

Colossians 3:1-4 (Easter Sunday)

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[0 : 00] My son, returning from school a few weeks ago, as he watched the snow fall, cried out in despair, My life is over!

You see, he had set his heart that morning on playing soccer with Daddy in the backyard after school. And it's difficult to play soccer in the snow.

And I told him that would not happen. And he said, cried out, cried out with a plaintive cry, My life is over!

Life is so fragile for a seven-year-old. Sometimes, frivolous things can shake our lives, make us cry out plaintively.

Sometimes they're frivolous things, like a snowfall and a desire to play soccer. Even for adults, sometimes they're frivolous things.

[1 : 23] Our favorite basketball team lost last night in heartbreaking fashion. Or your weekend plans are spoiled by sick kids. Or all sorts of fairly mundane losses in life.

Sometimes, life feels fragile when more serious things happen. My girlfriend broke up with me. When you're 12, that's not so big deal, right?

When you're 36, you've been dating for five years. That's a pretty big deal. I was let go of my employer. My application didn't go through.

My spouse walked out on me. We just got the pathology report. When these things happen, it's easy for our heart to cry out, My life is over!

It feels like death is encroaching. And covering over the life that we thought we would have. The life that we thought we would live. Something in our life has been lost, destroyed.

[2 : 40] And indeed, at times, never to be regained. This is death encroaching in our lives. We read earlier from the account of the disciples.

Imagine the disciples turning home that Friday night. What just happened?

We gave him our lives. We left everything to follow him. And now he's dead. He's gone.

Our lives are over. Death has won. So our lives feel so suddenly fragile.

The things that are so very precious are also so very breakable. The things that are so valuable are also so easy to lose in an instant. And indeed, the greater the investment of our lives, of our time, of our energy, of our commitment, of our heart to something, the greater the crisis when these things are lost.

[3 : 58] Friends, how do you respond in those moments? Seven-year-old cries out honestly, freely, My life is over.

What do we do? Shock. Disappointment. Devastation. Confusion. Anger. A sense of betrayal.

A sense of despair. Where does life go from here? Friends, it's Easter morning.

God has good words for us in light of this situation. What does the Bible have to say when all is lost? What good does God have to say to us, especially on Easter morning?

This is what we're going to spend a few minutes exploring today. If you want to turn with me in your pew Bibles to page 984, we're looking at Colossians chapter 3. In Colossians chapter 3, the Apostle Paul, in writing to the church in Colossae, is reminding them and instructing them on what it means that Jesus has risen from the dead.

[5 : 15] And he is applying it to their lives and helping them see the difference that it makes to them. And I hope this morning that we will see the difference that it makes for us as well.

So Colossians chapter 3, verses 1 through 4. 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 above, not on the 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. Will you pray with me?

Lord, this morning we need your help. Lord, we need your help to understand what your word has to say to us. We need help, Lord, because we so easily lose sight of and misunderstand who you are and what you have done.

[6 : 36] God, I pray this morning that as we think about Jesus risen from the dead, that you would help us to understand what a wonderful truth, what good news that is for us today.

I pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. When the worst things befall you, life is not over. Death has not won.

In the resurrection of Jesus, in fact, Paul is saying, your life has only just begun. And it's in communion with, in fellowship with, in connection with, the resurrected Jesus, in fact, that we find a true, an unbreakable life that can withstand the greatest trials and the greatest losses of life. This is what Paul is pointing to us in this passage. Resurrection is the best news in the world as we face the fragility of our lives.

We're going to look at two basic things. One, we're going to look at the beginning. He says, since or if you have been raised with Christ, and we're going to talk about what that means. And then we're going to talk about then, how do we live in light of that?

[7 : 51] What difference does it make? The resurrected Christ is the basis of a new life. And so we have to look first at this great passage.

Verse 1, There are two parts of this for us that we need to unpack for us to really embrace it and for us to feel it.

The first one is the objective reality that Christ has been raised from the dead. Right? Paul is assuming this when he says this statement.

How do we know this is true? Well, we've read about it. The gospel Luke tells us that this is what happened. The disciples showed up at the tomb.

And there was an angel saying, Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here. He is risen just as he said. This is the most fundamental truth claim of the Christian faith.

[8 : 55] Is that Jesus in real space time history, His actual literal physical body was dead and was brought again to life.

And that not only did he rise to that new life, But then he walked out of the tomb after God had rolled the stone away. And he appeared to many people while he lived on this earth in physical bodies where people could touch him and see him and hear him and eat with him.

And then he ascended into heaven. Not as a spirit, but as a body. A real resurrected body. And Christians claim that this makes all the difference.

