

# Christ Central Living Part 1: New Thinking

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[0:00] Amen. If you would open up your Bibles to Colossians chapter 3, I'd like to excuse the children to go to their King's Kids class. In your pew Bible, it's page 1169. I'm going to be preaching on four verses this morning, Colossians 3, 1 through 4. Hear God's Word.

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. 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. May God bless the reading, hearing, and now preaching of His Word. In the fall of 2013, Jenny and I purchased the house we're living in, and we got it for a song because it was a fixer-upper.

And one of the first things that we did was we replaced the old fuse box with a new and updated circuit breaker box. That box is what the electricity in the house comes into and distributes it. And so this is like the electrical life of the house comes in and out of that box, and we upgraded it. New ownership, new box, and some rewiring. With that new box, we had to do a bunch of rewiring in that house. If you're a Christian, the moment you believed in Christ, you were purchased by Christ, new ownership, and you were delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred into His kingdom, the kingdom of the beloved Son, in whom you have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. And as part of that redemption, He swapped out your box.

According to the Old Testament, the new covenant would be marked by people whose hearts of stone would be replaced with a heart of flesh in order to live for God. And so when Christ purchased you for Himself, He replaced your heart, that box in you, with a heart for God. And He regenerated you by His Spirit. And with that new heart comes a new life. You're a new creation, Christian. The old is gone. The new has come. You've got a new heart. And now God is rewiring our thinking. He's helping us to think His thoughts. This new way of living is called sanctification. Sanctification is the process of becoming more like Christ in your thinking, and in your character, and in your conduct. It's what the

[3:15] Apostle Paul talks about in terms of walking in a manner worthy of the Lord, worthy of our calling. And so as we are walking more and more worthy, we are being sanctified more and more like Christ.

becoming like Him. We're living more and more with Christ as the controlling center of our lives. What's essential to Christ-centered living is Christ-central thinking. What you think matters to God. And in Colossians 2, 8-23, a couple weeks ago, we were told how not to walk, how not to think. We're not to be taken captive by the Christ-less philosophies and practices of this world. But in Colossians 3, Paul turns the corner and he starts to instruct us how we are to walk, how we are to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord. And it begins with this Christ-central way of thinking. It's a new thinking. And what is absolutely essential to living for Christ is adopting a Christ-central mindset.

And so this morning, I want to point to three new ways of thinking from Colossians 3, 1-4. A new way of thinking about your identity. Who you are. A new way of thinking about your aim.

[4:55] Your purpose. Your orientation. From the things on earth to the things above. And a new time frame. Christ-King Church, what time is it?

It's Christ time. These three elements of a Christian mindset are essential to Christian living.

So let's dig in. Verse 1, we're told, if then you've been raised with Christ. God is actively rewiring the way we think about ourselves.

Our identity. God wants you to live out who you are in Christ with a Christ-shaped identity. It's a new way of thinking.

It's who you are now. Identity. What I mean by that is, what is true about you? What defines you?

[5:53] The truth that defines you. For many people, that is a political party. Others, that's a last name. That is one's maleness or femaleness.

Youngness, oldness, skinniness. Heavy setness. One's job. It's not infrequent in conversations.

Hey, what do you do? Because it defines you.

Are you a creative? Or are you pragmatic? These are the things that define us. What's interesting in our day and age is that Christians and non-Christians alike are wrestling to find the answer to a very basic question in life.

It's this question. Who am I? Christian, who are you? When you look in the mirror every morning, who are you looking at?

God has a very definitive answer. Who God says you are is very different than who the world says you are.

[7:00] Even what you say you are. If you look up at chapter 2, verse 20, we read this. If with Christ you die to the elemental spirits of the world.

Now look at chapter 3, verse 1. If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above. Both of those statements start with the word if.

And they sound iffy. But they're not iffy. Those are statements that are called conditions of fact. It's as though the apostle Paul is saying like this.

