

Sermon: “Hidden With Christ”

Scripture: Colossians 3: 1-4

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Most of you know from a few sermons of late that I have a new “favorite” Christian music group called “Casting Crowns.” One of their songs chronicles the life of a woman “going 100 miles an hour in the wrong direction” . . . a woman who discovers “she’s two years older and three more steps behind.” She is a woman searching for love and affection in all the wrong places. The chorus of the song says:

“But does anybody hear her? Can anybody see?

Or does anybody even know she’s going down today?

*Under the shadow of our steeple are all the lost and lonely people
Searching for the hope that’s tucked away in you and me.”*

Clearly, there are many sermons in this song. This morning, in light of our scripture lesson from Colossians, I am particularly drawn to the phrase referring to lost and lonely people “searching for the hope that’s tucked away in you and me.”

In Colossians 3 Paul says that in baptism we have both died and been raised with Christ. He goes on to say: “For you died, and your life is now **hidden with Christ** in God.” In 2 Corinthians 5: 17, Paul says “If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see everything has become new!”

I don’t know about you, but I don’t always feel like a new creation. I’m not sure the “old” is gone at all. In many ways I identify more with the woman in the song who is “another two years older and three more steps behind” when it comes to my own spiritual growth—my own living out of the faith as one who has died with Christ, died to self, and been raised to newness of life. If I am a new creation in Christ, that reality is often hidden from me and others—especially my family.

- **I don’t always feel like a new creation in Christ.**
 - **I don’t always behave like a new creation in Christ.**
 - **Sometimes I don’t even feel that “hope which is tucked away in you and me.”**

In the same way that one phrase of the “Casting Crowns” song stands out to me today, one particular verse of the Colossians passage also stands out. “For you died and your life is now hidden with Christ.” It’s important to note that it says hidden **with**, rather than hidden **from** Christ.

Albert Barns (as quoted by David B. Curtis in “Christ Our Life” April 4, 2004), says:

“The language [used by Paul in this verse] is taken probably from treasure which is hid or concealed in a place of security, and the idea is that eternal life is a valuable jewel or treasure, which is laid up with Christ in heaven where God is. There it is safely deposited. It is not left with us or entrusted to our keeping — for then it might get lost as we might lose a valuable jewel, or it might be wrested from us . . . but it is now laid up far away out of our sight, and far from the reach of our enemies and with the One who can “keep that which we have committed to him against that day.”

To our **“I don’t always feel like a new creation”** Paul might respond: You are, whether you feel like it or not. You **are** a new creation because you have died and been raised with Christ. This isn’t about feelings. You are a new creation and that cannot be taken away from you. Your Life is tucked away in the strong arms of your Savior. Sometimes the reality of who you are in Christ is hidden from you and others, but it is never hidden from Christ. Joe Gillespie (of Covenant Fellowship Church) says this about being a new creation: “Now all this is not visible to the world around me. The deepest and most fundamental reality of who I am is hidden from view. But it is not hidden from Christ. **Indeed I am tucked in and with Christ, included with Him in the mind of God.**”

To our **“I don’t always behave like a new creation,”** Paul might respond: “True enough. But you are a new creation because of Christ’s behavior toward you. Grace is what Christ does for us—what we cannot do for ourselves.”

We might ask: “Does this mean we’re off the hook as far as our behavior goes?” Paul clearly suggests otherwise. He calls us to **become who we are**. He calls us to take off the “clothes” of the old life and to put on the clothes of the new creation.

One temptation we may have is to simply hide our bad behavior, our sin and our pain—especially at church. Perhaps hiding our bad behavior, our sin and our pain is the way to become who we are and to behave like a new creation.

Once again a “Casting Crowns” song challenges us on this notion. The title of the song is: “Stained Glass Masquerade.”

*Is there anyone that fails? Is there anyone who falls?
Am I the only one in church today feelin' so small?
'Cause when I look around everybody seems so strong.
I know they'll soon discover that I don't belong.*

*So I tuck it all away, like everything's OK,
If I make them all believe, maybe I'll believe it, too.
So with a painted grin, I play the part again,
So that everyone will see me the way that I see them.*

*Are we happy plastic people under shiny plastic steeples
With walls around our weakness and smiles to hide our pain?
But if the invitation's open to every heart that has been broken,
Maybe then we close the curtain on our stained glass masquerade."*

Because we are hidden in Christ, we are secure—secure enough to be real. While not a license to sin boldly, this security makes it possible for us to confront who we are in our sin, brokenness, and pain in the context of loving Christian community . . . so that we can become who we are as new creations in Christ. Then, “lost and lonely people in the shadow of our steeple” might feel they could know “the hope that’s tucked away in you and me.”

To our **“Sometimes I don’t feel that hope that’s tucked away in you and me,”** Paul might echo what A.T. Lincoln said:

“Our true identity is hidden. By no means everything about Christian living is apparent, not only to outsiders, for whom much of it appears foolish, but also for Christians themselves for whom there remains mystery and much questioning until the final revelation . . . Its hiddenness necessitates that Christians live by faith and not by sight, without all the answers to the meaning of many events in their lives” (A.T. Lincoln, *New Interpreter’s Bible, Volume IX*, page 641).

If you have died and been raised with Christ through your belief and trust in Christ, you are a new creation. We don’t always feel like it. We don’t always behave like it. We don’t always feel the hope that “new creations” ought to feel. The reality of our identity is sometimes hidden from us and from others. But we are new creations. We are tucked in the strong arms of our Savior, never hidden from Him. Now our calling is to become who we are, secure in Christ’s love today and always. Amen.