us that this world is not our home. That instead we are called to seek the things that are above. But notice the way that this verse ends. Because we see this third reason for why we should set our hearts on Christ when Paul shows us that we should set our hearts on Christ because we have been given a new King. And notice the way he talks about it there at the end of the verse. Where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. So what's significant about the things above, what's significant about heaven is not all the benefits that we get from eternal life. The significance is that in heaven is where Jesus is. And Jesus is the benefit of heaven. He is the reason that we long for it, that we seek it, that we can set our hearts on things above because we have a new King. He speaks of this king

there as one who is seated at the right hand of God. He is picking up on language from Psalm 110 in verse 1. This is the most quoted Old Testament verse in the entire New Testament. Over 20 times it shows up there and here's what it says:

[¹The Lord says to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool."](#)

And that's the language that Paul is speaking here of Jesus. That he is now seated at the right hand of the Father. And what is the significance of this idea of being seated? Well, it's this picture of to dwell in peace, to live without fear. There is a sense of steadfastness, a firmness. And what it's showing us is that the only reason a king will be seated is when their enemies are defeated. You sit down after you've achieved the victory. And when Paul speaks here in these echoes of Psalm 110, he is reminding us of the victory that Jesus has won. And it's a victory that's made manifest by the fact that he's not just seated, but seated at the right hand of the Father. Now what is the importance of this position of being at the right hand? Well, the one that was seated at the right hand is the one who is in the place of prominence, in the place of significance. That's why Paul is calling us to set our hearts above because we have a new king. And this new king is not just sitting there forgetting us. What we see throughout the New Testament is that even on His throne, Jesus is at work. So in Acts 2 it tells us that when Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father, He sends His Spirit. Acts 5 speaks to us and says that when He is seated at the right hand of the Father, He offers repentance and forgiveness. And also, when we look at Romans 8:34, it tells us that when Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father, He lives to intercede for us. That even right now in this position of power and prominence, Jesus is praying for you and me. And that has everything to do with the way that we seek God through this month long emphasis on prayer here at Central during the month of May. I mean what fuel does that give us for our prayers to God if we know that God the Son is praying for us.? That transforms the prayer requests that you fill out on our digital prayer wall on our website. It changes the way that you write them down on the Connect Card in the back of your seat back when you turn those in. It reshapes the way that when people come to our prayer room and spend an hour each week lifting them up. It changes the way they pray. Why? Because we are setting our hearts on things above because we have a risen king who lives to make intercession for us right now. Paul speaks here of the way that Jesus calls us to set our hearts on Christ. But notice the way now in verse 2 he begins to speak next of how we should set out minds on Christ. Notice what he says.

[Set your mind on things that are above. Not on the things that are on earth.](#)

And this word to set your minds, it shows up over 20 times in the New Testament. And Paul uses this phrase all but 3 of those times and the idea here is to think, is to shift your perspective, it's to reorient your understanding. And it's not just an intellectual exercise, but a transformational experience. And what Paul recognizes here is the same thing he

