

Sermon Note: Set Your Mind

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

Introduction

What grabs your attention these days? Maybe it's the endless scroll of your phone, a packed calendar, the state of the world—or even just trying to make it through the week in one piece. It's no surprise that Paul's challenge to the Colossians—“**Set your minds on things that are above**”—feels radical, even idealistic. And it's exactly that reorientation of attention and intention that Paul sees as the heart of spiritual transformation.

The scripture this week speaks of a death and a rebirth: a spiritual shedding of what drags us down and a donning of a new self rooted in Christ. Paul isn't advocating for spiritual escapism or some kind of heavenly disconnection from reality. Instead, he invites us to imagine what it means to live grounded in unconditional grace—fully aware of the world's messiness, and *choosing* to respond through the lens of God's love and justice.

When Paul says to set our minds “above,” he's not asking us to ignore the pain, anxiety, or distraction we carry into worship each week. He's inviting us to acknowledge it, release it, and make room for the grace that renews. Like adjusting a blurry lens, we're called to view life with the clarity of Christ at the center—a clarity that helps us see the hard stuff differently, with deeper perspective and hope.

This week, we explore tangible steps toward becoming who we're called to be—living with compassion, speaking with kindness, and letting Christ shape how we engage the world around us. We don't have to be perfect! This is about persistence. A life centered on Christ doesn't magically make everything easy, it doesn't erase our struggles. It reshapes how we move through them and reminds us that we don't move alone.

Illustration Videos

Content note: *This clip includes brief instances of coarse language. Viewer discretion is advised, especially in intergenerational or more traditional church settings. Consider pausing or editing as appropriate for your context.*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YvPerZLPnm4>

In this scene from the iconic film *Shawshank Redemption* (1994), Andy's iconic escape scene portrays a powerful image of transformation, freedom, and new identity.

Why This Video?

Andy's escape in *The Shawshank Redemption* isn't just a jailbreak—it's a turning point of rebirth. After years of enduring injustice and confinement, he literally crawls through darkness to reach the light. It's a gritty, earthy depiction of transformation, echoing Paul's call in Colossians to shed the old self and embrace a renewed identity in Christ. The imagery of stepping out into the storm—arms raised, heart free—captures the depth of a paradigm shift—when everything begins to look different because we've been changed. Hope doesn't make the struggle disappear, but it can deepen our resilience and shape how we respond. Andy's

journey invites us to imagine how spiritual focus and persistence can lead to something deeper than survival: renewal.

Video Discussion Questions

1. What stands out to you most in the moment Andy steps into the rain?
2. How would you describe the emotional or symbolic significance of that scene?
3. What do you think kept Andy going during all those years of confinement and isolation?
4. How does the film use light and dark to represent transformation?
5. What kind of courage does it take to crawl through the darkness toward something better?
6. Have you ever experienced a moment that felt like personal liberation or breakthrough? What led up to it?
7. How does Andy's journey invite us to think about endurance and long-term hope?
8. What do you think freedom means in the context of this story?

Colossians 3:1-11 (NRSVue)

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

⁵Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry). ⁶On account of these the wrath of God is coming on those who are disobedient. ⁷These are the ways you also once followed, when you were living that life. ⁸But now you must get rid of all such things: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language from your mouth. ⁹Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices ¹⁰and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator. ¹¹In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, enslaved and free, but Christ is all and in all!

Scripture Study Questions

1. According to Paul, what should the Colossians seek and set their minds on—and why do you think that matters?
2. Looking at the behaviors Paul tells them to stop, what does that reveal about their past way of life?
3. How might focusing on “things above” help both individuals and faith communities leave behind behaviors that no longer fit life in Christ?
4. What makes it hard for people today to “strip off the old self” and “clothe themselves with the new”?
5. Paul emphasizes that in Christ, social divisions no longer define us. What guidance do you see in verses 10–11 for overcoming ethnic and racial divides in the church today?
6. How could you practice that guidance in your own relationships or church community?

Additional (Optional) Questions

1. What were the first things you did and thought about when you woke up this morning?
2. “Manifesting” is a popular idea today—naming what you want and believing it will come. What are some things you’d like to manifest in your life? Do you think that concept aligns with your faith?
3. We’re surrounded by messages about what a “good life” looks like. What are some things you’re told you need in order to be fulfilled?
4. Where do those ideas come from—social media, friends, advertising, or somewhere else?
5. Are there any ideas or messages you’ve received in church, worship, or Bible study that challenge or support those voices?
6. What makes those outside influences feel so compelling?
7. Who or what do you think should have the most influence on how we live—and why?
8. If you tuned out the noise telling you what’s important, what would rise to the surface for you?
9. How can you keep your focus on God even with all the distractions around you?
10. What might your life look like if your highest priority was to live like Christ?

Weekly Action

This week, choose one area of your life where you feel distracted, reactive, or pulled in too many directions. Write it down—on paper, in a journal, or on a digital device. Then each day this week, take 2–3 minutes to pause, breathe, and ask: “What would it look like to approach this with the mind of Christ?” Understand, this isn’t about fixing everything at once! It’s about practicing intention, making room for grace, and letting a new way of being take root—one moment at a time.

Prayer

God of hope, we confess that we are continually tempted by distractions. Lord, amid all that would seduce our minds toward earthly things, lead us to keep our minds set on things above, where Christ is. Amen.

Disclosure: This Sermon Note was created by LJUMC staff with the support of AI tools.