



“Renewal Is Happening”

Colossians 3:9-11

March 20, 2022

As we prepare ourselves for the Word of the Lord this morning, I want to tell you about a man by the name of Lazarus. Lazarus was a good friend of Jesus, along with His two sisters, Mary and Martha. In the Gospel of John, we read that Lazarus died. It would seem that he died an untimely death.

Several days after Lazarus’s death, Jesus arrived to console His family and to demonstrate the power of the Kingdom of God. After some discussion and conveying some important truths to Mary and Martha, Jesus approached the tomb of Lazarus and He said, “Remove the stone.” That was met with some objections, because Lazarus had been in the tomb for several days, and they informed Jesus that there would be a horrible smell that would come out if they removed the stone.

Jesus persisted, “Remove the stone.” With His persistence, they in fact removed the stone and Jesus approached the tomb, and He called forth with very, very memorable words. He spoke with the same authority by which He created the universe. What did Jesus say? He said, “Lazarus, come forth!” Then what happened next? Lazarus came forth! Lazarus rose up and he appeared at the opening of the tomb.

But that is not all that Jesus said on that occasion. Do you remember that Jesus said something after that? There was Lazarus still in his grave clothes and Jesus said, “Unbind him and let him go.” Jesus was talking about the wrappings of death; the grave clothes, that Lazarus was still wrapped up in. It was time for the removal of those clothes and for Lazarus to go and change into some nice clean, fresh, perhaps cotton clothes.

Since the days of a man named Saint Augustus in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century, Pastors and Christians and students of the Bible have seen in Lazarus a portrait of what happens in all of the followers of Christ—that by grace, through faith, we are given new life in Christ. We were dead in our transgressions and sin, but God raises us up to resurrection life in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Let’s understand this: not only does God give to His church and His people the gift of everlasting life, but He also gives them the gift of newness of life. Not only are we graced with eternal life, but also transformed lives with the coming of the gift of the Holy Spirit. We are regenerated. We are born again by grace.

This morning as we look once again to Colossians Chapter 3, we are in a portion of Scripture that teaches us about the risen life that the believer has in Christ Jesus our Lord. Joined with Christ, now God the Spirit is empowering us that we might strip off the enslaving patterns of sin that defined life prior to Christ, and that we would put on the new qualities of Christlikeness in the life that He gives us moving forward.

Wouldn't it have been mighty strange if several days after being resuscitated, Lazarus wanted to find those grave clothes and get dressed up in them again? What if Lazarus said, "I think I'm going to go spend the night in the tomb again." No! Lazarus, that is not what you want to do.

Yet, what you will find even as a person who is born anew in Christ is that there can still be a pull toward the old garments and the old ways. Therefore, the Word of the Lord speaks to us the way it does with instruction; with exhortation from the heart of God to the church—exhortation containing power from the Holy Spirit, instructing us that we are to put off the old and we are raised in the new and we are to adorn ourselves in the new.

The Holy Spirit is going to be at work giving us the desire for this and the power to carry it out. We are to strip off the old. We are to put on the new as the work of God's gracious power is here manifested in our lives.

This instruction is what Paul is bringing us to, the Spirit giving it through Paul here in Colossians Chapter 3, which begins with the premise that he is speaking to Christians. Paul said in Colossians Chapter 3 and Verse 1:

**<sup>1</sup>If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.**

Then Paul went on into this instruction to the people of God, "Put off the old, put on the new." Let's see how this is laid out for us this morning in the text. We are going focus on Verses 9 through 11, but let's read the surrounding verses once again to keep us in the flow of thought that is here for us.

I am going to begin in Verse 7 of Colossians Chapter 3 and read through Verse 14.

**<sup>7</sup>In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. <sup>8</sup>But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. <sup>9</sup>Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices <sup>10</sup>and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. <sup>11</sup>Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all. <sup>12</sup>Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, <sup>13</sup>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. <sup>14</sup>And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.**

This is a beautiful portion of Scripture.

