

## Colossians 3:1-4 – The Resurrection of Our Lord – Seek the Things Above – April 5, 2026

+In Nomine Iesu+

Today is a day for the Gospel—for good news. In the Lenten Season, we preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified. In the Easter Season, we preach Jesus Christ risen from the dead. Jesus lays down His life. And then He takes it back up again. And it is important to know why.

In all of this, sins are atoned. Death is defeated. This is our salvation. Of course, this good news must be received in faith. We must rely on what He has done. We must trust in the cross and resurrection. And we are exclusively loyal to Christ.

But sometimes I fear that we limit the scope of salvation. And let me tell you what I mean. Now, I would be *happy* to be wrong with this assessment. I was pretty wrong when it came to my March Madness brackets—clearly out of my depth. But on this topic, I think I have something to say.

A quick definition of the Gospel is probably the one you know: the forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ. And that is such a good start. Forgiveness is foundational to our status before God. Jesus comes to reconcile us to the Father. Sin is the problem. And Jesus is the solution. We gather to confess our sins and hear God’s absolution week after week.

I like the way Paul says it in Romans 5, “God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.”

The Psalmist gets at this as well. In Psalm 32, we hear, “Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.”

But with both of these passages—although we hear about our sins forgiven—we get a sense that there is more.

Now, sometimes I fear that is all we want. Just forgiveness—and nothing more. We want God to forgive us for every sinful thought, word, and deed. We want freedom from our guilty feelings. We want Him to keep us out of hell. And then we want to get on with our lives. We want to find a little grace on Sundays—and then live the way we want all of the rest of the time.

But God has bigger plans for us than that. In Scripture, salvation is so much more. I really appreciate our Epistle reading today from Colossians. It pairs nicely with the Gospel account of Jesus’ resurrection. I want it to take the lead for us. The reading is very short. So let me just read the whole thing one more time. But maybe take the time to read the whole chapter today. It is one of those chapters that just feels like it was written for our times.

“If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.”

In the Lenten season, we talked about Jesus’ words from the cross. There are seven of them—just as we might expect. Seven is the number of completion in the Bible. And we even had one of these words on our black altar paraments on Good Friday. *τετέλεσται*, in Greek. “It is finished.” And as I said in Lent, this word suggests *a past action with enduring results*. That’s what the cross is all about.

But it’s interesting, as we read the New Testament, the verb translated, *to save*, is most commonly used in the future tense. Let me say that another way. As we read the New

Testament, much of the talk about salvation addresses life after we have come to faith—after Baptism.

And so, today, I want to talk about two other aspects of the Gospel beyond the forgiveness of sins. For us, salvation is an enduring reality. And it is a future reality. And we find both in our Epistle reading. The first is bound up in Paul's comments about being raised with Christ—seeking things above—and our life being hidden with Christ in God. And my point is this: in Christ, God heals our souls.

The Lutheran Confessions often talked about sin as a disease. And this is super helpful. In fact, this is right at the beginning of the Augsburg Confession. “Our churches teach that since the fall of Adam, all who are naturally born are born with sin, that is, without the fear of God, without trust in God, and with the inclination to sin, called concupiscence. Concupiscence is *a disease* and original vice that is truly sin.”

There's a word to take home with you today. Concupiscence. It means we don't take God seriously. It means we are inclined to rebel. And sin is addressed as an infection that Christ comes to heal. It's not a natural part of our human nature. And for that, we need a Physician for our hearts. We need God to heal our souls.

Jesus spent His earthly ministry healing people. He opened the eyes of the blind. He restored the lepers. He set free those haunted by demons. And these miracles weren't just about making life better for a time for a select few.

They were signs about the future—what God will do for His people in the end. But they are also enduring signs—that address spiritual healing. God begins the restoration of our souls right here, right now. And this healing takes place as God draws us into the life of Christ.

When we are sick or weak or injured, we do what we need to do to get better. We see the doctor. We eat healthy. We exercise. We go to therapy. We rest. We take our supplements. We discipline our bodies to get back on track.