Because if he had simply died and gone to his grave like every other human being, Then all the things that we often like to think about Jesus, He was a great teacher.

He was a moral example. He built a vision of a better society and a better world. All of those things could still be true. But Christianity says something actually quite different about Jesus.

[10 : 10] It says that Jesus was raised from the dead. And therefore, His death had a power. Unlike any other life. Unlike any other person.

Because when, The Bible says when he died, He died in our place. He died for our sin. He took the penalty, The death, That we deserve for our rejection and rebellion against the Lord of life and the creator of all things.

The Bible claims that Jesus' death made a difference by dying in our place. But if he had simply stayed in the grave, He would have died like any other man.

By his rising from the dead, He proved that he was able to die not for himself, But for us. And that the judgment that he took upon himself by dying, Was not for his own sin, But for the sin of others. And by rising to new life, He is now a living Savior. Did you see what Paul says about him? Christ is now seated at the right hand of God in heaven.

[11 : 24] Like a general having returned from his victorious campaign, He has now sat down, Because the enemies of sin and death have been conquered. Not merely by his death, But especially by his resurrection from the dead.

And he is not only a conquering king, But he is a living Savior.

He is a real person who we can talk to in prayer, Who intercedes with us before the heavenly, Who is able to help us in our weakness and in our trials.

He is a real person, Alive to whom we can relate. Death could not hold him. The power of sin was broken. And he is able now to give us new life. This is the claim. Christianity affirmed that because Jesus is risen from the dead, Death is no longer the end.

[12 : 34] Now, I want to spend a few minutes, Because I am sure there are a few of you, Maybe many of you, Who are thinking, This sounds a little fantastical. This sounds a little bit like the sci-fi movie that I saw last week.

This sounds like a great story. But I just don't think it could really be true. And throughout history, There have been all sorts of arguments about how this has happened.

Maybe Jesus didn't really die. Maybe he just passed out. Maybe the disciples hallucinated when they claimed that he saw him after he raised from the dead.

Maybe the apostles, So wishing that he was still alive, Created a whole myth about his resurrection, Knowing that it wasn't true. But hopefully believing that that idea would somehow carry on and do good in the world.

Now, Though these things have all been posited and explored throughout the history of humanity since Jesus' death, None of these actually stand up to good, historical, rigorous exploration.

[13 : 53] I was a history major in college. Historical evidence is not the same thing as scientific evidence. We cannot put to test Jesus rising from the dead again. There's no test tube.

There's no repeatable hypothesis to be tested. But as a history major, There are good reasons to believe. There are lots of good reasons to believe that, In fact, Jesus rising from the dead, And the account of those who saw him and met him, Are as credible as all sorts of things that you believe about Julius Caesar and Alexander the Great, And all sorts of other historical people of the past.

Friends, I'm not going to bore you. I'll be honest with you. I'm not going to bore you with all the arguments this morning. If this is something you are interested in, There are good resources.

There's a great debate out there. You can see it, I believe, Online. It's become a book, too. Gary Habermas and Anthony Flew. Did Jesus rise from the dead? It's a debate between an atheist who said it didn't, And a Christian who said, No, I think it did.

I recommend it to you. William Lane Craig, Knowing the Truth About the Resurrection, Our Response to the Empty Tomb, Another Great Philosophical Approach to This.

[15 : 14] There are books downstairs. Friends, If you're interested, Come to Christianity Explored next week. Come after church next week, And talk, And ask your questions about whether this could be true or not.

Because, You know what? I get it. It sounds crazy. Because it's not natural for someone to rise from the dead. Right? It doesn't happen very often.

In fact, It has happened only a few times in history, I would wager to say. But friends, What I want you to see is that, The Bible never claimed it to be natural.

It is supernatural. It is a work of God. And that doesn't make it less real. It makes it more. And if you're wondering about it, Explore it.

God has brought you here this morning, And I pray that you would hear the summons, To actually find out what you think about it. Actually examine the evidence. Actually look at the textual variance, And look at the way that history was told.

[16 : 22] Look at the situation and the context. Take a challenge from me, To pick this up and pursue it. Because, If he didn't die, And rise from the dead, As the Bible says, Then Paul says, Those of us who are Christians, Who worship Jesus, Yeah, we're just, Believe in something.

You know, We might as well believe that, I won't even, I'm not even going there. We might as well believe that Martians, Are going to bring, You know, Papayas to our country, Or something like that. You know, We might as well believe something, Just completely ridiculous. If he didn't rise from the dead, What we believe, Is just foolishness. And we are men, Most to be pitied.

