

## Lift up your hearts at Easter and each Lord's Day

***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 the 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.*** [Colossians 3:1-4; Epistle for Easter Sunday in The BCP]

The message of Easter Day begins with the proclamation that God the Father has raised his Incarnate Son from the dead, and has changed his mortal body into an immortal, spiritual resurrection body of glory. By the action of raising and exalting him, the Father has thereby also accepted all that Jesus, the Son, has done in his obedience to his Father, and in his fulfilling the divine will for the salvation of the world.

The same message continues by spelling out how the Resurrection of Jesus, the Son, affects millions of other persons, in particular those who believe on his Name and become his disciples. The resurrected and exalted Jesus is the Head of the new creation, Lord of the Church, the King in the kingdom of heaven, the High Priest and Mediator by whom forgiven sinners come to the Father, the Prophet who proclaims the Word of God by the Spirit through his servants, the Judge who will return to earth to judge the peoples, and the Second Person of the Blessed, Holy and Undivided Trinity.

The Death of Jesus was different from the death of any other person, because he died as the Messiah, the Representative and Substitute Man, that is the Second and New Adam. His Resurrection was unique both in its reality and in that he was raised as the Messiah, the Representative and Substitute Man. In him, as it were, when he died, when he was buried and when he was raised were all the elect, all those who would believe upon him, when they heard the Gospel proclaimed (see further Romans 5 – 6 & 8).

With this background, St Paul begins to make sense when he writes: "If then you have been raised with Christ..." He does not doubt that as baptized Christian believers they were "in Christ" when he was raised from the dead; and further that in their baptism/conversion they received the new life of the Spirit, resurrection life. "Then" is not a word indicating doubt but of a fact of redemption.

So he continues: "Seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God."

Since the elect of God have been raised in and with their Lord to the highest possible place to which they could ever ascend—the closest proximity in Christ to his Father in glory—this amazing fact ought to give powerful direction and strength to their lives, what they aim for and what they say and do. "Things above" contrasts, of course, with "things that are earthly". The Greek verb used points to the orientation of the human will, and here the will is being guided in the direction of "the things above."

What Paul is saying is of such importance that he restates it in a related but different way: “Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on the earth.” The apostle urges them to let their thoughts dwell on that highest of realms where Christ is enthroned as Lord. Meditating upon, and contemplating Christ the Lord, in his exalted glory, is a powerful motivation for living for him in ways that please him on earth.

The Christian is to be in the world; not of the world; but for the world in the sense that God is for it. He can only be so if he is genuinely “heavenly-minded”.

Having made his exhortation for Christians to live in the light of the fact and message of Easter, the Apostle recalls the doctrine which was taken for granted when he began the exhortation: “For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” Jesus Christ is One Person, the Second Person of the Holy Spirit, and he is made known in two natures, divine and human. Those who are united to him by the Spirit and in faith are—as it were—enclosed within his glorified human nature and thus “are hidden with Christ [the Incarnate Son] in God, the Trinity.”

And to this mysterious but profound teaching he adds the word of hope: “When Christ who is our life appears, then you will also appear with him in glory.” St Paul looks to the end of the age when Christ returns to the earth to judge the living and the dead. He will not come alone but will be accompanied both by the holy angels and his redeemed saints in their resurrection bodies of glory.

So it is that the message of Easter Day is the message for all Lord’s Days, which are festivals of the Resurrection of Jesus. Further, the application of the Easter message is for every day until the same Lord Jesus returns in glory!

***“You must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus”*** (Romans 6:11).