

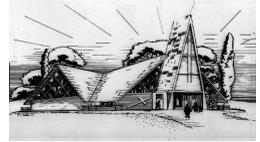


Free Evangelical Lutheran  
Synod in South Africa

## Sermon - Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 13C)

**You have been raised with Christ!**

**Set your minds on things above!**



St. John's Lutheran Parish Shelly Beach

• The Word of God for this Sermon is written in Col 3,1-11:

• *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.

• 5 Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

• 6 On account of these the wrath of God is coming.

• 7 In these you too once walked, when you were living in them.

• 8 But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth.

• 9 Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices

• 10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

• 11 Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.

• Let us pray: *Come Holy Spirit, open our ears and our hearts so that we will consider the things that are above. Amen.*

• **Dear Congregation in Christ!**

• The things above consider, strive for, not the things on the earth! What does Paul refer to when he says “things above” and “things on the earth”.

• Paul wrote this letter to warn the Christians in Colossae against the philosophies of men, false teachers, who would draw the Christians away from the sufficiency of Christ's Work and Word. The false teachers claimed that through special visions of worshipping angels one could reach the fullness and riches of a true Christian Life! So if you wanted to get one step higher up, you would have to engage in the higher things, namely, one would have to tap into these special visions or experiences of worshipping angels. These would then also give people special prophetic insights which were beyond what Scripture teaches.

• Last week I received an invitation to go and, as it says, learn to tap into the prophetic. Most churches lack something because they are not moving in the

prophetic, is said. What they mean with prophetic is, to be able to know things about the people gathered in front of you, which they haven't told you, like for example, they would say, 'there is one person here whose arm is sore. Come forward please.' And then that person would be touched by the "prophet" and without a prayer, explicitly without asking God, the prophet will then claim to feel a warmth in his arm and would claim that that is the presence of the Lord filling him up. In one of the training sessions the prophetic trainer gave himself away when he said, that it works like this, that when you say 'I am feeling my arm getting all warm' the person you are touching will normally claim the same. Nothing else than manipulation.

- The point is, unfortunately, the Colossian heresies are well alive today just clad in other forms. And now "church" is all about getting warm feelings and getting "healed", whilst we have God's personel for that, namely hospitals with doctors and nurses acting out their God-given vocation. Yes, of course the church prays for the physical health of its members and visits its members in hospital. For that you don't need special visions and prophecies. You need the Scriptures which are fulfilled in Christ which will lead you to repentance of your own selfishness and will open your eyes for the need of the neighbours all around you. True prophecy in Scripture always has something to do with Christ's Mission.

- That is why Paul emphasises the supremacy of Christ. He shows that as baptised believers in Christ we already possess much more than the pretend-spirituality of warm feelings and visions of heaven. In the Service that God has designed and instituted for us we are filled to the brim with God's fullness and riches, namely with Christ Himself. He is our treasure in life and in death.

- We receive forgiveness of sins, spoken to us in full audibility, by the authority of God, earned for us by Christ on Calvary. It is God's idea that in the corporate entity of His members, Christ's Body the Church, He gives us His gifts of Grace personally, from person to person. He lays His hands on you using the hands of one of His ordained members. God deals with us corporately and yet at the same time so personally. His Way is the best, its perfect!

- And God is present in Christ's Body whether we feel anything or not. His presence does not depend on our senses. It is an objective real presence dependant on the promise of God's Word. In Christ the whole fulness of God dwells bodily.

- He promised to be present with His Grace when we call Him in and by His name. We can count on Him, because He has commanded us to do this. This is what the church has been doing through the ages. We don't suddenly need a new prophetic movement to let us "feel the Lord's presence". That is neither commanded nor promised by God anywhere in His Scriptures.