But the Bible claims that if it is true, If it was factually true, Then it changes everything. And friends, It changes everything about how we live, And how we die, How we face the greatest losses, And the greatest trials of life.

It makes all the difference. So Paul starts with this, Objective reality, Christ has been raised from the dead, But look again, Verse 1, Right?

[17 : 44] It's not just that this thing happened 2,000 years ago, But verse 1 says what? If you have been raised with Christ, So suddenly this objective historical reality, Paul's saying, Has become real for you.

Now, We need to make sure we get our English grammar right. If is the first word, It's a perfectly good reading of the word, But if can be used in different ways. It might be introducing an uncertainty.

Well, If this had happened for you, But instead, Here it's more of a logical if. It's creating the basis of an argument. A better word in English might be since.

Paul is talking to believers, Who have professed their faith, In this risen Jesus. And so he says, Since you, Have been raised with Christ.

What in the world does that mean? I mean, Seriously. He died 2,000 years ago. Even if he did rise from the grave. What does it mean? That I have been raised with Christ?

[18 : 55] This doesn't make any sense at all, does it? Well, let's explore it. Because it points to the very central reality. That Christians, By placing their faith in Jesus, Enter into a very real union with him.

A spiritual reality where we are joined with Christ. And we are joined with Christ in both his death and his resurrection. Because in that is where we find, in fact, Our salvation, Our hope, Our restoration to a relationship with God.

We have died with Christ. What does this mean? When Christ died on the cross, He died for our sins. When we died with Christ, We died to our sin.

What is sin? Sin is our rejection of God. Our independent spirit. Our desire to be self-centered, Rather than God-centered in the world. Our loveless pursuit of our own agenda, Rather than a loving pursuit of God.

And loving him and his creation and his world. Sin is an egocentric worldview. And an egocentric life that says, No God, I don't want you.

[20 : 28] I want to be God in my life. And what Paul is saying here is that When we are joined with Christ, Dying with him, We are dying to that old way.

We are dying to ourself. We are dying to our selfishness. We are dying to the right to say, This is my life, And I'm going to do with it what I want, And I'm going to determine what is right and wrong. We are dying to a life that is apart from God, And in rejection of God. But it also is dying to death itself.

Because all that sin and all that rejection Brings us spiritual death. And when we die with Christ To our sin and to our old way, We die to death itself.

When we place our faith that what Jesus did Makes a difference for me, Now, Not only have I died with Christ To sin and to the old way, Right?

[21 : 39] You see it in verse 3, For you have died, Right? Not only have we died, But now we have been raised with Christ To a new life.

Where once self reigns, Now God reigns in our hearts And in our lives. Where once egocentric life Made things about me, Now suddenly my life is lived for him.

And for his world, And for his creation. Where once, I stood apart from God, Rejected him, And stood under his condemnation.

Now I am free from the guilt of that. Freed from the shame Of my brokenness and my imperfection. Freed from my destructive patterns To find life on my own.

And freed to seek after life. In Christ. With Christ. That I never could have otherwise.

[22 : 40] Everything changes When we place our faith in Christ. When we say, Yes, Jesus, I'm a sinner. I can't save myself. I will throw myself on you And your mercy.

I will believe that your life And death and resurrection Are able to save me from my sin. When we place our faith in Jesus. Everything changes. Fundamentally we are changed.

You are no longer The caterpillar trapped in sin. But you are the butterfly. You are no longer The ugly duckling.

But you are the beautiful swan. You are now a new creation. And God has given you A new spiritual life. You have a new relationship With God.

Friends, did you hear Diana's testimony earlier? Did you listen To how she talked about How in her battle with anxiety The resurrected Christ Made a difference in her life.

[23 : 44] She knew Because of her faith in Christ That she could live differently Because of that. It was a beautiful picture Of what it looks like To be raised with Christ.

All right. So this is the first part. Paul has said If you've been raised with Christ And he's saying You who are Christians You who claim to believe in Jesus And that he rose from the dead And that you

have now Been raised with him Into this new life.

How then do you live? This is the second point I want to make this morning. Is that the resurrection life Of Jesus reshapes Our lives.

Since we've been raised With Christ Then We now have a new life To live. What does that look like? Two things. First It reorders What we focus on.

Do you see in verses One and two Look with me again. Do you see the verbs? If you've been raised With Christ Seek The things That are above.

[24 : 56] Verse two Set your minds On things above. These words have to do With a focus With our attention. The things that we spend Our time Thinking on Meditating on The things that consume Our thoughts Our prayers Our care Our love And devotion They're reflected In the things we value The people that we listen to And what we invest in And Paul is saying If you now have A new life with Christ Make it The overriding focus Of your life.

