



image: <https://www.kzoo.edu/praxis/black-panther-radicalism/>

CONCORD
SUNDAY
SCHOOL

LECTION-
ARY
LESSON 15

SUNDAY,
APRIL 12,
2020

Colossians 3:1-4 NRSV

1 So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, 3 for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.

Background

Every letter has an author and an audience. What makes the letter called Colossians difficult is that many scholars cannot agree upon either. Some say it was written by Paul. Others wonder if it was written by Timothy. Others say it might have been written by someone influenced by Paul. Then there are those who say this is written to Colossae (its people would be called “Colossians”). Some say it would be written to the universal church. Or to just the churches in Asia Minor. There might be good reasons for all of those scenarios. Whenever we analyze a letter that was not directed to us personally, it’s important to consider its original intent and context.

Throughout this letter, a major theme focuses on the ways that Christ and the body of believers are linked together. In your own devotional period, think about ways you might identify with Christ and that he might identify with you.

Today’s lesson will focus on giving the **right things our energy**.

Read the scripture out loud together.

Discuss with someone in your home. **Do you find it hard to focus these days?**

What's happening during this passage?

The third chapter of this letter opens with a bit of a dare. “If” you have been “raised with Christ,” then “seek the things that are above, where Christ is.” The audience is urged to think of things that are where Christ is, not on “things that are on earth.” The argument is, “to those who have been riding with Christ this whole time, what happens to him will also happen to you.”

Do we have to die in order to get the revelation?

We hope not. Some scholars argue that this reference to “dying” is coded language about baptism. As Christ was baptized, so are his followers. As we are plunged beneath the waters of baptism, we are enacting a choreography that mimics death and resurrection. Romans 6:3-4 tells it this way:

3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

We might infer that this letter is directed to those who have been baptized. If we have been “raised with Christ,” we must also seek the things that he sought after baptism. Justice, companionship, mutual care and compassion, fairness, mercy, community.

If I set my mind on things that are above, what does that mean for my daily practice?

Have you ever heard the phrase, “some people are so heavenly minded, they ain’t no earthly good?” There is a way to practice this posture in excess. Sometimes, people can be so focused on the spiritual that they neglect the very real issues in their faces. Consider this. What if our focus on things that are “above” help us to live differently here on Earth? For example, if we say we believe that the “things that are above” include an end to hunger and homelessness, then how do we behave today to make that true? If we believe in big ideas like justice, mercy, compassion, forgiveness, care, then shouldn’t we also live those big ideas in everyday ways? As V. Michael McKay’s

Koinonia says, “how can I look upon your face, and ignore God’s love, you I must embrace?” How can we call ourselves followers of a loving Christ if we do not actively follow his actions?

What we do today shapes the future. What we believe about Heaven and Christ has implications for how we live on Earth.

What questions do you still have of this scripture? How will you commit to journeying with this text this week?

Connection to Today’s World

In 1991, the Sounds of Blackness released a song now considered a classic. “Optimistic” is a catchy yet substantive



song that harps on themes of hope, optimism and perseverance. When asked about the song, Gary Hines said “we wanted to create something that’s not a flash in a pan, but something that would be a classic 20 years from now.” It was designed as a “statement of faith, it’s not about

white washing anything, but looking all the horrible situations in the face and saying you know what? Despite what we see, despite what we're going through everyday, all these different things, we have the faith and we believe in God, we believe in ourselves and we believe we can overcome.”

Of course, we might not always be ready to “be optimistic.” There is indeed trouble all over this world. Setting our minds on things “above” must be done with moderation, as with all things. Therapists often argue that focusing on “the things you can control” helps people to cope with immense struggle all around them. Maybe you cannot stop the cold nights from coming, but can you find a blanket? Maybe you cannot make the virus stop spreading outside, but can you minimize the risk you pose to others? Maybe you cannot attend the graduation you were looking forward to, but can you call up your classmates and coordinate a TikTok video?

Journal: Where do you want to put your energy this week? What's the big idea? What are some everyday ways you can live up to that big idea?

Closing: Sing “**Take Me Back,**” by Andrae Crouch.

*Take me back, take me back dear Lord.
To the place, where I first received you.
Take me back, take me back dear Lord,
Where I first believed.*

Prayer:

Dear God,

You gave us a son who has died, who is risen, and who shall come again. On this Easter Sunday, remind us of the mystery of the faith. Help us to always keep our eyes up and out. We need to look towards you and towards our fellow humans now and always.

We need your grace as we always have. We need your comfort and your tenderness as we move through these uncharted waters. Above all, help us to find patience and strength when it seems both are backordered.

In Jesus' name we pray,
Amen

Works Cited:

Introduction to the New Testament, Eugene M. Boring

<http://www.thefader.com/2017/02/16/sounds-of-blackness-optimistic-gary-hines-interview>