This morning we are going to set out attention on what are hinge verses of this great portion of the Bible. In Verses 5 through 8, we see the proverbial grave wrappings that we are to strip off and stamp out and bury and get rid of—all of these patterns of thought and behavior that have to

do with various forms of immorality and impurity and unclean anger and wrath and malice and slander and deception—all of those things are to be taken off and removed.

Then in Verses 12 through 17, we see the life-giving, gracious qualities that God adorns us in and that we are to be putting on, with all the language of compassion and humility, all of these expressions of Christlike love.

Then as we look at what is in Verses 9 through 11, what we have are the hinges, you might say, teaching about this practice of putting off the old and putting on the new. This is given to us in the form of exhortation, as imperatives coming from the heart of God to the church.

We need this instruction from our Father in Heaven, because there will be the confounding sense in which at times we want to put on the old, even as God has given us a new heart for the new. We are still capable of spending nights in tombs! And the Lord is telling us, “No, no, no! Do not go there.” He is giving us this instruction from His Word. We can all be like that.

We have this crazy dog named Lydie. We call her Lydie-Lou. She is 50% black lab and 50% German shepherd, we think, but she is 100% crazy even though she is such a sweet girl in so many ways. But one of us will give her a bath and get her smelling and looking good. What does she do within a half hour? If we are not watching, Lydie rolls her back around on the grass!

And by God’s grace, the church has been cleansed in Christ but you will find that there is a remaining pull within and an ability in your life to still sin. It is still there. So, God gives life-giving instruction to us in the midst of that struggle.

You may find that you still want to go to that old beer bar at times. You may find that you will still want to look at that explicit pornographic website. You will still want to nurse resentment. You will still want to and the ability to smolder internally with resentment. And God is reminding you, “I have raised you up to newness of life. Walk in the newness of life by the power of the Spirit that I give you.”

Sometimes we are like dogs that just want to go and sniff a tree, and we need to say, “Lord, I confess I have those desires. Change my heart, O, God. Help me, help me when I’m feeling that pull to the old, and be submitted to Your will and the new life that You give.” That is what this portion of Scripture is all about.

We are like Paul in Romans Chapter 7, “I don’t know why I do what I do. The good I want to do, I don’t do it. The evil I don’t want to do, I still feel pulled to it.” There is a tug-of-war going on. This is the Lord grabbing one end of that rope and pulling you in the right direction through the teaching of Scripture which gives life. From this text, let’s pray that the Lord speaks into our hearts and empowers us over sin and invigorates us in this resurrection life that we have in the Messiah.

From this portion of Scripture, I want you to see three realities of the Risen Christ in our lives. Three realities that the Lord brings to each Christian. This is speaking to the church of God; to

the people who have come to faith in Jesus Christ as the answer for their sin and their rebellion against the Lord. He is our forgiveness. He is our righteousness.

If you are here and you have not trusted in Jesus in this way, here is your call to come to faith in Christ. Trust in Him! Confess your sin and call upon the Name of the Lord Jesus, that you might be born again and that God might lead you, with the rest of us, in this way of new life that we are pursuing by His grace together.

Let's talk about three realities and experiences for the people of God.

The new life in Christ, what has it brought to you? What do you need to be calling to mind when you are feeling that pull to go spend the night in the grave? God has brought:

### **1. A decisive change (3:9-10)**

Do you see that in Verse 9, going into Verse 10? Paul said:

**<sup>9</sup>Do not lie to one another**

The implication is that people in the church will still have the capacity to do that. Paul was speaking to the church. We can go further back into the text where it says to not use obscene language. Do not let yourself go into impurity and immorality. Don't engage in these kind of things,

**<sup>9</sup>...seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices <sup>10</sup>and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.**

This is speaking of a decisive change that God empowers in the hearts of His elect. It is called repentance. That's the way of death. This is the way of life. Lord, you have opened my eyes to the way of life. Therefore, having seen Jesus, I turn away from that and I follow in this.