If with Christ you die to the elemental spirits of the world, and you have. Or in 3.1, if then you've been raised with Christ, and you have. So what you can do is you can replace the if with a since.

Since with Christ you've died to the elemental spirits of the world. Since then you have been raised with Christ. And what these statements are, are statements of who you are in Christ.

[8:09] Your identity. What is getting, what we're seeing here is what people call our union with Christ.

Did you notice the with Christ language? If with Christ you die to the elemental spirits. Verse chapter 3.1, if then you have been raised with Christ.

It's describing our union with Christ. Your conversion to Christ, Christian, is vocationally linked to you being united to Christ.

Because you've been united to Christ in his death, that means you've been forgiven of all of your sin. Sin does no longer, has no longer mastery over you.

The penalty's been paid. Because you've been united with Christ in his death, the world no longer has mastery over you. Death has no longer mastery over you. It's because you've been united with the work of Christ on the cross.

[9:17] your identity is tied powerfully to the cross work of Jesus.

But it doesn't end with being united to his death. We've also been united with his resurrection. If then you've been raised with Christ.

What that means is this. Because you've been raised with Christ, you no longer are ruled by sin, but now you can live for God. You can obey him with joy.

And now you live for the things of God. Your union with Christ in his death delivered you from something. And your union with Christ in his resurrection delivered you to something.

From sin in this world, to God, and living according to his kingdom. This shows up in Romans chapter 6. Your union with Christ results in you being dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

[10:24] And here in Colossians, your union with Christ, with his death, means you're no longer held captive by the Christless philosophies and practices of this world.

You've been freed from that. You've been redeemed from that. You've been delivered from that. It's not who you are anymore. And in Colossians, your union with Christ in his resurrection means you've been freed to now seek the things above where Christ is, to set your mind on the things above, not in the things on the earth.

So having been purchased by Christ, you now have a Christ-shaped identity, gospel identity.

You've been united with Christ and his death and his resurrection. That's who you are. You know what the application is from this part of the sermon? Believe.

Trust. define yourself this way. It's a Christ-shaped identity. It's who you are now.

[11:37] And this is a new way of thinking for many of us. We tend to let our circumstances define who we are. But God has changed that.

Believer, you need to be convinced of this. You are united with Christ in his death and resurrection regardless of how you feel. It's true.

It's true of you. Your union with Christ, it's not just a truth that defines you.

It is the truth that defines you in every aspect of your life. So brother, sister in Christ, when you look in the mirror, who do you see?

You know, the real question is, who does God see? In the book of James, the book of James talks about the Bible as a mirror.

[12:41] And when you look into the mirror of God's Word, Christian, do you know who's looking back at you? A sinner that's been united to Christ in his death and resurrection, and you are now a saint.

Do you need to grow in this area? Do you need to grow in how you think about yourself? The way you do that is by getting God's Word on your mind.

Just a simple verse like Romans 6.11, so consider yourself dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus because you've been united to Him.

If you get that on your mind, you know what happens? You walk through your day a little differently. You walk through your day tempted to things, and you're like, no.

That's not who I am anymore. That's not me. I live for Christ now. God is actively rewiring how we think about ourselves, our identities, into this more and more Christ-shaped identity.

[13:57] It's who you are, regardless of how you feel. And this Christ-centered mindset about you yourself tied to Christ is absolutely crucial to Christ-centered living.

Now we move from identity to aim. in verses 1 and 2, the Apostle Paul starts talking about, he starts using above language.

He starts using what you're aimed at language. Your purpose. If then you see, if you have been raised with Christ, united 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. When we come across words like this, like strong words, seek, set your minds, this is God urging us to think a certain way, to have a certain mindset, to have a certain posture.

If you've got a Christ-shaped identity, you must have a Christ above aim.

[15:21] That word seek is a wonderful word and it shows up a lot in your Bible. It shows up a lot actually in the Psalms. Let me just orient you to a couple Psalms where there's this seek language.

