NIV **Colossians 3:1-4** 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.

The book of Colossians is such an interesting read. It begins with a rousing opening, one filled with words that direct us to look at and consider the awesome gift that Jesus Christ is. It is a chapter that again and again drives one to Jesus, to grasp what Jesus is and has done for the whole of mankind. It is a chapter the causes the soul to soar and the spirit to bow in humble thanks.

And then comes chapter two. Chapter two has section after section where Paul is refuting, contradicting and encouraging the Colossian believers to turn away from, nay, to run away from the false teaching Judaizers of the day. The Judaizers could best be described as those who claimed faith in Christ, but who insisted on good works and obedience to laws as the way to complete and make faith whole. You can see some of the problems they brought to the Colossians by just some of the great lines that Paul uses to refute and dispute what they were trying to proclaim was the “true” faith.

Take verse 2 or rather the end of it and verse 3. Paul says, **“in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”** That line is masterful! One of the claims of the Judaizers is that they “really, really” knew and understood the mysteries of God, yes, they grasped the “higher wisdom and knowledge of the spiritual world.” The problem was that these false teachers left Jesus and his work of redemption pretty much out of the picture. Their “higher wisdom and knowledge” was really nothing more than the works of the flesh, the idea that we could attain and gain salvation because of how we live and act. But Paul and the Apostles of Christ consider that the only knowledge and wisdom we need is Jesus. Contemplating Jesus, understanding Jesus and what He is all about is the heart of faith. And to fully grasp what Jesus was all about all you need to do is go back and read chapter one again. The words are masterful!

Or go to verse 8. **“See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.”** Again, the words are absolutely masterful and still so relevant for today’s world. Don’t buy the foolishness of the world. The world then and now would have you believe that salvation is just a matter of being sincere and being purposeful in your life. So…it doesn’t matter what you believe, just so you believe something! Or…church and a church life is not important for our souls. What is important is that we have a spiritual connection to God, forged with a personal relationship with God. God will then lead you to what is best and what is most important!” Those are two current philosophies that are heavily influencing our world today. But notice that the Holy Spirit of the Bible directs us to the work of Christ Jesus. He is what you need and He is what is most important. Not some sort of mysticism or spiritualism or faith in personal righteousness, but Jesus and what He has done! It is really what this day is about.

One more example from verse 16. **“Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day.** Verse 16 is a great reminder that we will not and cannot be saved based on what we eat or drink, with the style of our worship or the when of our worship. Don’t get this wrong, giving worship and praise to the Lord is important for our spiritual security, but the how’s, when’s and where’s are not the important thing. You are not more saved than another if you go to church on Sunday once or twice, worship on Tuesday or Thursday or on whether or not you eat pork, rare steak, or basmati! The world keeps insisting that our salvation is all about us and what we do or know or see rather than what Christ has done and accomplished.

What is the basis for our faith? It is Jesus. Jesus and what He has done and accomplished for us. No greater day exists for our grasping of Jesus and what He is all about than this particular day, this day when we reflect upon and consider most deeply the wonder of His Resurrection. Let’s then contemplate the wonder of our faith as we consider the words before us under the theme: **SET YOUR MINDS ON THINGS ABOVE. 1st. Being raised with Christ. 2nd. The Thing Above.**

Notice our opening statement. Verse one says, **“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above.”** The first thing I want you to notice is that this statement is part of a conditional sentence and because of the tense of the verb it is clear that this sentence is speaking to something that is clearly a reality. The use of the “since, then” is wonderful and it tells you this is assumed to be true in your life. What is true? That you have been raised with Christ!

Here is the sweetest and surest wonder there is to speak of. In order to grasp the intent and wonder of these words you will need to contemplate Jesus and what He has done. Jesus is God’s Son. Jesus has come into our world to serve as our Savior. Jesus does this first, by living a perfect and holy life. Then second, Jesus does this by offering himself as the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Jesus went to the cross and there paid for our sins in full. We heard that message on Good Friday in the words: **“It is finished.”** And then, the third portion of Jesus’ redemptive work and perhaps for us the most important, is the fact that Jesus rose from the dead to prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that He is everything claimed about Him. He is our Savior. He has offered and given to us freely and absolutely the forgiveness of sins and eternal life and salvation. All of this is revealed and sealed in the resurrection of Jesus!

Now, two things on this point. First, let me share with you a quote I read the other day on my social media page. It is awesome and I shared it with my friends and then my friends in turn shared that post too. It is quite thought provoking and what it says is absolutely true. It is a quote from author C.S. Lewis. He said, *“You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool. You can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call Him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”*

Shall I read that again? The man was right. Either Jesus is believed by you to be the Son of God and Savior of the world, your Savior or Jesus was just a mad fool who no one should pay attention to. There is no other choice. This truth hinges on the resurrection. Either you believe Jesus suffered, died and rose from the dead, actually and physically rose from the dead or your faith, your religion is pure and absolute garbage. There is no middle ground here. As C.S. Lewis tells us, Jesus himself doesn’t give us the option!