Having come to faith in Christ, you have come to the point of repentance. So when you have the desire to go and walk in the old ways, when you have the desire to be resentful or to speak forth impurities if not from your lips at least in your head, just remember that according to this passage of Scripture, you are not that person anymore.

That is the old you. This is the new you. That was then. This is now. You have put off the old. You have put on the new. Now in the power of God's grace, live out what you are in Christ. This passage is telling you to move forward in newness of life. Eyes opened to the glory and the grace and the pattern of Jesus, leaving all the wrappings of death behind and walking forward in Him.

Pray, O, church, even when you are feeling the pull of sin that God will renew that decisiveness within your heart. I'm rebelling against that and I am submitting to the King, to the Lord, to the Kingdom of grace.

Pray that the Lord will make your heart decisive against sin. You have put off the old. You have put on the new. And we are to walk in the Spirit's power in the newness of life that God gives. In the same way that good old Lazarus was risen from the dead, God has brought you life. Live according to the life God has brought you. This is what He is calling us to.

So we can all just stop and be fueled by gratitude for what God has done in our lives. Praise God that by the work of Jesus, we have had a whole series of "but God" experiences:

You were dead in your transgressions and sin, but God has made you alive.

You were once in the domain of darkness, but God has transferred you to the Kingdom of light.

You were once under the dominion of sin, but God has given you the gift of the Holy Spirit who is more powerful than sin.

You were once wise in your own sight, but God has opened your eyes to the truth of Scripture and the glorious way of life that it lays out for us.

So when we are feeling the pull to go and live wrapped up in those old gnarly, nasty, stinky grave clothes, pray for renewal in that decisiveness. Paul is saying, "Listen, that was then, this is now. Walk in newness of life that God has given to you."

This week when you step out and feel the pull of those patterns of sin, I pray that you will have recollection from this portion of Scripture, that God has brought you newness of life and then walk in that power.

As we continue, there is more for us to see. Here is something that is amazing. Understand that all of the change that occurs at the individual level is in keeping with profound realities that are occurring on a much wider scale in the lives of countless people all across the globe who are being saved by grace.

There is very real sense in which each one of us was born connected to a man named Adam. Adam was the head of the human race; the first man created. He sinned against God and he rebelled against the one prohibition and he took all of us with him into that sin. And the sinful nature has been perpetuated generation upon generation upon generation.

So we have all had the seed of rebellion within us, but God is doing this great work of redemption across the globe. He is saving His people. He is bringing them to faith in Jesus Christ. If you have come to faith in Jesus Christ, you are severed from Adam. You have a new Head. God has joined you to Christ and God is creating among all of the followers of Jesus a new humanity. It is a new creation that is widespread all across the globe.

We get to be a part of what God is doing. So not only has new life in Christ brought you a decisive change, but this gift of God's grace, this new life in Christ, has brought you into:

## 2. A transformed community (3:11)

This transformed community is a surprisingly unified community by virtue of His very presence within His people. He brings the most unlikely people together in His new creation.

We see this laid out for us moving into Verse 11. Here in this new creation, here in the church of God, here in the great work of redemption that God is performing:

**<sup>11</sup>Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.**

In all of these people groups that He is saving by grace.

Verse 11 lays out four couplets given to exemplify the diversity of groups that are brought together to comprise the church of God.. They come out from all manner of walks of life. What we see is that the different backgrounds fade as what unites people of the church rises up in prominence in our eyes.

That prominence is that Christ is our all, and that Christ is in all who have trusted in Him. So in this transformed community, Paul was dealing with all these different areas of potential division among the people of the world.

Here Paul was saying that there is no ethnic heritage that remains prominent. Christ is all. Christ is in all and Paul was saying that ethnic heritage does not qualify anyone over anybody else. There is not Greek nor Jew. Paul also said that there is no circumcision or uncircumcision; religious pedigree or ritualistic performance does not qualify one person above another. Christ is all. Christ is in all.