Psalm 27, 4. One thing have I asked of the Lord that will I seek after that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and inquire in His temple.

Verse 8, Psalm 27. You have said, God has said, seek my face. David says, my heart says to you, God, your face, Lord, do I seek. It's beautiful.

Les read something this morning from Psalm 34 to open us up. The young lions suffer want and hunger, but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing. Psalm 63, verse 1.

Many of you know this one. Oh God, you are my God. Earnestly I seek you. My soul thirsts for you. My flesh faints for you as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and your glory.

[16:29] David in these Psalms is talking about seeking the Lord in the sanctuary, the temple on earth. Paul is urging us to seek the Lord in the heavenly sanctuary.

To seek the things that are above. where Christ is. Right now. Seated at the right hand of God.

Now you, if you've been around the block, you hear that phrase, seated at the right hand of God, and you're like, yeah, I know that verse. It's more about, more than just who Christ is, it's where He's at and what He's doing.

It's a reference to Psalm 110. And if you want to turn in your Bibles to Psalm 110, Psalm 110.1 is one of those Old Testament verses that is one of the most frequently quoted Old Testament verses in the New Testament.

And the reason why, it's because Jesus Christ fulfills it. But, David, saying to God, says, the Lord says to my Lord, sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.

[17:49] Fulfilled in Christ, Jesus is known as David's greater son. That the Lord God has set all things as a footstool under the feet of Jesus Christ, David's Lord.

And so what we're being told to do here is seek Christ above on His throne who's reigning over everything. And what this is to do is to reorient ourselves off this present earth and onto Christ's reign in heaven.

His throne room where He is carrying out His new creation work on this fallen old earth. this is the one whom we seek and where we seek Him.

We seek Him where He's at. Above. Sitting on His heavenly throne. He's reigning over all.

It's contested now, but He's reigning over all. It reorients us to Christ's rule in heaven. There's this phrase in Daniel chapter 4 and 5.

[19:15] It's heaven rules. Jesus is ruling from heaven now. It's one of these truths that we need to get our minds on.

Set your minds on the things above. Chapter 3, verse 2. What the Apostle Paul is doing. He says, Seek the things above. And then he says, By setting your mind on the things above.

On Christ. We seek the things above by setting our minds on the things above. We renew our minds on the truth of who Jesus is and where He's at. Heaven rules. Jesus is reigning.

Imagine you are working for a company whose headquarters are in Sydney, Australia. And you are living in Sydney, Australia. Down under.

But that headquarters moves to Chicago, Illinois. But you're still in Sydney. You know what's going to need to happen. Your thinking is going to get reoriented.

[20:20] You're going to go from below thinking to above thinking in terms of your headquarters. Brothers and sisters, our headquarters is not on earth, but in heaven.

Let me say that again. Our headquarters is not on earth. It's in heaven where Christ is. And so we need to learn to think oriented to heaven and where Jesus is.

Not on the things of earth. We're to think of where Christ is. What He's doing. His work of a new creation. Making new creatures. Paul says, think on that.

Not on the things that are on earth. And before you start thinking about particular material things, remember the context. In Colossians 2, 8-23, the Apostle Paul has been talking about the things of earth as philosophies, as lifestyles, as practices.

Don't set your mind on those things. On all the isms. Expressive individualism, scientism, materialism, Christian nationalism.

[21:44] Don't set your mind on those. Set your minds above where Christ is. Think those thoughts.

And with that reorientation of where Christ is, you align yourself with not just who Christ is and where He's at, but what He's doing. You're positioned to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord in the fallen earth.

this is essential. This mindset, this Christ above aim and orientation, it's essential to a Christ-centered walk on earth.

This is unseen, right? Christ at the right hand of God, ruling on high, it's unseen.

Because we walk by faith, not by sight. We are inundated with thousands of claims every day through a variety of different screens and voices that are making the case daily that this world is all that there is.

