

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

<sup>5</sup> Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. <sup>7</sup> In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. <sup>8</sup> But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. <sup>9</sup> Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices <sup>10</sup> and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. <sup>11</sup> Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.

In the last couple of weeks, many young people of our LCMS  
have attended a “Higher Things” youth conference.

Today’s text now calls us all to focus attention on higher things.

Years ago, I had many meals together with my wife’s family,  
back when her brothers and sisters were younger.

Sometimes conversation ended up on unappetizing topics  
that junior high boys might talk about or other inappropriate topics.  
My father-in-law would say: Let's elevate the conversation.

KJV uses word "conversation" to refer to whole way of life.

Paul in text is saying: elevate your way of life to things above.

In verses before, in last Sunday’s readings, Paul warns Colossians  
not to be slaves to human philosophies or Jewish traditions.

In the verse before these, he writes: These have indeed  
an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion,  
but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence in sin.

But, he says here, that doesn't mean we just give in to  
being careless and undisciplined.

There is something that has value in stopping indulgence of flesh,  
that is a mindset focused on what has ultimate value.

CHRIST RAISES US FROM EARTHLY LIVING  
CHRIST RAISES US FROM EARTHLY THINKING  
CHRIST RAISES US FROM EARTHLY IDENTITY TO HIMSELF

CHRIST RAISES US FROM EARTHLY LIVING

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There is a saying; Ships are of no use if they are not in the water,  
but also become worthless if water gets into the ship,

which is a way of saying that Christians need to live in this world  
but become worthless if they live in a way that is of the world.  
When we work in a competitive business or political world,  
or when not at work, live with rowdy friends or rough family,  
we may behave in that environment as if we forgot our morals.  
When problems press in on us & demand attention: our job, sickness,  
problems with finances, difficult relationships,  
we may behave as if we have forgotten we have faith.  
In situations like this, Paul implies, we forget to think with our brain.  
We think instead with our heart, gut or body members lower down.  
Paul writes: put to death what is earthly in you,  
literally: your body members that are of the earth.  
This world assumes you have to do what you feel in your members.  
You have to follow your desires, appetites, or sexual urges.  
This is what leads to what Paul lists here: sexual immorality,  
impurity, passion, evil desire, covetousness.  
And what comes out of us when we follow these desires?  
anger, wrath, malice, slander, obscene talk, lies  
All of these are idolatry, forgetting to love & trust God above all,  
to live as citizens of heaven.  
Instead, they bring the punishment of God on themselves.  
Instead, Paul says, elevate your thinking, think with a renewed mind,  
not with the lower members of your body. Put them to death.  
Live as if they were paralyzed by drowning them in baptism,  
in which a new man daily emerges to live before God.  
In some ways, it is refreshing to live where we do in eastern Africa,  
where forms of sexual immorality accepted here are unthinkable  
and things like abortion are unacceptable.  
This is partly because a higher % of people there  
think of themselves as Christians  
and there are even more Lutherans there than in the U.S.  
and the Lutheran church is continuing to grow so fast  
that pastors are serving six or more congregations  
and so local men called evangelists often lead weekly worship  
and do visits, outreach and teaching  
while deaconesses also work with children, widows,  
and the sick and poor, teaching, visiting and helping.  
And there are not nearly enough of them either and they lack training  
and there are not enough skilled teachers to train them,  
which is why the church there has asked our LCMS  
to send people like me to help them.  
They need these church workers because there is still plenty  
of natural human selfishness, anger, immorality and evil behavior,

and along with behaviors there is another problem that needs help.

### CHRIST RAISES US FROM EARTHLY THINKING

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Once, I was traveling through Michigan when I saw a big sign  
in front of a house rooting for University of Missouri Tigers.

Right next door was a sign just as big rooting for K U Jayhawks.

Their mindset obviously not limited to where they were.

There are times our mindset is not limited to where we are,  
but focused on big events in Washington, Uvalde or Ukraine.

When big events happen, good or bad: the birth of a grandchild,  
or a national disaster like 9-11, it grabs attention,  
people are riveted to the TV or to a phone.

We may remember where we were when we heard about it.

But some may also have to admit their minds were elsewhere,  
they were involved in doing something they rather not admit.  
and were totally oblivious to what was happening  
so missed things bigger than what seemed important at the time.

This is what we are like when we don't have minds on Christ,  
who is seated at God's right hand.