There is no sense of cultural refinement that will qualify anyone above anyone else, because there are even barbarians and Scythians brought into the body of Christ. Economic standing, slave nor free does not qualify anyone or disqualify anyone above or below anyone else. We are qualified in the Kingdom of Jesus Christ by the righteousness of Jesus Himself. There is this great transformed community that we are brought into.

Among the different groups, there are two that got my interest because Paul did not address them as commonly as he did the others. He said, “Look, even barbarians and Scythians are brought into the body of Christ and transformed by His grace.”

The word *barbarians* is an interesting word. It is called an onomatopoeia. Does anybody remember that word from grammar school? Onomatopoeia has a ring to it and is a word that sounds like what it means.

So a barbarian in the Greek world was what they called anybody who did not learn the Greek language. It was mocking the way they spoke. In Greek ears it all sounded like: bar, bar, bar, bar, bar. That was a way for the Greek world to refer to those who did not learn their language and their culture. It implies inferiority of those who would not or could not learn Greek.

But among the barbarians, the worst of the worst were the Scythians. Scythia was a region north of the Black Sea that is now part of modern day Russia. These were the people that were regarded to be the worst of the worst. Scythia was regarded in the First Century as a wretched hive of scum and villainy. It was the epitome of refinement and savagery.

Paul was seeing barbarians, even Scythians, redeemed and clothed in Christ. He was saying that if barbarians and Scythians can be renewed and if they can strip off all of the garments of their previous savagery and be found dressed, made new, and adorned in Jesus—their language being transformed, their attitudes being transformed, the use of their hands being transformed—then each one of us in Christ who feels the pull of the old life, can look at what God is doing among people.

There is the very clear sense in which the Scythians needed to be redeemed but Paul having been a Pharisaic Jew, he knew the sneering, snarling attitude of superiority that Pharisees had over the nations of the earth and he would have been very clear to emphasize that the heady, haughty religious types needed to be transformed too with hearts made humble and gracious and full of love and mercy by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Paul was saying, “Listen, church, you are being brought into this new community where there is love, respect, appreciation, and where is the sense of regard for all of the people groups of the world, understanding that we can have this standing together in Christ, and we are now a part of a community that is to be a community of grace here in a fallen and dark world.”

God calls us up in this new creation to be the presence of the future, you might say. The Kingdom of God is going to invade all things and there will be a great renewal and redemption of everything and, filled with the power of the Spirit, we will be a preview of coming attractions as we are casting off the old and putting on the new.

This is what we are called to be but not just called to be, this is what we are empowered to be because if called to it without being given the ability to do it by God’s Spirit working within us, we would never do that.

Our part is to say, “Lord, give us this hope and this vision. And give us the power, because we still tend to be those who want to go and put on the old trappings of life. So, Lord, help us to see this vision of being an outpost of Heaven in a fallen world, where these different communities come together with Christ being the all in all.”

So it is a community project. It is something that we do together and it is something that we help each other in. In the weeks to come, we are going to see the different ways in which we do that, as the Holy Spirit empowers us to do so.

The new life in Christ has brought decisive change. It brings us into a transformed community and finally, what we see is that the new life in Christ brings us into:

### **3. An ongoing process (3:10)**

We have the desire to live in this full-fledged, full-on newness of life but, guess what, I don't about you but I have not been perfected in Christ yet. And the closer you get to me, the more you know that. And might I say, neither have you, because I know some of you fairly well too.

We are already in the Kingdom, comprising the Kingdom and we already have newness of life, but it is not yet culminated. It is not yet made perfect and what we see is that this is going to be an ongoing process throughout this life.

So the new life in Christ is brought us into this process as we see in Verse 9 and 10, once again:

**<sup>9</sup>Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices  
<sup>10</sup>and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.**

We are being renewed in knowledge after the image of the Creator. Here is a pop quiz. Who is the Creator from our earlier study of Colossian? We can even go back to Genesis too, but according to Colossians, Chapter 1 and Verses 15 through 20, who is the Creator of all? It is the Son of God. All things were created by Him and for Him.