pointed out to us when he said to seek the things above. This is appearing in the original language as something that we don't just do one time and move on. Instead, the picture here is to keep setting your mind, to keep seeking, to keep setting. No matter what we face, we are doing this over and over again. If you want to know what that looks like, just think a few months back to when we all went through that freak February snowstorm together. And you remember we had those rolling power outages that would occur and the power would go off. You'd lose all the electricity in your home. And when that power came back on, for some you didn't know when it would happen, but for others there was this regular rhythm where you knew it'd be off for a while and then the moment it came back on you had like a 25-minute window to do everything you needed to do before it went back off. And so it was like a Kentucky Derby in your home. As soon as the race begins, you know the first thing you've got to go over there and do is reset the router for the Wi-Fi so that can kick off. And then hustle to the kitchen to start making some of the food that you may not be able to cook otherwise. And by the time you've got that going, finally the Wi-Fi will kick on where you can get 10 minutes of study or 10 minutes of work on before it all goes off again. You lose that power and when you lose the access to the power, the way that you restart things is by resetting those items that have been disrupted. That's the way that Paul is speaking about how we combat the spiritual attacks of our enemy. When he seeks to separate us from the power of the Spirit, when he seeks to separate us from the power of God's word, the way that we press on throughout the day is by setting and resetting our minds on Christ. It is ongoing, it is recurring, it is relentless. See Paul knows everyone sets their minds on something. Maybe it's on their deepest fears. Maybe it's on their greatest hopes. Maybe it's on their most significant uncertainties. Maybe it's on their greatest desires or purposes. Our minds are always set on something. What Paul is explaining to us here is that the call of the gospel for each one of us is to set our minds on things above. That's the way the church has taught throughout the history of Christianity about the idea of practicing the presence of God. Are you familiar with this idea? It's the same thing that Paul is speaking of here in this text, to set your mind on Christ is to practice God's presence. In other words, when you go throughout your day, do you go about your day with an intentional desire to maintain and ongoing awareness that Christ is with you and for you in the moment? From the moment that alarm clock off and you're waiting for the coffee to brew. From the moment that you're getting your kids off to school. To the moment that you sit down at your desk to study or to work. From the moment that you come home and reconnect with your family. From the moment that you head to bed. At every moment of your life, Paul is saying to us we should keep setting our minds on Christ. That we should practice God's presence in our life. That's why he speaks elsewhere about what this looks like to do it in 1 Thessalonians 5. In verses 16 – 18 he says this:

¹⁶Rejoice always, ¹⁷pray without ceasing, ¹⁸give thanks in all circumstances for this is the will of God for you.

He is speaking there of what Paul is talking about here in Colossians 3. Setting our minds on Christ. Practicing the presence of God. And one of the ways that is so helpful to do that is by creating nudges in your life that will drive you to God rather than away from Him. That's why when we launched our prayer emphasis, we gave you these prayer bands. Because each time you see this on your wrist, it's a nudge to remind you to practice that presence, to set your mind on God. Maybe there are other things that you can do in your life. See what Paul knows is that where you set your minds shapes where you set your heart. And where you set your heart shapes where you set your affections. And where you set your affections shapes where you set your attention. And if we want to walk in victory, we must set our minds on Christ. The country of China is playing catchup in the world of astronomy. They're trying to advance their space program in significant ways. And one of the things that that's included is that they have just recently started to build their own space station. And they launched a rocket back in late April to put one of the first modules up in the clouds for that space station. And the rocket went up into the sky and now countries around the world have kept their eyes on the rocket that shot it up there in the weeks since then because it was going to fall in what's known as an uncontrolled fall. Let me translate that for you. They have no idea where it's going to land. And here's why that matters. This item that's going to fall from the sky this week is 100 feet tall, 16 feet wide, it weighs 20 tons. Now a lot of that will burn up in the atmosphere as it re-enters, but every country was watching it closely. And I've got good news to report to you. We made it because it fell last night while we were all sleeping in the Indian Ocean. But for this season, for these several weeks, every country in the globe had their eyes set on things above because they knew there was a danger, a threat. And it's easy to set your minds on things above when you can see the danger. But the temptation for us is to just look to God, to look upward, to seek God to meet our needs in our times of hopelessness. In those moments of despair when we deeply need help. But instead, Paul is calling us to set our mind on Christ at all times. Both in the despair and the delight. Both when we need help and when we have hope. There is never a time where that shouldn't be the case. And the challenge that he's laying out before us is this. He puts this question in front of us, will we set our minds on things above or on things on earth? Will we look to ourselves or to our Savior? That's why at the end of verse 2 there he tells us not to set our minds on the things that are on earth.