That of course, leads to the second point. It really has to do with the conditional clause. You recognize that the conditional clause tells you the same thing? Either you have been raised with Christ, that is, you do believe He is God who suffered and died and then rose from the dead in perfect triumph and wonder for the declaration of your salvation or Jesus is nothing. Because it is the resurrection that motivates and moves us. It is the resurrection of Jesus that proclaims Him God and Lord of all. If you do not believe that and subsequently are not willing that He affects your life His way, then don’t run around pretending you are a believer or more specifically that you are a Christian. Because this sentence point blank tells you that since you have been raised with Christ, your thoughts are on things above!

Ah, there’s the rub. So many commentators want to dicker and debate about what that means. I don’t know why. It is clear in our text what it means. Listen again, **“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 not hidden with Christ in God.”**

What are the “things above?” It is the things that Jesus is all about. It is the fact that Jesus has ascended into heaven because He is God and Lord. It is the fact that all things in heaven and on earth have been placed into the hands of Jesus. He is the Lord of lords and the King of kings. He sets the standards and he sets what, how, when and where in all things. I don’t have a clue why so many commentators want to debate what “the things above” are unless it is just because they want to undermine and destroy the very message and point of Jesus.

The things above are Godly things! What is so hard to grasp in that? The things above are spiritual things, not the things we make up and imagine but rather the spiritual things that God himself has revealed. The things above are revealed in the Word of God, the Bible of which John’s Gospel says, **“In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.”** The Holy Spirit is talking about Jesus. Jesus is the full and complete revelation of God. You want to know God, you want to know the things above, then you turn to Jesus and what He does and what He says is.

Jesus, by his very appearance in this world, tells us that we can’t save ourselves. If we could, then what is the point of Jesus? If we could be so good, so perfect as to earn heaven, then why did Jesus have to come and die on the cross? It happened because we couldn’t earn heaven. We couldn’t even get close. Just Jesus appearing is a statement in itself.

We set our minds on the things of Jesus. Now remember, Jesus made it clear that the standards of God have not been altered. The Law of God still shows us how God wants us to act and behave. And God’s law makes it clear that you cannot even get close to keeping the Law perfectly as God demands. Then here comes Jesus to tell us that He has kept the Law perfectly for us, He has died for our sins and offers us freely, forgiveness and redemption. Jesus tells us He is the key, the complete key to God’s gracious love and kingdom of heaven.

Isn’t that awesome? And when, or if you want to use the words of our text, “since” you have been raised with Jesus, meaning that Jesus has given you life, true life, eternal life with Him, then you will have found that you have **“died with Christ”**, meaning that you have died to sin, its power and destructive nature in your life. You don’t seek after sin, you don’t excuse sin, you don’t persist in sin and you don’t tell God that his ideas of sin are wrong. Yes, **you died with Christ and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.**

Do you know why it is called hidden? It is because Jesus has not returned yet. When Jesus returns for the Day of Judgment then our lives are no longer hidden with Him, but will be fully and absolutely revealed. We will be shown to be with Him and giving praise and thanks, glory and honor to Him, with Him and all the heavenly beings for all eternity. On that day there will be no doubt about who believed and who did not. That’s the point of telling us it is hidden.

But the other wonder of that statement is the word **“now.”** Our life is **“now” hidden with Christ**. The promise of Jesus for our salvation is sure and certain. As far as God is concerned it is a fact, it is a “now” thing! Our hearts and minds strive after the wonders of Jesus. Our attitudes are working at serving the Lord and bringing His wonder all the more into our lives. We are a people, a chosen people, a people made holy in Jesus just because of this “now” salvation!

By the way, all of this, if you have been paying attention reminds us of those great lessons of the resurrection that we learned from our Catechism. I have never failed to utter those words at every Resurrection morning sermon that I preached and I am not about to let this sermon go without them. What are the lessons of the resurrection? That Jesus is God’s Son! God told us we would know His Son because he would die and come back to life forever! The resurrection proves it. Jesus is our Redeemer. When someone tells you your sins are forgiven and heaven is your home because he will die and come back to life and then does…believe in that someone who is Jesus the Son of God come back to life. And finally, Jesus promises that because He lives, so will we? We have eternal life in Jesus. When we experience that separation of body and soul, souls will go to be with Jesus because of the life He has given us. We will live and be His in His kingdom forever! This is the promise and wonder of the Resurrection of Jesus.

Thank you Lord for this awesome day and its message. And now Lord, all the more, remind us that **“since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above.”** Amen.