

The Hidden Dimensions Of Our Lives

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[0 : 00] to us of yourselves, and grant that in our rejoicing we may grasp anew the wonder of the resurrection. In Christ's name, amen, amen.

I can't help but be grateful for the lovely decorations that are in the church this morning, for the wonder of the choir singing, for the beauty of the day outside, for the patient love and work of those who are caring for the children in the nursery and the toddlers and the Sunday store, and most of all, for all of you.

And as you know, Easter is the time which, according to long tradition, the minister scolds the people who only come to church on this one day, which I am about to do.

And the fact of the matter is, I would long that this congregation, this church, the Christian church in Vancouver, would be such that it would be the highlight of a child's week to come and join in the worship of this place, that a blind man would come knowing that for at least a moment he would see far beyond the limitations of physical sight, that a woman having an issue of blood would come and be healed, that an old man could come and receive a child into his hands, as old Simeon did, and at the peak of his life, humbly bow himself before God, and say, My life is done.

Lord, now let thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word. That an old woman who may have been a widow for years and years would find this a place of prayer and worship and fasting and fulfill her day in those pursuits.

[2 : 08] That a young married couple would come and find in the Song of Solomon the ultimate ecstasy which, in a sense, they foreshadow in their relationship to one another.

That a businessman who was in ruin could come and discover the wonder of the book of Job. That a rich man could discover something far better than all that he possessed so that he would know that if he gave it all away he would still be richer than anything that he could imagine.

That a poor person would come and discover here in the gospel the unsearchable riches of Christ.

That a scholar would find an inexhaustible vein of inquiry that would challenge all his faculty.

That each of us would find life in Christ. That we would find worship in a congregation to be the highest function of our lives.

that we would find a happiness in our home as a place of belonging. That we would find fulfillment in our work. That we would find a vital relationship to the stranger and the foreigner and the people from whom we are so far removed.

[3 : 36] And all those promises are made to us and the way that we can grasp them are given to us in the epistle this morning which is Colossians chapter 3 verse 1.

Paul goes on to enumerate how we take hold of all of that. And he begins if you will see on page 189 chapter 3 and verse 1 with these words in which his exhortation to us begins.

He writes Now he's not suggesting that you might not be. He's only saying because you are through your faith in him you share in his resurrection.

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

For you have died your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears then you also will appear with him in glory.

[4 : 57] I had a terrible time with those verses trying to get anywhere with them. But now I'm so full of them that I would like to go on for hours and hours to explain them to you. And I hope that they will so grasp your mind and heart as well.

Well first let me tell you the thing that I think will be the key for you is if you look at that phrase your life is hid with God in Christ.

Paul is not telling you be a good guy have a happy home go to church do your work well be friendly to your neighbor. He's not saying do that.

He simply is not. It's not his nature to say it it's not the New Testament business to say it how you live your life is your business. What he's saying to you is because Jesus Christ is risen from the dead then the whole of your life is different.

Your relationship to yourself to your church to your family to your work to the stranger to the man in the remotest part of the world all that has been changed because Christ is risen from the dead.

[6 : 08] Will you see the implications of that for you and work them out in your own life? That's what he's saying. And he says that the way you do it is that you have a hidden life.

That's what it is. Your life is hidden with God in Christ. Many of us seek to have a very obvious and open life where we will be seen and recognized.

Maybe our picture would appear in the paper and people would know all about us. All the wonderful things that would happen to us because we are powerful rich important socially prominent all those things.

Paul says no it's the hidden reality of your life in Christ that is at the center. Can I tell you something that happened that I just heard about this morning?

A man whom I know very well was at a ball game in Toronto. The Toronto Blue Jays were playing as only they can play. And it was dull beyond all imagination.

[7 : 19] And inning after inning came along. But suddenly and quite spontaneously in the midst of it all the crowd broke into tremendous cheer.

And he looked around and couldn't figure out what on earth is going on. What are they cheering for? And this didn't happen just once. It happened four times in the course of that game and he simply could not tell what they were doing.

And afterward he inquired and found out. They were listening to the hockey game on their own.

That's what makes Christians cheer at the most unexpected moments.

Why they rejoice because there is a hidden life in Christ which is for them a source of great rejoicing even when everything around them may seem dull and unimaginably boring.

So that that's what Paul is saying. Have this risen life in Christ. And he says the way you have it is two things that you must do. And if you look you can see them there.

[8 : 40] Seek the things that are above. Now when he says that he's not asking you to cop out. He's saying that your life should be according to a hidden agenda.

