

## Easter Sunday 2020

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Col 3:1-4 ESV

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

Where does your hope come from? What is it that you look to in order to feel comforted, secure and content? Because if we are honest, most of us want to feel that way, we want things to go well for us, we don't want tragedy...we don't want suffering... we don't want restriction in our lives... we don't want challenges... we want comfort and we want success and we want to win.

To make the point, (I have asked many people and have not yet been challenged on it) if you were to take a piece of paper and write down the events that you hope happen for the rest of your own life I bet that you will not include in there any tragedy or any disaster or relationship breakdown. You won't include loved ones being killed, or even you or your family members or friends getting sick. I bet you would not even include getting a cold. Now I must confess that I have myself imagined some of these events in my own life but again only for selfish reasons, I wish I could have mild sickness just enough so I get to stay at home without feeling guilty, but that is just so that I can escape some other pressure in my life and relax in bed for a few days.

I have even heard many people in recent weeks saying that they are enjoying the forced isolation because they are getting lots of stuff done and not feeling guilty for not going out!!

But in the main we don't like it when things go badly for us.

So, what do we do with the concept of a worldwide pandemic? How does it leave us feeling when we realise that we are not in control...?

What gives us hope? Where does that come from and what do we look to?

If we look to the things of the world, we won't see much reason for hope. There are restrictions, there is an unsure future, there is a sense of being separated. The news reports seem to be full of the bad things in life. Even if we can somehow ignore all the bad and evil things that happen around us then is the ultimate downer, the one that none of us can ignore or escape - Death.

Looking only at these things for our hope is a hopeless exercise and is not what God wants or intends for us His children.

God wants us to look to Him, He wants us to set our minds on the things that are above not on the things of this world. The things of this world change way too much, we change too much, we don't even know what we should give to ourselves. We are like kids who would be happy to spend our days eating lollies and playing computer games, unaware that if this is all we did it would be bad for us.

As adults we may think we really know what we need here on earth to be happy and content, maybe something like winning the lottery! ...and yet there are many stories of lottery winners who after winning have great regret. There is the illusion that with plenty of money I will be happy forever, but money does not give peace and comfort.

What else can we get tempted into looking towards for hope and comfort? What about the thought of "once I get the right job I will be happy"... or the "right spouse"... or "when my spouse just fixes that one annoying habit"... or "once the kids grow up"... or "when I get the promotion"...or "when my health improves"...

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or maybe for many right now we say “I will be happy when the pandemic is over, then I will be happy, then I will be content to enjoy life again.”

But here is the problem - If we look to our circumstances in life to keep us satisfied then we will always be disappointed, we will always want more, always looking to the next thing that promises to make us happy. We will be disappointed because things will always go wrong in our fallen and sinful world. The created world cannot satisfy the need we have to be satisfied in God.

How much better it is to be able to rest in the unchanging truth of God for us.

God tells us to look to the things that are above, what exactly is that? Look to Him, look to what he has said and done.

Christianity has the right message to hear anytime and every time because it surpasses all circumstances, it is not a Sitcom... there is no situation dependant relevance in order for it to apply.

To look to what God has done for us in Christ Jesus means seeing that our greatest need has been met. It means focussing on the fact that you have a Saviour who died for you, taking the punishment that you deserve. Then He did something remarkable, He showed that He has power over death by coming back to life! Now the last thing that we fear has been overcome! The thing that none of us can avoid is no longer a thing to fear.

Why is this so? Let's look at the text, Col 3 says that we have already died with Christ, and that you are hidden with Christ in God. And when Christ who is our LIFE appears then you also will appear with him in Glory!

This is God's good gift to you, and focussing on this gospel fact is what gives peace in this fallen, unpredictable, uncontrollable and changing world.

The Lord loves you and wants good things for you. The thing that the Lord knows to be the most important thing for you is to be with Him forever in His perfect loving caring presence, life forever with Him after our earthly death. That is what He has given you in Jesus, victory by His blood and resurrection. That gift is yours because you are in Him. You are baptised into Christ's death and resurrection... imagine if you were able to focus on that!

Imagine if you were able to be aware at all times of what God has done for you. Then all the things that cannot satisfy us here will be put in their right place. Good or bad events will not control you! You will be able to be content in any circumstance.

Christ did not shirk at the thought of dying for you. He willingly laid down his life so that you could live in peace with Him. He didn't enjoy the thought of dying, in fact He agonised over it. Because He went through with it, we have something perfect, something complete in Him that we can look to, an unchanging fact that we are saved through Christ's work on the cross.

In this we have peace with God and life eternal. He is Risen... and this fact now gives us HOPE... a sure hope and future through the demonstration of His love that gives us life, and so we live here now on earth, waiting for His glorious return, living in the joy of our Risen Lord Jesus Christ.

Glory be to God!

AMEN.