

“At the Intersection of Life and Christ”

Scripture: Colossians 3:1-11

Graphic: intersections, streets, communion

Key Verses: 1 So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

Theme: At the intersection of life in this ‘world’ and life in Christ, there is a grand collision between the values, morals, hopes, fears, decision-making process, and purpose of life without Christ and life with Christ. Christ meets us at the corner and offers real life directly through his death and resurrection. If we are to turn the corner, we must go through Christ’s death and walk down Christ Street.

1) Introduction

- a) At the corner of Chautauqua County Road 33 and State Route 474 is a place that’s very familiar and dear to us...anyone? (Panama, NY)
- b) And if I were to ask any of the firemen here today, if there have ever been any spectacular and dramatic collisions at that corner, I’m sure the answer would be YES!
- c) And as tragic as that can be at any intersection in America, when it’s right here at home, it becomes personal...it becomes emotional...it becomes real to us. Chances are we know at least one of the people in the accident.
- d) When one person travels down one road and another person drives down a perpendicular road, there is a CHANCE, even with all the laws and traffic control devices we have, that ONE of them will NOT be paying attention. And when one person isn’t paying attention, driving down a road with distractions and mind wandering, there’s a GOOD chance that two cars will end up at the same place at the same time. The laws of physics prevent two solid objects from occupying the same space at the same time!
- e) And when that happens, life changes, especially for the people who are involved in the accident. The reality of life gets sort of suspended at that moment. All the distractions...all the problems...all the *stuff* of life becomes insignificant.
- f) As we walk through life, to stay with the word picture, as we drive down the highway of this world, there comes a time, maybe more than one, when an intersection comes between the street of life and the street on which Jesus is traveling.

- g) And if you picture an intersection in your mind, one road is traveling north-south and the other is traveling east-west. The only point that those streets meet, is right at the intersection.
- h) The ways of this world are as perpendicular to the ways of Christ as the two roads that are traveling through Panama, NY. And our scripture lesson this morning from Colossians 3 tells us about the some of the characteristics of a life traveling on Life Street...and those exhibited by a life traveling on Christ Street. And we have a choice to make when we get to the intersection of Life and Christ.
- i) Turn with me in your Bibles to Paul's letter to the Colossians, chapter 3, starting in verse 1...
- j) Pray...

2) Scripture

a) Read verses 1-4 (NRSV)

- i) Read verses 1-4 from the NLT: 1 Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the **realities of heaven**, where Christ sits at God's right hand in the place of honor and power. 2 Let **heaven** fill your **thoughts**. Do not think only about things down here on earth. 3 For you died when Christ died, and **your real life** is **hidden** with Christ in God. 4 And when Christ, **who is your real life**, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory.
- ii) The internet is a wonderful thing, right? Well...maybe not. Reality has become an idea that is less clear than 100 years ago. I can go online and present myself to the entire world as someone completely false as compared to the reality of my life.
- iii) When we go to Tent Camp every year and spend time with 25 teenagers in the woods of Camp Findley, usually on the last day of Tent Camp, the kids begin to lament the fact that they go back to 'reality' when Camp is over.
- iv) And our comment to our sad campers is that, **IN FACT**, a Christian community like Tent Camp is more **REAL**, from the perspective of God, than the "life" that they lead back home.
- v) The same is being said here by Paul...

- vi) Reality in THIS LIFE – in the world which operates from the perspective of the world apart from God – is whatever we want it to be (i.e., the internet). My reality is MY REALITY.
- vii) Paul is telling us that when we are born-again, baptized children of God, OUR reality is NOT the reality of THIS WORLD (this world where reality is relative), but IN FACT is found in the reality of heaven...is found in the things of Christ and not the things of this broken and hurting world.
- viii) He encourages us to SET OUR SIGHTS on THOSE realities...
- ix) Because if we are Christians, followers of Christ, and if we agree that Christ is a current reality in heaven, then why wouldn't we set our minds on the things that are of Him?
- x) Let heaven fill your minds! Fill your thoughts.
- xi) Don't think JUST about the things down here on earth. Don't get so distracted by the job, the kids, the church meetings, the yardwork...that you fail to let your mind be FILLED with the things of heaven, where Christ is.
- xii) BECAUSE, when Christ died HERE ON EARTH, our lives were (and I love this) HIDDEN in Christ. Our lives were literally CONSUMED INTO the life of Christ. He died our death and took our lives into him.
- xiii) And because we are IN CHRIST...our real identities are of Christ...then when HE comes again (and as United Methodists we believe that Christ will return again at some time sooner or later), WE will ALSO be revealed with Him in glory...we will share in his glory. Our real selves will be finally 100% revealed.
- xiv) So, life is great, end of sermon right?
- xv) Well...this is a wonderful picture of life with Christ...but so many times, we fail to put to death, we fail to get RID OF, we struggle with those things in our lives that so distract us that we are in danger of a collision at the coming intersection.
- xvi) Paul tells us what these things are...what the things are in our lives that are of THIS world and not of the realm of Jesus Christ in heaven.

