

## ASCENSION (Sunday Service)

### Colossians 3:1-4

#### Look where you're going

I know many of the guys will say only the ladies do it, but you know that's not true. You can be just as bad as they can. I've seen it. You've seen it. You're driving down the road and somebody is swerving around or going way to slow and when you finally get up next to them to pass them you realize that they're fidgeting with some of the toys in their new car, or playing with their cell phone, or doing their makeup, or even reading the newspaper. "Look where you're going, Einstein," you think to yourself—you can't yell anything when you're a pastor after all; you never know who might recognize you.

"Look where you're going." It's good advice, on the road, walking down the hall, on the football field, and just about everywhere else. When we get distracted we stumble, run into things, stub toes, get lost, or hurt someone. Just ask the captain of the Titanic, the freshman linebacker sucking wind when he didn't notice the pulling guard, the deer in the back of a pickup driving down 75.

"Look where you're going," St. Paul says to us today. *"If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth."* So let me ask you: Have you been looking where you're going?

When someone is buried with Christ in Baptism and raised with Him through faith, as St. Paul explains this elsewhere, a change occurs. At least, it's supposed to occur. Luther puts it this way:

If...you have apprehended by faith the resurrection of Christ and have received its power and consolation, and so are risen with Him, that resurrection will surely be manifest in you; you will feel its power, will be conscious of its working within. The doctrine will be something more than words; it will be truth and life.

So has there been much change in your life? Are the former things the former things or still the current things. Have your eyes lifted from the concerns and passions and things of this life to focus on the next? Have your eyes turned from flesh to spirit, from Satan to Christ, from sin to forgiven service one to another? Are you looking where you're going? Are you living like this is the only life you have, or are you living this life in the joyous expectation of a better life to come? Is Christ priority number one—that is, do you desire Him in Word and Sacrament more than anything else—or are you priority number one? Are you standing in grace or walking in sin? When was the last time concerns about your neighbor and not only yourself kept you up at night? When was the last time concerns about your relationship with God kept you up at night? When was the last time that when something went wrong your first reaction wasn't to pout or think, "How can I fix this," but to turn to God in prayer?

Hard questions, aren't they? We don't like them, do we? Why? Because we know the answers, and the answers are embarrassing. We've not sought the things that are above nearly as much as we've obsessed about the things below. We've raced our kids around to

every activity under the sun, or sat and grumbled about our aches and pains, or fretted over the falling dollar and staggering economy, or gotten consumed with issues at work, or filled our lives with toys to pass the time, or anything else under the sun, but we've not set our minds on the things that are above nearly as much as we ought. We haven't been looking where we're going, and so we stumble, run into things, stub a toe, get lost, or hurt someone. And what do we ask at those times, "Where is God?" And God says, "Up here. I gave you eyes and a mind, didn't I? Maybe you should use them, Einstein."

*"If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth."* In our seminar on prayer last Saturday, we looked at the Lord's Prayer. There are seven petitions in the Lord's Prayer. Do you know how many are about physical, earthly concerns? One, the petition concerning daily bread, and even that has a spiritual dimension. God wants us to get the order right. When our spiritual life is a mess everything gets messy. With Christ we struggle hard enough against temptation, against pride, anger, greed, envy, apathy, and selfishness. Without Christ we are helpless. Only trouble can follow.

The world is a lovely place. I like to walk about and smell the roses too sometimes. I like to play with toys. I like to go out and have a good time. I like to live in a nice house and drive a nice car. I like lots of things in the world—and I ought to, God created it for me to enjoy it. But do you know what none of these creatures can do? None can take the place of their Creator. Only He can fill the hole in my heart carved from the fall into sin and made bigger by my daily sinning. Only He can promise me a future beyond things that spoil. Only He can eternally heal me of sorrow, sickness, and death. Only He can provide a purpose and a meaning to life that won't last only until I get what I want or the next fad comes along.

You ever work really hard for anything? I think myself of going through the system to be a pastor. With every step you think the next step will bring contentment. You will have attained your goals. And what happens? More goals come along, new problems. You're never satisfied, never done. That is the story of life with your eyes set on things below.

Christ came down to earth for one reason: to save sinners. And He did. We are baptized into His death, aren't we? And why is that? Because His death won us life. And now, victorious and resurrected, He's ascended to the right hand of the Father. Why? Because that's where we belong, and He's getting things ready.

Look where you're going. This life is but a blink of an eye, and the stuff of this life is lead-painted junk from China compared to the riches stored up for us in heaven. How foolish we would be to trade the eternal for the temporal, the real thing for the knock-off, they living for the dying, the satisfying for the dissatisfying, the uplifting for the depressing, the saving for the damning, the healing for the infecting.

Look where you're going. And Christ makes no doubt about where you are going when you are His. He ascends with arms outstretched in welcoming blessing before. So keep your heads up. Why? *"For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in*

*God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.”*  
Amen.