This means he is totally in charge of everything.

All we need, in heaven & here too, depends on him.

We need to pay attention to what he does and set our minds on him.

Everything is vanity & nothing makes difference except Christ.

Life does not consist of the abundance of one's possessions  
but of what we possess in Christ.

Things around us here & now that we covet, feel like doing,  
that make us angry, make us feel we need to lie,  
seem important at the time but are not as important  
as what God has done for us in Christ, giving new lives.

This new self is renewed in God's image, like first creation,  
including new a mind, renewed in knowledge.

We don't have to live like animals, controlled by urges.

God has given us knowledge of what is truly right and wrong  
Not just knowledge of how to behave  
but especially knowledge of what to believe.

Even as Christians, we may operate on basis of feelings  
about being forgiven, how much God loves us, etc.

but instead, we can operate on basis of knowledge of truth  
of what God has done for us in Christ, revealed in Bible.

This is what we have to emphasize in our teaching in Kenya.

where many consider themselves Christians  
but the most common churches are those which still have  
ideas and beliefs that are like worldly thinking.

They emphasize keeping O.T. laws more than faith  
in what God has finished doing for us through Jesus,  
and the importance of a person's own choice and decision  
more than what God does in his sacraments,  
the need to have special spiritual experiences  
beyond what God gives to all who are saved,  
the idea of Christians ruling on earth in a political way  
more than being with God in heaven,  
and the promise of physical health and material riches  
more than the true promise of the forgiveness of sins,  
all of which leads ultimately not to hope and assurance  
but despair and loss of faith.

But our faith and hope is based on the fact that we are already  
renewed in God's image and raised with Christ  
who is already seated at God's right hand. This is how...

#### CHRIST RAISES US FROM EARTHLY IDENTITY TO HIMSELF

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

<sup>11</sup> Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised,  
barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.

Some of the problems in Africa come from continued tribalism.  
which leads to selfishness and corruption.

It may be that there is increased tribalism here these days.

To those in Colossae, it seemed very important whether you are  
Greek or Jew, circumcised or not, slave or free,

To some today it may seem very important if you are American,  
Republican or Democrat or identify with a certain sports team.

But ultimately what really matters is being in Christ.

He has put our old self to death & given us a new identity.

Our school, Matongo Lutheran Theological College,  
has students from 12 different countries, each with dozens of tribes  
but what they all have in common is being called by Christ  
and a common purpose to serve as God sends them  
because of all that God has already done for them.

Paul's emphasis to Colossians is: all you need is Christ.

It may not look like it now but you have life hidden with him.

Any attempt to supplement is like diluting pure medicine.

For now, our lives are hidden with Christ.

This means what we are may be unseen but is kept safe.

As baptized children of God on earth, our life is like an unborn baby,

very real but not yet fully revealed.

Totally given by what another has done, limited in what we can do  
until Christ comes again and we are with him in glory.

Until then, we keep our focus on him & what he has done for us.

He died for us to take away all our sins.

He united us with himself by giving us faith & forgiveness.

In many ways, the church in Africa doesn't look like much.

Most of the churches are small and shabby,  
most of the people are poor, the church workers are  
poorly equipped and many are not well educated,  
they are very outnumbered by other kinds of churches,  
but God is still using them to do powerful things.

The same kinds of things may be true of us.

It may seem that what we have and can do is so little  
but God has us here for his own great purposes.

We all show signs of living in a sinful filthy world,  
yet we are made perfect inwardly because renewed by Christ.

If you focus on the world, you will see no end of trouble.

If you focus on yourself, you will see no end of sinfulness.

But if you focus on Christ you will see grace, peace & every  
blessing.

What we have and are in Christ is complete,  
although what we do is still in process of being renewed.

It is renewed by Christ and what he has done for us.

**CHRIST RAISES US FROM EARTHLY LIVING**

Don't live as those controlled by feelings of earthly members  
set on immorality, passion, evil desires, anger, lies, etc.

**CHRIST RAISES US FROM EARTHLY THINKING**

Elevate your mind. Don't focus on your own doing  
but on what God has done and is doing for you.

Remember who you are, where you are from,

**CHRIST RAISES US FROM EARTHLY IDENTITY TO HIMSELF**

Our new life comes from Christ who is all and in all.

This new life of ours is hidden but continues to be revealed  
in how we live until it is fully revealed in glory with him.