

St. Timothy's Lutheran Church
Joe Hill, Dir. Of Youth & Worship

August 6, 2013
Colossians 3:1-14

In Christ: Character Matters

Introduction:

Good morning! Today we will be continuing our preaching series through the book of Colossians that we are calling *In Christ*: In the first week, Pastor Brian taught about how we find our God-given purpose and calling in life when we live In, Through, and For Christ. In the second week I talked about the Throne and the Cross- how in Christ we have our King (on the Throne) and our Savior (on the Cross). Last week Pastor Brian taught about finding Spiritual Fullness in Christ. This week I am going to work through Colossians 3:1-14. And my main point for today is this: when we find our lives In Christ, Christ lives in us! He transforms our character and in God's plan for this world, your character matters.

Search for Meaning in Christ

This passage starts today with an almost cryptic saying. It says *set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.* That means that we were created to find fullness, purpose and meaning only in Christ.

Our tendency in this world we live in is to look around us to try and find the meaning and fulfillment in life. We look to other people or other things and think **if only I had *that*, then I would be happy**. I am as guilty of it as anybody. It happens with cars, clothes, homes, friends, romantic relationships, grades, jobs, and more! But those desires are appetites, like hunger or thirst. And appetites are never satisfied. They are quenched for a time, but they come back.

When we set our hearts on God, we begin to find what it means to live fully. We live selflessly, not selfishly. But Paul isn't shy about the result of setting our hearts and minds on worldly things- sexual immorality & lust, anger & malice, slander & lying. And these things result in broken relationships. Broken relationships with one another, unhealthy relationships with material things, and a broken relationship with God. We start to think of these relationships, consciously or not, as either the object of our fulfillment or obstacles to it. We think that a relationship will make us happy- we will feel loved, it will advance our career, or we could get in with the cool crowd and finally feel accepted- or we see others as

getting in the way of our happiness. And when this happens it continues the vicious cycle of brokenness.

Experience Transformation:

But the Bible has the answer here- all of that other stuff, it leads to death, so let it die in your life and find true life in Christ. Set your hearts and minds on Christ. When we put off that old way of living- and by that I don't mean just stopping individual acts of sin- but changing what we focus on. When you turn your focus away from worldly things and set your heart on things above, your very character is transformed. **When we change what we pursue in life, the way we live is changed!** When your life is your job, you can become ambitious, perhaps you work too much. When your life is in your possessions, you become greedy and ungenerous. But when your life is Christ, you become like him- you are renewed in the image of your Creator!

Application:

Our character matters to God. Paul says, *"Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all of these virtues put on love which binds them together in perfect unity."* Your character matters to God because you are His chosen, his holy people, which means that God has set you apart for a special purpose.

It matters because God's plan for this world is not just for each one of our individual salvations. That is part of it, but that is not *all* of it. **GOSPEL- Cross & Resurrection** The scope of God's plan isn't, "This world is messed up, but at least there's heaven." **His plan is that heaven would invade here and now, through you and me!** You are not just saved for the next life, but also for this one! When God first called Abram, he made a promise that He would bless Abram, but part of that promise- a crucial part of that promise- is that Abram and his descendants would also be a blessing to the world around them. God's plan is to use each one of us to show His love, kindness, compassion, gentleness, patience, forgiveness and love to those around us.

I can't tell you how many people I have met and talked to over the years who have abandoned faith because they were burned by Christians or the church. Hypocrisy in Christian character is a big reason that people leave the faith, but

authentic Christ-like character is our greatest testimony! In the first several centuries of the church's existence, they were ferociously persecuted. They had every reason to hate and fear their neighbors and their government. But do you know what they did? By their kindness, humility, gentleness, compassion, forgiveness and love they made themselves indispensable to those around them! So much so that some Roman officials became hesitant to persecute them because they didn't want them to stop helping the poor, sick, and orphans. People could not help but notice Christ when they noticed Christians. And that's what this world needs. There are people in our lives who desperately need to experience the love of God- our friends, family members, coworkers, classmates- and God wants to deliver it through us!

So here is my challenge for you today- pursue Godly character. I am going to read verses 12-14. What sticks out to you from that passage? Is God putting one of those things on your heart? At some point, write it down, stick it on your fridge or dresser or bathroom mirror as a reminder. And pray that God would form that within you. But my challenge comes with a warning. If you pray to be more humble, God will give you the chance to be humble. If you ask for patience, God will give you a chance to be patient! In Galatians 5:22-23 refers to these things as the fruits of the Spirit, because the power of the Holy Spirit produces them in our lives. Know that God, through His Spirit, fully equips each of us as we seek to find our lives in Christ.

Search intently to find your life in Christ. When you do, you will find that he lives in you! Strive in all things to be like Jesus, because in God's plan, your character matters.