And in our Lutheran Confessions, Baptism, Absolution, God's Word, and the Lord's Supper are called medicines for our souls. Prayer, fasting, and contemplation are our disciplines. And in this way, we seek the things that are above. I want you to think of your time in Church like that. We are not here to be entertained or affirmed. We are here so God can heal our souls from the inside out.

And when we receive this medicine, the infection of sin diminishes. Slowly, as we take our medicine—as we practice our disciplines—our lives begin to look more like the life of Christ—whole, complete, strong, healed. We are drawn into the life of Christ. And that is the goal of our faith, to be with Christ—to be more like Christ. As Paul says, our life is hidden with Christ in God.

I like the way C.S. Lewis said it in *Mere Christianity*. And I really recommend this book if you haven't read it yet. It's easily in my top five. It will revolutionize the way you think about Christ and His Church. Lewis says, “Every Christian is to become a little Christ. The whole purpose of becoming a Christian is simply nothing else.”

And then, he defines the work of the Church with the same kind of language, “The Church exists for nothing else but to draw men and women into Christ, to make them little Christs.” That is what the word *Christian* means. This is that one task that makes the Church unique. We are to become like Christ—“little Christs.”

Not that we become the Savior of the world. We don't share in Christ's divine essence—we share in His divine energies—we share in His character. In our humanity, we become more and more like Him. This is God saving us. He keeps us from falling back into the sickness of sin. That is the work we do here day after day. And Lewis is right. The Church exists for nothing else.

In Word and Sacrament, we are infused with His kind of life. In 2 Peter 1, the Apostle tells us that we “may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.”

Christ is beginning to turn us into the same kind of thing He is. And this is the remedy for our sin. It may not always feel like He makes our lives better or easier. In fact, healing is hard work—sometimes it is even painful.

And don't think God has promised you an easy life—an undisturbed life. God puts us through trials and tribulations. So often, we want God's eternal promises right now. We are trying to live in the eternal age—and it's out of place. This is the time for discipline—for growth—for healing—so that we don't shipwreck our faith or ruin ourselves—so that eternal results can come in the end.

It is as Paul says in Romans 8, “For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son.” Christians become partakers of His nature. We share in His knowledge, character, and peace. We share in His mission in the world. And ultimately, we will share in His eternal life.

And that leads me to my next point. The second aspect of the Gospel is also found in our Colossians text. And it is all about resurrection. Our souls are raised with Christ in Holy Baptism—this is the first resurrection. Our bodies will be raised with Christ at the end—the second resurrection. When Christ returns, God will raise us from the dead. Resurrection is the great hope of the Church. And on the day of resurrection, we will be like Him, our healing will be complete.

It is as John says in 1 John 3, “Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.”

Christ is risen from the dead. But the resurrection of Christ is just the first. Now, it is unique in that it is Jesus—and it happens right in the middle of human history. But for all of the rest of us, resurrection will happen on the last day. In John 5, Jesus says, “An hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.”

This is God's plan for His people—and we say it all the time in our creeds. We believe in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Jesus heals our souls from sin in this life—to take us into eternal life—where sin will be completely purged, completely eradicated. And then, the healing will extend to our bodies—no more sickness, no more disease, no more death.

It is as Paul says, 1 Corinthians 15, “For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: Death is swallowed up in victory.”

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is a world-changing event. It means God has accepted Jesus' sacrifice for sin—and thus our sins are forgiven. It means that God's plan has been

realized, and He begins the long work of bringing us back from the sickness of sin. And it means that He conquered sin and death, the firstborn from the grave, and we will follow.

And I hope that's what you will take home with you today. God's work for our salvation in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ is far more grand than we imagined. God forgives our sins. God heals our souls from sin. He eradicates sin like the disease it is.

And now, we participate in the life of the resurrected Christ. He is living. And we are being restored by His life. And in the end, God will raise us from the dead. Christ is the firstborn. And we will follow. Jesus is risen and we shall arise. This is His great salvation.

Christ is risen! *He is risen indeed. Alleluia.*

+*Soli Deo Gloria*+