- Another issue which does its round: One man claims, that he has met Jesus

personally. Now he is going around asking other people, have you met Jesus personally? Most admit that they didn't meet Him face to face. Then he boasts, I have! Paul met Jesus personally in full glory and yet he would refuse to base his faith on that experience and he would not proclaim his personal experience as witness, as Gospel. He always refers to the fulfilment of the Scriptures in Christ. Jesus told Thomas [John 20,19], *"Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."*

- How does one come to know another person and find out what is in the heart of that person in any case? Isn't it by listening to what he or she has to say? Do we come to know a person by looking at him or her? Not really. Isn't hearing Jesus' voice, His Word the same as meeting Jesus? We are meeting Jesus and tap into His Spirit, if you want, we learn what His desires are, how He thinks about us, about all other people, about the world, about the past, present and future and what He does for us.

- He has revealed all of this and it was written down for us in Holy Scripture. As we hear these words the Spirit of God, we have received in Baptism, the Spirit of trust, switches on the light in us, enlightens us so that we begin to hear and understand Him. This is the new creation that God begins in us. We come to see things differently. We begin to realise what true Life is all about.

- That is why, although our flesh perishes away, our God-given Spirit will never die. That is why, although we die, we live.

- The record of our debt has been cancelled, now already. All our debt has been nailed on the cross! That burden Christ has removed from us. Therefore we are alive, truly alive *in Christ!* We are rich *as we are united with Christ.* This is the objective absolute truth.

- This is true *although we don't feel nor see any of it.* You cannot feel nor see forgiveness of sins. Its not a feeling. Its a word you hear. This word may manifest feelings of release etc. etc. but that is not what forgiveness is. It happens to us although we might feel nothing at all. Of course once we realise the great compassion of Jesus for us, and if we realise how grave our sinfulness is, this will affect our emotions. But the outbreak of our emotions don't add to the sufficiency of God's Grace.

- Paul teaches us very clearly that we should not expect to see or feel any of the Glory of our Life in Christ, because, our Life in Christ is hidden! But its real! Its more real and will outlast the reality we feel and see with our present senses!

- From this it should be clear that what we hear God say to us through someone else proclaiming His Word to us, what is going in through our ears, is much much more reliable than what we see or experience for ourselves! If we are honest we only see

sin and perishableness on ourselves and on others. However, God's Word tells us about the hidden Life God has begun in us.

- We begin to see with our renewed minds! We need to listen to be able to see with our minds! That is why Paul says, set your minds on those things that God proclaims to you through His Word. God creates new things with His inspired Word. Now He gives us that inspired Word and therefore we “see” what He means.

- That is why Paul says, since therefore you have been raised with Christ set your minds on these things that are above. Don't set your minds on the things that are on earth. If you set your mind on things of the earth, you only see what you can feel and experience yourself. Then you are back to the Fall into sin. Then creation, the fruit of the tree, things on earth, will seemingly be able to make you wise. Then you will never know about your Life in Christ.

- Then you will get stuck in the desires of the flesh. You will long for sexual immorality, impurity, all sorts of evil passions and desires and greed for money and material stuff, which is idolatry. These things will consume all your attention and thoughts and energy. The tragedy is, the deception is, in the end your soul will be empty! This is true if you set your mind on any man-made tradition and teaching of God. Any worship God has not commanded will in the end take you down the road of emptiness and destruction. There is no eternal Life given there. You might find health and wealth and good feeling and upbeat music, but there is no hidden life in Christ there. There might be shadows of Christ. But He Himself is not there.

- Eventually, when the hype is over, when the dust settles, when your money is up, your health starts to deteriorate again, when everything is just going down the dumps, despair will set in. You will be paralysed with fear, anger and rage against each and everyone. That is if we set our minds on things on earth and of the world, if we listen to our old Adam speaking inside us. He speaks from the inside of us!

- Therefore we need Christ to come and switch on the light in us, to enlighten us, again, to give us His Spirit, His certainty, His roadmap to the end, so that we can see things in true perspective of what He has accomplished for us!

- Then, *as God's chosen ones, put on compassion and kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.*

- *And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.* These are the gifts Christ gives you today. Put Christ on, set your mind on Him and you will begin to act like Him. **Amen.**

- *Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. (ESV Eph 3,20-21)*