We were made in the image of God. Jesus is the image of God. He is God made visible. The incarnate Son of God is the image of God; the visual representation of who God is. He is God and He is God made visible. We are made in His image and now through this life, going into glory, we are in this ongoing process of being conformed to the likeness of Christ. This is going to be a life-long process.

The grammatical form of this language of being renewed in knowledge after the image of Christ, this indicates something that is continuing. It makes clear that the new self, the new reality ruled by Christ is in fact a reality, but it is not in its final state. It is in a state of becoming. We are becoming like Christ and we need to be spurring one another in this process of knowing Jesus and becoming more like Him in the knowing of His ways.

By God's grace, we will grow in all of the characteristics that characterize Him—in His love, in His mercy, in His boldness, in His grace to the unswerving—we follow Christ. That is the end. That is the goal. Christlikeness. Being like Jesus.

The sphere of growth is given to us in this passage of Scripture. Christlikeness being the goal. The sphere being knowledge of His ways. The new self is being renewed in knowledge after the image of the Creator. The more we know about Him and the more we study of Him in the pages of Scripture, the more we are knowing Him personally and the more the Holy Spirit will be conforming us to the likeness of Jesus. Christians are to be studious people. We need to study the life of Christ. We need to ask the Lord to transform our lives by the renewing of our minds.

Every Christian is in a life-long, continuing education program, just like doctors and lawyers need to continue on every year attending different seminars, staying current with their practices.



Christians are in a life-long education program, where we are learning to be more and more like Jesus.

So every church is to be a center for education. It is to be a place of learning. We are Bible students together. So Bethel Grace, it is to be a hospital for the sick, because we all have our infirmities, both physically and spiritually. Bethel Grace is to be a hospital. Bethel Grace is to be a living room where brothers and sisters can come close to each other in this life. And Bethel Grace is to be a sanctuary for the worship of God.

And Bethel Grace is to be a place of learning, because the Word of God is living and active. Jesus said, "My words, they are spirit and they are life." So it is as we feed on Scripture with hearts made humble and receptive by the Holy Spirit that we will be growing into the image and likeness of Jesus Christ.

So, brothers and sisters, let's dig into the Word as Colossians Chapter 3 and Verse 16 says:

**<sup>16</sup>Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom**

That is a part of it. This is what we are called to do; just learning more about Jesus; learning more of His ways; seeing the life that He lived; seeing the life that He empowers in His people; calling on God to humble and renew our hearts, that we might truly, truly follow in the pattern of life that He gives and that He builds us up in.

I have been thinking about this and there are some people in our church that are educated people. Some of the people of Bethel Grace have been teaching the Bible for decades and decades. You have taught others how to teach the Bible. Pray to the Lord that you would never lose your passion for learning more about Jesus, because there is more of Him to learn. He is the treasure chest of all wisdom and understanding.

Pray that the Lord would keep you renewed in your desire to read of Him and to pray to Him. In the times of learning of Him, both in your personal devotional time and with other believers, pray that God would be using that to form you and fashion you into the very image of the One that you are gazing upon.

Some of you struggle with reading. Some of you barely got out of high school and reading is difficult for you. Don't let that be an excuse. Pray that the Holy Spirit would overcome that and give you the will to overcome that so that you might dig into the pages of Scripture and, by the work of the Holy Spirit, maybe even be found with wisdom that surpasses your instructors because the Spirit of God can do that.

That is what He did with all those fishermen in the New Testament. The religious gurus of Jerusalem were saying that these are just Galilean fishermen! But they were empowered by the Holy Spirit and they were knowing Christ and growing in Christ; the Lord causing doctrine of truth to explode in their lives.

So more about Jesus. More about Jesus in our hearts, in our community, in our church and by His grace, in us and through us into the lives of the people that He has placed us among.

With this, let's go to the Lord in prayer. Let's ask Him to give us such resolve. Let's ask Him to perform these works in us. Let's ask Him to be glorified here in our midst.