Now we've heard him describe these things on earth over and over again in Colossians. He's talked about these empty deceits, the philosophy, these elemental spirits, this self-made religion. All of these different ways he speaks about and he's saying the temptation can be that we set our minds there. But instead, he is telling us that our focus should be on Jesus. For you men that are married, you remember what it was like when your bride began to walk down that aisle. You watched her that whole way down and everything else faded. Or you know what it's like to be gathered with 10's of thousands of people at Kyle Field in that big game moment where there's no distractions around you because you are singularly focused. It's like one of those iPhone pictures you take in portrait mode where when it captures it, one element is in focus and everything else fades. That's

the way Paul is speaking about setting our minds on things above. That we have a singular focus that causes everything else to fade. It's not as if nothing else matters, that Jesus is the only thing of significance. What he is saying is that when we set our minds on things above, it changes the way we set our minds on things below. It resets us. It transforms us. So what does it look like to set our mind on things above and not on things of earth right here at Central? Well, let me give you a few examples. Next month when we gather out on these fields for Sports Camp, we're going to have hundreds of children out there and we're going to have hundreds of you volunteering. In fact, we still need more of you to step up and we're going to do that in a way that sets our minds on things above, not on things below. Which means, yes, we want them to grow in their skills as athletes. But more importantly, we want them to grow in the Gospel. We want them to hear the life-saving message of Jesus and to see their lives changed. Or in a week after that when we gather on this stage and have couples lined up here holding their babies in our parent dedication. We are doing that not seeking happy homes, not seeking obedient children, we are seeking the things that are above. We are seeking that God would work in the lives of these parents to use their children to grow those parents to be more like Jesus and to use those parents as the primary ones discipling those children in their homes. Or even this coming Wednesday when we gather in the Family Life Center for our next Central Family Celebration. We're going to come together to celebrate all that God is doing. Not the things that the world would celebrate. But the things that are above. We're going to look back to what He has done. We're going to look ahead to what He is going to do. And we're going to do it just as Paul calls us to here setting our minds on the things that are above. You see, when we set our minds on heaven, heaven can reset our minds on earth.

Now I told you the oldest person in the world was born just in time for that first flight to occur back in Kitty Hawk back in 1903. Well, it turns out they are still alive today when another marker in aviation has occurred in 2021. You see, back in February 18th, NASA had launched its next rover to Mars, Perseverance, and it landed and part of what happened is that Perseverance was carrying with it a helicopter named Ingenuity. Well, it's about 4 feet, it's solar powered, it's like a drone is what we would think of it. And for the first time in human history, this helicopter, Ingenuity, was able to take a flight on another planet. Isn't that amazing? And to bring it all together, the NASA engineers who designed it took a stamp sized swatch of fabric that was on the Wright flyer that first flew in 1903 and stuck it to the bottom of the solar panel that was there for that first flight for Ingenuity. And that flight lasted longer than 12 seconds. It went higher than 10 feet. And in fact, since then, it's flown over 5 missions. And the purpose for Ingenuity being up there is not just to test drive, can we fly on another planet. In addition to that, the purpose of these missions, the purpose of this flight is to give them another perspective. That when this helicopter goes up above the ground, it allows them to reorient the way that they see the surroundings. And what it does is by giving them a new perspective, it can set the rover that is going to then move across the land on a new path. One that avoids danger. One that finds freedom and protection. And that comes when a new

perception changes our direction. That's the way that Paul is speaking to us here this morning. That when we set our hearts and our minds on Christ, it can give us a new perspective that fuels a new pathway. It can give us a new perception that puts us on a new direction. And by doing that what we will find is that when we set our hearts and minds on Jesus, it will allow us to find the lasting victory that we cannot find anywhere else.

Let's pray together.

Father, there may be people in this room who even if they want to seek the things above, even if they want to set their minds on Christ, they don't even know where to begin because they've never met Jesus in a saving way. Would you open the eyes of their heart this morning to see their need of salvation? To set them free from their sin. And, Lord, there may be people in this room who are heavy laden, who are weary, who are suffering under the weight of this world, and it's so easy for our eyes to be taken off of things above and to be fixated on the things of this world. Would you change our perspective, God? And, Lord, we pray especially on this Mother's Day for the families that are in the room. If there are families that are just hanging on, would you help them to find help in the Gospel? If there are new families that are just beginning, would you help them set foundations rooted in Jesus? And no matter where we find ourselves this morning, Father, the desire of our hearts is to set our eyes on You, to set our minds on You, to set our affection on You, so that we might walk in the victory that you've called us to. And we pray to that end this morning, God. In Jesus name. Amen.