

This past week at First Lutheran we had a most amazing Vacation Bible School! And believe me this Sanctuary, the Fellowship Center, the South Narthex, and the two classrooms we used downstairs looked completely different! I can honestly say it was out of this world! You see, we had an outer space theme called “Miraculous Mission: Jesus Saves the World!” The kids, their youth leaders, and all of adults definitely had a “blast” as last Sunday we lifted off on our VBS adventure learning how God made the Earth and All Stars, the whole universe in six days! Then on Monday we zoomed ahead to see how God promised Abraham he would have more descendants than all the stars he could count in the sky. Then on Tuesday, our journey took us all the way into the New Testament as we discovered the star that guided the Wise Men to the Savior, the infant Jesus. Then on Wednesday we heard about the most spectacular sight that anyone has ever seen, in the skies above or anywhere, and that is the Lord Jesus who rose victorious from the dead! Finally on Thursday, our last day, the kids learned how their Risen Savior lives and reigns to all eternity and is coming back for them and all of us!

Now, I’ve always loved Astronomy, reading books on the planets and stars, going to the planetarium shows in downtown Minneapolis as a boy. Yes, I really wanted to be an astronaut. So getting to play the part of a “Mad Scientist” Astronomer during Story Time at this year’s VBS was a “far out” experience! I think the other adults and kids would agree it was an awesome week of growing together in God’s Word with our focus set on things above! Both spatially above, that is, the stars and planets and so on, but most of all, **spiritually** above, that is growing in our faith in the risen and ascended Lord Jesus!

In fact, that’s exactly what St. Paul is talking about in our Epistle lesson today from the book of Colossians. You see, when Paul talks about seeking things that are above, he’s talking about seeking heavenly things, about seeking God’s things. He’s saying we shouldn’t worry about things on earth like money or how long we’re going to live or how popular we are, or how nice our clothes are or things like that. Instead, what’s important are the things that take us to heaven and help others go to heaven. Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead to take us there, so when we die, we’ll go to heaven, and we’ll be able to see Jesus sitting with God the Father. That’s the important thing; that’s the **main** thing, and we want everybody to know that. That’s a big part of what it means to set our minds on things above.

Setting our mind on things above also includes not getting distracted by the things of this world. That's not to say that God has not blessed us with many good things in this world: Our families, loved ones, and friends especially. Also flowers, gardens, pets, baseball, cars, motorcycles, weekend getaways, summer vacations, and the list goes on. But what God is saying to us through St. Paul is don't let anything of this world become more important to you than your Savior and the eternal blessings He has won for you. And so, Paul strongly warns us with these words, "Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature. Sexual immorality, impurity, lust," In other words, don't go along with the world's **abuse** of God's good gift of those intimate relations reserved for a husband and wife alone. Paul then goes on to say, "Evil desires and greed, which is idolatry." Don't long for and try to get things in **any** dishonest way. Don't put the stuff that the sinful world so highly values above God. Set you mind on things above.

Then in verse seven Paul further warns against letting anger, rage, and malice be the way we treat those who have done us wrong. Then he adds, 'Don't slander them,' that is, 'don't even say any bad things about them.' In fact, 'don't let any filthy language come from your lips.' "Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator." Another way of saying all this is, "Don't let the things of this world become the **end**-all for you, because then they'll **be** the **end** of you."

Instead, set your mind on things above. Again the things above mean the things of God. Most especially, it means Jesus, Who first came from heaven to earth to take your place, Who died on the cross for your sins, Who rose again from the dead, and now sits at the right hand of God. It means Jesus, Who sits at God's right hand is working even now for your good—He hears your prayers, He declares you innocent before His Father. It means Jesus, Who visits you in this dying world to speak His Word of comforting Gospel, to forgive your sins with His body and blood. It means Jesus, Who has not left you to be just a temporary thing on earth, but has made you a beloved child of God whom He will one day deliver into heaven forever. **Because** you're His, all **good things** are yours.

And there's another reason to set your mind on things above: that's where your life is hidden. "For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God," Paul tells us. **That's** an amazing statement! An even more joyful reason to rejoice in things above is because that's where your life truly is. Once

upon a time, you only had life for this world—you were among the things passing away. But you've died: in Baptism, you were buried with Christ and **raised** with Him. Already now, you have eternal life. Already now, your name is written in heaven, in the Lamb's book of life. The treasures of heaven are yours. God calls you His beloved child, and tells you that your life is already hidden with Christ in Him.

What better encouragement could we ask for as we go through our day-to-day life down here in this world. What better encouragement could we ask for as we deal with the stress and the anxieties of life every day, or with illness, or with the loss of a loved one, and all sorts of troubles? God calls **you** His beloved child! He tells you that your life is already hidden with Christ in Him. The things of this world? They're going to pass away. The things **above** will last forever. That's where your **real** life is and that means **you** will last forever!

There's a problem for us sinners though: This life is **hidden**. You hear this—that the treasures of heaven are yours, and maybe that news sort of bounces off of you. "That stuff may be true," you think to yourself, "but that's so far away from how my life feels right now." And meanwhile, the things of this world are real and tangible and many of them are lots of fun. And so it's easy to treasure **them** more than God or to covet them rather than be **content** with what God's given us. But they fall apart so quickly—a job, even a relationship or **anything** can be lost. Everything in this world can be lost in an **instant**. If that's how you measure your life, then your **life** quickly turns into nothing, too. And if that's how you measure God's love for you, then you won't think very much of God's love.

But God's love for you is **sure**, and His love is so great that He has shed the blood of His Son to make you His own. You can't see His great love- not yet- it's hidden. You can't see His glory- not yet- that's hidden, too. You can't see His grace-which is also hidden. But by faith, by **God-given** faith, you know that all of this is yours. As much as the things of this world seem important, the treasures of heaven are so much better- **eternally** better!

Are you like me, have you ever harbored a secret desire to go into outer space? Maybe to the moon like the Apollo 11 astronauts did 50 years ago last month? Well, as Christians, we're destined to go farther; so much farther. We've been raised with Christ. And we have life, now and **forever** with Him!

Every day, then, set your mind on things above, upon Christ and your life that's hidden with Him. That way, when you go through suffering and loss in this world, you can still say, "Even though I feel the pain and I feel the loss right

now, I have life, ***undying life***, in Christ forever.” It’s hidden, but it’s ***real*** and it is yours... forever. Amen