[23:05] we must be vigilant in reminding ourselves, renewing our minds, setting our minds on Christ above to fight back, to push back, to remember, no, no, no, no, no, no, no.

This season we're in, it's not just a presidential election cycle. No, no, there's other things, there's greater things going on.

Christ's reign. So let me urge you to consider something. If you tend to get focused on this earth and you're realizing, man, I can take some ground and setting my mind on things above, you want to get Bible on your mind.

You want to get Scripture in your heart. You want to allow Scripture to aim your soul. And one of the things you can do is write out of Colossians 3.1. They're just seven words. Write them somewhere. Write them on their heart, on your heart. Seek the things above where Christ is. Seek the things above where Christ is. Could you imagine popping out of bed?

[24:21] Seek the things above where Christ is. What a great way to start your day. And then you walk through the day with those seven words rolling around in your mind. It will aim you throughout the day.

Seek the things above where Christ is. God is rewiring our priorities. He's rewiring the thinking of what we're aimed at day in and day out.

It's absolutely essential, this way of thinking, meaning this aim as we walk on this earth day in and day out.

We live for unseen things now. Things above, not things below. Things that are eternal.

Things that are lasting. Not things that are temporary and passing. Nothing. Who you are in Christ, your identity, is to aim you at things above as we live in a certain time frame.

[25:32] And this is where we want to land the sermon. We're going to close it with these points, this last point. In verses 3 and 4, God is seeking to rewire our minds in a certain time.

Church, what time is it? Let me show you. Right now, you woke up today, how did you frame your life, time frame wise?

Well, I got to get to church, you know, we've got lunch afterwards. You kind of frame your life in terms of the day. Or maybe you frame your life in terms of your birth and your death.

Maybe you frame your life in terms of your marriage, in terms of a season of parenting, or maybe you're framing your life in terms of your work life when you start work and when you will one day retire.

Maybe you are framing your life in terms of a presidential election cycle. Paul starts verse 3 with reason language.

[26:34] For you have died. So we set our minds on the things above, not on the earth because we've died with Christ. We've been raised with Christ. And we're ushered into a Christ-framed life.

We, brothers and sisters, live in between the already of Christ's inaugurated reign and the not yet of the fulfillment of that reign.

We live in between the first coming of Christ where He died, He was raised, and 40 days later He was ascended to the right hand of God where He's been reigning ever since, up until this point, until the second coming.

His appearing when He returns. And at that point, He makes everything new. He judges all and recreates the heaven and the earth.

So we live now between the already and the not yet. The beginning of Christ's reign and the fulfillment of Christ's reign. What time do we live on?

[27:50] How do we synchronize our watches together? We synchronize them together to Christ. Christ time. We live in between Christ's present reign and the fulfillment of His reign.

Let me just show you from the text. In 3.3, we're said, for you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

Do you remember where Christ is right now? He's above in heaven. So when we're talking about our hiddenness, our out-of-sightness with Christ in God, it's located.

Just like in Ephesians 2.6, the Apostle Paul talks about that Christians are seated in the heavenly places. Now, we have a spiritual place with Christ in the heavenly realm.

And why that's important is what comes with that. Sometimes Christians think that because Jesus is in heaven, He leaves us exposed on earth.

[29:01] Exposed to demonic attacks. Exposed to wrongs that are outside of His reign. No. No. Believe it, you're hidden with Christ in God.

Scholars think this is a reference to Psalm 27 and I tend to agree with them. If you want to turn back to, if you want to look at Psalm 27, 5, and 6, hear what David says. For He will hide me in His shelter in the day of trouble.

He will conceal me under the cover of His tent. He will lift me high upon a rock. And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me. And I will offer in His tent sacrifices with shouts of joy.

I will sing and make melody to the Lord. Again, this is the temple on earth. We are hidden with Christ in the heavenly temple. We've got a place with Him. It's a picture of protection, guardedness, sheltering, concealment in the day of trouble.