If this is all That it's meant to be All that Christianity Claims it would be Then why would you Spend your time Thinking about Anything else?

Well Let's be real Let's think through our day Think through our weekend What did you think About yesterday? I thought about Boiling a lot of Easter eggs For my kids to die I thought about Cleaning up the house For some people Who are coming over Afterwards I thought about I thought about How my kids are doing And how I've been Really distracted this week By a number of things And how They just need Some really good Daddy time And they haven't Gotten it yet And they're kind of Hurting because of that What else did I think about?

I thought about my work I thought about Oh there's some things That I want to try To get to next week That I didn't get to Does this sound familiar? I thought about Oh I have to go To the grocery store And shop Because there are A few things I don't have In order to Be able to be ready For tomorrow I thought about I've got a sermon To write And I've got to Keep working on this So I can figure out What I've got to say And what it is The Lord has for us And in the middle of it I probably thought Man I'm really tired I wish I could take a nap But I don't have time for that These are the things Right?

That consume our everyday thoughts And our everyday lives Yes? Does this sound familiar?

Yeah? Do you have to-do lists Running through? Okay And what Paul is saying Is now All of these things Which will still be true In your life You still have kids You still have grocery shopping You still have projects You still have work You still have relationships But suddenly They are reframed And they are the context In which we are to Seek the things above And set our minds On the things above The things of God And the things of Christ And the things of His kingdom In the middle Of those very mundane things We are to meditate on The faithfulness of God How well He provides for us How He is trustworthy Even when we can't see What He is doing

[27 : 53] How His mercy to us Is great in our weakness And in our failure How His grace Is abundant to us And can give us hope That we are not abandoned How His love Is deep And steadfast And secure For us We can think of the nature Of our salvation How when we were still sinners Christ died for us When we weren't even seeking Him He sought us out How He has done At the price of His very own life How He has paid for our sin So that we might be brought back to Him How He has loved us And the great work of salvation That He has wrought in Christ That removes the stain of our sin It takes away our guilt It removes our shame It calls us beloved Children Welcomed We are to think on how Because we are raised with Christ

We now have a life That is indestructible Because no matter what happens Even if we die The life that we have In relationship with Christ This new life of faith In Christ The life that He has given us Death has lost its sting There is no more fear Of death And friends We get to think about this When we are planning Our shopping lists And when we are worrying about Our weekend plans And when we are Living out our calling And our vocation And our day to day work Christ is seated At the right hand of God He is in heaven Not on this earth

Which is in rebellion against Him Paul says We have a new orientation And friends I know that this sometimes Feels like pie in the sky It feels like You just want to be So heavenly minded You are no earthly good But friends I will tell you what What Paul is saying Is that the only life Worth living Is really in heaven The only life Worth living Now Will be worth living Because you have set your mind Not on the things of this world But on the things of God And His kingdom This is where true life Is found Which brings me to my final point The resurrection life in Jesus Reorients What we look to For our life Verse 4

Is one of those verses That has captivated Frustrated Frustrated Convicted Me As I have lived Look with me again In it When Christ Who is your life Appears Then you also Will appear with Him In glory Now Some of you are Probably good Grammar students Do you see There are two verb tenses In this Right What does it mean That Jesus has been raised From the dead That you have been raised With Him It means Something for today And something for The future Right Christ who is your life That is today Today Your life Is hidden With With God With Christ In God Is that right Verse 3 With Christ In God Your life today

Is already there You have this new life That He has given you And There is a life That will come When He appears You will appear with Him In glory Paul Paul is reminding us That because Jesus Is raised from the dead Because we By faith Have been joined With Him In that Christ is our life Today And our glory Forever And He wants us To see Life and death Differently Than before I don't know about you I used to think That my life Was about This 70 years On earth And then I would die And then my life Would be over Paul challenges us To think About it A little more A little more Carefully See here's what's true About my life When In 1986

[32 : 59] After a Grease Soaked Meal At a Friendly's In Suburban Pennsylvania I prayed Confessed My sin And God Gave me A new life In Christ In the front seat Of a Subaru With a youth worker In my town I became alive I became alive I was given A new life In that moment And now That life Is what I am living Now And that life Is what I will be Living for eternity And there will be This thing Somewhere along the way Which will happen Called death My physical death I will actually die But do you know what It doesn't actually Matter that much Anymore That's what Paul Is saying Christ is your life Now And your glory To come And that means That I don't have