Now it's not and I'm sure that we've misinterpreted in our understanding and perhaps even in the way that we have lived our lives by supposing that if you seek those things which are above you're not concerned with any earthly matter.

Like your bank account or your income tax or raising money or anything like that. No those are far beneath me. I'm seeking those things which are above.

Now that's not what he's saying. He's saying the agenda of your life the reality of your life in Christ is hidden and the source of that life is the risen Christ himself.

So you are to be in touch with him. It's not a matter of paying your dues at the local church. It's not a matter of being on the membership roll.

[9 : 48] It's not a matter of any of those things. It's simply a matter of seeking those things which are above because you are in touch with Christ himself. That's where you're living from.

And if you were a great surgeon or a great politician or a great lawyer or a great engineer or a great garbage collector and I often think what philosophers the garbage collectors of Shaughnessy must be they know so much about us that we didn't think we'd ever hit let anybody know about us so that they could even do that in recognition of something of the greatness of the purpose of God in people's lives.

And that's what the doctor needs to be concerned about and the lawyer and the engineer and the secretary and the chef and the waiter and the dishwasher they're constantly living by another agenda and the source of that agenda is coming out of their relationship to Jesus Christ.

So they don't mind washing feet. They don't mind humble service. They don't mind obscurity. They don't mind hiddenness. They don't mind teaching a Sunday school class or looking after the nursery or sweeping the floor.

They don't mind any of those things because the agenda of their life is seeking those things which are above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

[11 : 19] That's where their agenda is coming from and that's what's determining the nature of their life. The second thing that you have to do is you have to set your affection on things above not on things on the earth.

That's the way the authorized version says it. The RSV says set your mind on things above. That is the whole attention of your mental faculty so that you understand the God who has made himself known to us in Christ.

Can I tell you on this Easter day warmed as our hearts are by flowers by music by maybe the sun isn't going to be out much longer but it's been out.

All that may attract us and move us deeply and bring back associations with Easter to go way back into our childhood. All that may be part of Easter for you but there is a reality to what God has done in Christ which has been made known to us in the scriptures that if you were to take the whole capacity perhaps of your tremendous mind and apply it to what it is that God is saying in Jesus Christ through the scriptures you would find that your mind has a challenge that it has never had before.

The possibilities of understanding people and our world and judgment and death and all these things opens up to you as you set your mind on things above to understand the purposes of our God and so can I commend to you that hidden life.

[13 : 14] It's a strange verse if you look at it closely which I ask you to do just as we conclude. You have died your life is hid with Christ in God.

Your life is buried with Christ. That's what they do when somebody dies they bury them. That's what they do to you when you are baptized.

You have died with Christ and your life is buried with him. It's hidden and the hidden dimensions of your life and mine are the reality which is at the center and that reality at the center is there because what it says here you have been raised with Christ and though you will be misunderstood and though you may find that life is very difficult and though you may find all sorts of problems your life is hid with Christ in God and when Christ who is our life appears as he will you also will appear with him in glory.

The meaning of your hidden life will be revealed as the seed is taken and buried in the ground and for weeks and months it doesn't even show and then slowly it breaks through so your life is hidden with Christ you are committed and I am committed to live in obedience to he who is seated at the right hand of God we search for him that our life draws its source from him and having drawn its source from him we know that when he shall appear in glory we shall be with you people people won't see us and say my what a great man will see they will see in your life and mine in our life as a congregation in our life as the church of

Jesus Christ in the latter part of the 20th century they will see the glory of God in those people who having been raised with Christ their lives are hidden with him and they await his revelation the revealing of him coming out from hiding of Jesus Christ and in that moment all the hiddenness of their life will suddenly redound to the glory of God and your life will have been lived with the praise and honor and glory of his name that's what we want and that's what I pray for all of us this Easter day that you may know that Christ is risen that knowing that you may seek him that you may set your mind to know him that you may allow your life the heart of what your life is to be hidden with him that you are prepared to be vindicated not before he is vindicated and he is acknowledged by me

[16 : 50] God grant that we may know that amen now if you would please turn in the books the service books to page 234 please stand together together we will confess our faith in the words of the Nicene Creed I believe in one God the Father Almighty maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible and in one Lord Jesus Christ the only begotten Son of God begotten of the Father before all worlds God of God light of light very God of very God begotten not made being of one substance with the Father through whom all things were made who for us men for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin

Mary and was made man and was crucified also for us under Pontius Palab he suffered and was buried and the third day he rose again according to the scriptures and ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of the Father and he shall come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead whose kingdom shall have no end and I believe in the Holy Ghost the Lord the giver of life who proceedeth from the Father and the Son who at the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified through faith by the prophets and I believe one holy Catholic and apostolic