Oh, brother and sister, you've been hidden with Christ. Christ in God. You are not exposed. You're not in danger. You're protected in Him.

[30:18] In fact, you're defined by Him. You're united to Him. We are hidden with Christ in God as He reigns on high.

This is the already of His present reign. We are hidden with Christ in God. Nothing and no one can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. But there's also the not yet.

We're hidden with Christ in God, but when He appears, verse 4, when Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

What we're talking about is a heavenly mindset, a heavenly framework of Christ's present reign and Christ's future fulfilling reign.

One reign is hidden and unseen, but when He comes, it appears with fullness of glory. glory. Paul is pointing to the promise that Jesus has made that He Himself will come back in glory.

[31:33] That's Matthew 24, 36-51, where Jesus talks about His second coming will be like a thief. In fact, it shows up so much in the New Testament.

1 Thessalonians 4 and 5, the Thessalonians were to encourage one another with the promised return of Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 15, there's going to be a blast of a trumpet of an archangel and Christ will return.

Don't lose heart. Titus 2, 11-15, we are all waiting for the glorious appearing of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

And so we press on, growing in self-control, Revelation 19, 11-16, Jesus is pictured as a returning victor on a white war horse with a number of titles.

When we read here, when Christ, who is your life, appears, then He will also appear with Him in glory. Jesus, we're one day closer, brothers and sisters, to this surprise return of Jesus.

[33:00] Glorious and awesome and for those who don't believe, terrifying. He's no longer hidden. He appears fully for all to see.

And we, who have been united with Him in His death and resurrection, we, who have been hidden with Him in God during His present reign, we will appear with Him in glory when He returns.

This promise of glorious, His glorious appearing, it, it puts hope in our hearts. It, it gets a time frame in place.

It's a, it's a Christ frame way of thinking and living. We, we live in between the first coming and the second coming. We live in between His hidden, present reign and His appearing when He returns and makes all things right.

And this kind of Christ-framed time frame is absolutely essential to living a Christ-central life on earth.

[34:11] What time is it, church?

Who you are in Christ aims you at where Christ is in between the already and not yet of Christ's appearing. Who you are, you, Christian, have a Christ-shaped identity.

What's your aim? Christ above aim. When you live, you live as I do between Christ's first coming and His second.

Between the already and the not yet in these three elements, they shape our minds so that we can live for Christ on earth by faith.

Now, I just want to point you to something. because this isn't just kind of a little deposit and Paul moves on. He tells us these things here in 3, 1 through 4 because in 3, 5, and through 11, he gets into this.

[35:24] He says, who you are, it requires you, who you are in Christ will now require you to put your sin to death, to put it off on earth.

Christ. And then in 12 through 17, who you are in Christ, your identity with Him requires you to put on Christ-like character and conduct.

And then he takes that way of thinking of putting off sin and putting on Christ-likeness, he brings it into our everyday lives. In verses 18 and 19, we live out our identity in Christ in our marriages, wives and husbands.

We live out this identity in Christ, verses 20 and 21 of chapter 3, in our families, children and parents. And then in chapter 3, verses 22 through 4, 1, we live out this identity in Christ with this aim and time frame in our workplaces.

Whether we have a subordinate role or a supervisory role, we're living for Christ. And this kind of thinking is absolutely crucial to that.

[36:47] Your identity in Christ informs all of who you are. All of who you are. When you became a Christian, Christ purchased you with his blood for himself.

Change of ownership. And he swapped out your box. He took out that heart of stone and put in a fleshly, soft heart to live for him.

And he is rewiring our thinking. How we think about ourselves, what our aim is, even the time frame that we're on. Christ the King Church, what time are we on?

One more time. Christ's time. Do you know why? Christ is our life.

God in heaven, we thank you so much for your word. Would you use your word to form our thinking so that we can live faithfully with you as the center of all that there is.

[38:05] Bring us into that reality more and more. It is reality. Father, would you pour out your spirit? Would you press these truths into our being and that, God, you would set us free?

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.