

Text Colossians 3: 1-4
title Sunrise service **The SO WHAT of the Resurrection**

We have heard the Story this morning of that first Easter morning, how the Empty tomb both bewildered and emboldened the early disciples. We know that the events of that morning changed the course of history forever. We could even argue that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the single most notable event in all of human history. But in order for this to be something more than an historical event- we must all answer the question that Paul deals with this morning- the "So, what's it to me?" question.

Read Text.

In a couple of words, the so what question is answered; ME TOO! Back in Colossians 2:20, Paul contends that his readers have already "died" with Christ. Now in 3:1 he asserts that those who have "died" have also been "raised with Christ." Paul assumes that his Colossian readers have participated in these experiences of death and life at the event of their own baptisms. Having experienced this symbolic death and resurrection, each believer, Paul now insists, has yet another mission to complete -- to "seek the things that are above."

What Paul was trying to do was to head off at the pass a form of dualism that had wormed its way into the life of the church. Dualism is the idea that there is a higher spiritual world and a lower physical world; that things of the spirit are more important, more "real". Dualists had gone to the point that they denied that Jesus was even a flesh and blood person, much less that he literally rose physically from the dead. Some believers were apparently practicing strange rituals, extreme asceticism, or even participating in a special cult of angel worship in their own attempts to "seek things above."

The corrective Paul offers here is one of perspective. His message to the Colossians urges them to celebrate now -- however incompletely -- what is still a future event. The empty tomb found by Simon Peter, the "other disciple," and Mary Magdalene testifies to the fact that salvation is a **present** reality. Every believer's new and redeemed life already exists. At the same time, the church lives in a post-resurrection age that has only just been inaugurated. The promise has yet to be fulfilled; the "glory"

of all those things we "seek above" is still in the future. The process of Christ, who already lives in us, becoming revealed has already started.

In part, that is what we are celebrating this morning. This is why, Christians this morning, all over the world are greeting each other with cries of "He is Risen!" and "He is Risen indeed!" Let's try it now.

I know that it doesn't always feel like we have been raised with Christ. It way too early in the morning! Paul's advice to the Colossians is to "Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth." It is as "seekers" that we come to know that our lives are fulfilled in the resurrection of a Christ who is "now" but "not yet," whose work is "complete" but yet "incomplete." Christian life is, in a way, one long Easter egg hunt.

Paul urges his Colossian friends to rise above the materialism of the false rewards this world has to offer. Dying with Christ, entering into that tomb with Jesus on Good Friday, is the way we Christians annually remind ourselves of the "completing" power of the risen Christ.

I don't know what "incompletes" are keeping you from growing into the fullness of faith and the life God intends for you. Do any of these "incompletes" apply to your life?

- relational incompletes -- do you have unresolved conflicts with someone, or do you have feelings that have not been expressed?
- integrity incompletes -- does it seem that you are one way with one set of people, yet a different with another set of people? If everyone you know, from work, friends and family got together, would they agree that they know the same person?
- physical incompletes -- Are you taking care of yourself? Doing what the doctors tell you to do to lead a long and healthy life?
- personal incompletes -- Are you "settling" for second best? do you avoid dreaming like you once did, reaching out to receive all of God's blessings?
- spiritual incompletes -- do you wish to commit 100 percent to God, yet fail to follow a disciplined walk with Christ through daily prayer, and Bible study?

I know this is beginning to sound just another list of things to do- when it is already hard to live up to the commitments we have now. The paradox in all of this is,

yes, it is a list, but it is a list of what God wants to do for us, not a list of things we must do to please God.

The open tomb on Easter morning forces us to face the paradoxes and "incompletes" in our lives. The open tomb assures us of God's promise to turn all our "incompletes" into "completes." When we find the tomb opened and empty every Easter morning, we are ourselves reborn with the risen Christ. But we are reborn with a specific mission -- **to seek out this Christ who once again lives, but is not yet back among us, and to allow that Christ to transform our "incomplete" lives into "completes."**

In the early morning hours of that first Easter, the Marys and the other women encountered an empty tomb that changed everything. Later on, Cleopas and his friend encountered Jesus on the way to Emmaus; and finally He appeared to all of his disciples gathered in the upper room. There was no doubt that Jesus was alive, Risen from the grave, just like he said he would. All the rest of his promises were as good as done already. This morning, let us leave this place knowing what the first disciples knew. He Is Risen! He Is Risen Indeed!