b) Read verses 5-9a

- i) This list should not be a surprise to any of us, right? Fornication (which the Bible defines as any sexual contact outside the bounds of a marriage between one man and one woman), impurity, passion (and Paul is talking about sexual impurity and sexual passion), evil desire, greed (which Paul says in idolatry). He goes on in verse 8 to list actions such as anger, wrath, malice, slander, abusive language (which is actually translated as FILTHY language) from your mouth.
- ii) THESE are the things that are part of THIS world, of which we are guilty of in part or in whole, that are not part of the life that is truly hidden in Christ.
- iii) The road of this world that we travel, and against which all the things on account God is coming in judgment, are never acceptable on the road of Christ. There is NO PART of LIFE STREET that is part of CHRIST STREET...
- iv) ...save one point. Save one point...
- v) And it's the point of the intersection between the two. On the corner of Life Street and Christ Street.
- vi) And it's right at that point, that we have a choice to make...
- vii) We can choose to continue on traveling on this road of life, with all the sin that comes from the list about which Paul warns us to shed, or we can choose Christ.
- viii) In verse 9...

c) Read verses 9b-11

- i) Think of that picture for a minute. Would we choose to travel on the road that leads us deeper and deeper into the strife of this world and the rejection of Christ – basically, driving through the intersection without turning onto the road that Christ is walking?
- ii) Or, will we come to the intersection, and decide to turn to Christ – to repent of the sin in our lives and drive the road that leads to heaven, where Christ is? Where, Paul says, there is a NEW SELF, a renewal and

refreshing...a restoration of the image of God into which we were created and made to be...

iii) To the place where God IS all and is IN all...

3) Application

- a) Each one of us, today, is being given the opportunity, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to spend a moment at the intersection of Life and Christ streets. God gives us the opportunity to make decisions about the rest of our lives as we approach this intersection.
- b) And just like our own freedom to choose which way to go when we comes, physically, to in intersection, today, God gives us the freedom to choose which directions to turn (or not).
- c) In the church, established by Christ, the primary way do that at this intersection, is to come to the Table during Holy Communion.
- d) At this place where there is the potential for spectacular collisions between the things of this world – the sin, rejection, pain, apathy, evil – and the things of the Christ – forgiveness, acceptance, joy, concern, good, love.
- e) These things are on a direct collision course and Jesus knows that! In fact, **THE MOST SPECTACULAR** collision of these opposing forces between good and evil had a cosmic, divine, grace-filled and explosive impact at the exact moment of Jesus' death on the cross. Sin was defeated because Jesus stood in the middle of the intersection and allowed all the consequences of the Fall and all the grace of salvation to impact **HIM!**
- f) And you are approaching the intersection this morning, and Jesus is standing in the road, waiting for you to choose which way to go...

4) Conclusion

- a) Holy Communion is the tangible, real, and authentic expression, in the church, of Christ as our reality. There is nothing more real about the presence of Christ in our midst than our willingness to come to the table and receive the grace of God in communion. This is the body of Christ, **BROKEN** for you in that collision. This is the blood of Christ, spilled as a result of that collision. And he stood there willingly so that you don't have to.

- b) He stand there willingly so that you can follow the road that gets rid of your sin and clothes you in the newness of Christ.
- c) Today might be the first time you have given your life to Jesus Christ by turning to him in your heart. Today might be the 100th time you have turned to Jesus. John Wesley firmly believed that Holy Communion can be a converting experience – people’s lives can be eternally changed through the power of the Holy Spirit working directly through the real presence of Christ. This IS the body and blood of Jesus Christ...for you.
- d) Life is a series of intersections between Life and Christ. And each time we accept the gift of grace from God, we move closer to the holiness into which we are called.
- e) Come forward today with your turning signal on, ready to strip off your old self, and be a new creation where Christ is IN all and IS all...
- f) Let’s pray...