To wait For my life In eternity To happen I can have Life Now With Christ Friends I'll tell you What I struggle With this This is one Of the hardest Things For me To realize I wrestle With it To know What does it Really mean What Does it Really look Like Because Paul seems To be saying You have Life And life In that Has like Capital letters And like Glowing Colors And it's Meant to be This weighty Word Beyond Just four Letters In our In our Alphabet You have Now tapped Into the Very life Of God And he Has given You a Life That is Yours With him And it's Connected To things Like He is The satisfaction Of our Souls He is

The Ultimate One On whom We rely For our Life We don't Look at The things We do Anymore To give us Life We don't Look at The relationships Anymore To give us Life They're a Part of Our life They're They're Significant Places Where we're Called to Live out Our life But they're Not the Source Of our Life Any Longer And all The things That I Thought were Little Deaths They were Real And they Were Hard But I Have a Life That's Unbreakable That started A long Time ago I don't Have to Wait to Die For that To Happen But There is Also a Reality That this Life has A glory Awaiting It that We have Not yet Experienced Sin Though Broken

In our Lives Is not Eradicated We continue To live In a Fallen World Where we Experience All these Little Deaths Day After Day But Christ Who has Broken The power Of sin And death Who is Raised From the Dead Will come Again One day And when He comes He will Establish A perfect Kingdom And those Deaths And death Will be No more And life Will be All There are Many Lessons I Learned From walking With Brandy Through her Four year Battle With cancer And ultimately Her dying A little Over a Year ago Perhaps This is The one That is The greatest The life Of a Christian Is secure In Christ Both For today And for

Tomorrow Friends I watched Her Live out What it Meant for Christ To be Her Life Today She Set her Mind on The things Above As she Faced The hardships Of treatment And the Uncertainty Of what Would come Ahead She read The scriptures She prayed With brothers And sisters She sought Out the Saints Of old Who knew More than Our 20th Century Church Does About death And dying And how To face It As believers She would Go to And sing The great Hymns Of the Faith We taught Our kids Up from The grave He arose We'd sing It with Gusto Over the Dinner table At night She journaled And talked With Jesus In prayer About her

[38 : 03] Life now And about Her life To come And she Loved Well She loved Our kids She loved Our church She loved Her family At a time When it Would be So easy For her To be Selfish Even though The death Of cancer Encroached On her Body She knew That Christ Was her Life And she Lived it And I Got to See it Up close And then In the End When it Became Clear There Wouldn't Be Many More Time When death Finally Seemed to Have The upper Hand It Didn't She Accepted It She knew That death Was not Her end She knew That glory Was awaiting

Her And as Her body Deteriorated Her desire To go And be With Jesus To go And be With him Where there Was no More sickness And no More pain And no More sorrow Death She knew That her Body Would die But she Knew That she Would go And be With Jesus And that One day Jesus Would raise Her To new Life And give Her a New body That would Live Forever And it Made all The difference I saw Her Take hold Of the Indestructible Life And it's Taught me Much Watching her Do this Has been an Immense amount Of support From my Kids People ask Me often How are The kids Doing I say You know What Theology Matters She didn't Just disappear She didn't Just get Buried Into a Box In the Ground She has Gone To be With Jesus She's Living Today Able To see Them And we Know one Day That we Will see Her If we Too are Raised With Christ It Makes All the Difference So when Life Seems so Fragile When the Things that Seems so Important Have seen To be Breakable Shakeable When we Face the Greatest Loss If you've Been raised With Christ There's Resurrection Life For you Life Now And life Forever More Your Life Is not Over No matter How great The trial Or the Crisis Is But your New life Has just Begun Let's Pray Lord Lord I Pray This Morning Lord That you Would Teach Our Hearts Teach Our Minds Lord We Confess How Difficult It Is At Times To See The Glory Of The Risen Christ To Believe That It's Actually True To See It Actually Make A Difference In Our Lives Lord We Confess How Often Our Eyes And Our Hearts Are Fixed On The Things Of This World Lord We Pray You Would Lift Our Eyes To Remember The Goodness And The Wonder And The Awe And The Beauty Of Our Lives With Christ Both Here And Forever More Lord I Pray For Those Who This Morning May Be Exploring Or Thinking Or Evaluating Whether They Truly Know This Life In Christ Lord Reveal Yourself To Them Help Them To Understand What A Great Savior And A Loving God You Are What You Have Done Through Your Death And Resurrection For Them And Lord For All Of Us We Pray That We Would Be Encouraged This Morning Encouraged To Fix Our Eyes Lord On These Things We Pray These Things In Jesus Name Amen