Church I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins and I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come Amen Now let us kneel and pray for the church and for the world

Christ is our life and prayer comes out of that new agenda that he sets for all of us God raised him from the dead and made him sit at his right hand in the heavenly places far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church which is his body the fullness of him who fills all in all As we pray for the church and for the world we are asking that the power of the risen Christ may be shown forth among those who name his name now and those who do not name his name as yet

Almighty and ever living God who by thy holy apostle has taught us to make prayers and supplications and to give thanks for all people we humbly beseech thee most mercifully to receive these our prayers which we offer unto thy divine majesty beseeching thee to inspire continually the universal church with the spirit of truth unity and concord and grant that all they that do confess thy holy name may agree in the truth of thy holy word and live in unity and godly love and as we make that prayer let us remember that the risen Christ is the center and that we only come closer to each other in spiritual reality as individually we come closer to him give grace so heavenly father to all bishops priests and deacons and especially to thy servant douglas our archbishop that they may both by their life and doctrine set forth thy true and living word and rightly and duly administer thy holy sacraments prosper we pray thee all those who proclaim the gospel of thy kingdom among the nations and to all thy people give thy heavenly grace and especially to this congregation here present that with meek heart and due reverence we may hear and receive thy holy word truly serving thee in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life and remembering that Jesus Christ is now king of kings and lord of lords let us focus on the nations especially on those parts of the world where there is tumult and war and tension and suffering let us pray for peace in the Middle East and the war between Iran and Iraq and wherever else there is tension let us pray for godly peace we beseech thee also to lead all nations in the way of righteousness and so to guide and direct their rulers and governors that thy people may enjoy the blessings of freedom and peace and grant to thy servant

[23 : 24] Elizabeth our queen and to all that are put in authority under her that they may truly and impartially minister justice to the maintenance of thy true religion and virtue in a moment of silence let us pray for the governors of Canada and for those who govern our own province of British Columbia ministry we read specifically that to this end Christ died and lived again that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living with that in mind let us pray for those whose life is in jeopardy let us thank God for those who have departed this life in the faith and fear of Christ let us pray for a sense of togetherness in Christ with all the saints those who make up the church triumphant no less than those who make up the church militant we most humbly beseech thee of thy goodness

O Lord to comfort and succor all them who in this transitory life are in trouble sorrow need sickness or any other adversity in silence let us name before God folk known to us in special need at this time and let us ask specifically that the power of the risen Christ may be made known to them and we thankfully remember before thee O Lord all thy servants departed this life in thy faith and fear and we bless thy holy name for all who in life and death have glorified thee beseeching thee to give us grace that rejoicing in their fellowship we may follow their good examples and with them be partakers of thy heavenly kingdom will you join me in the final sentence of the prayer in the middle of page 236 reviewing all that we have asked let us say together grant this

O Father for Jesus Christ's sake our only mediator and advocate to whom with thee and the Holy Spirit be all honor and glory world without end amen please turn to the bottom of page 238 hear what comfortable words our Savior Christ saith unto all that truly turn to him come unto me all that labor and are heavy laden and I will refresh you God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son to the end that all that believe in him should not perish but have eternal life hear also what Saint Paul saith this is a true saying and worthy of all to be received that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners hear also what Saint

John saith together if anyone sins we have an advocate with the Father Jesus Christ is righteous and he is the appreciation of our sins and not for our soul but also for the sins of the whole world let us humbly confess our sins to almighty God together almighty God Father of our Lord Jesus Christ maker of all things and judge of all people we acknowledge and confess our manifold sins and

wickedness which we from time to time most grievously have committed by thought word and deed against thy divine majesty we do earnestly repent and are heartily sorry for these our misdoings have mercy upon us most merciful Father for thy Son our Lord Jesus Christ sake forgive us all that is past and grant that we may ever hereafter serve and please the newness of life the honor and glory of thy name through Jesus Christ our Lord Almighty God our heavenly Father who of his great mercy hath promised forgiveness of sins to all them that with hearty repentance and true faith turn unto him have mercy upon you pardon and deliver you from all your sins confirm and strengthen you in all goodness and bring you to everlasting life through Jesus Christ our Lord now we sing together our offertory hymn number 295 ■■■■■■ one [29 : 44] Holy God yes yeah Oh, they get carried back down the aisle.

And as soon as Stephen Lowe's brought you guys, go for the camera. Thank you.