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Friday, March 27, 2020 – Ebenezer Baptist Church Vancouver

EBC Update



Keeping the Right Perspective

Sunday Worship Plans

Our first online service should be available, God willing, this coming Sunday, March 29, at 10:30 a.m.

A recording should be posted at this [link](#) on [Youtube](#). It should also be available on our [Facebook page](#) and our [church website](#), when we are able to post it there. And we'll be posting a voice recording of Pastor John's sermon at [rockoffhelp.com](#).

Please make a point of subscribing to our Youtube channel. We can add features free of charge once we reach over 100 subscribers.

If you have any difficulty accessing these resources, please call or email John directly.

“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now 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)

It can be relatively easy to believe in a loving God when things are going well. The really difficult questions arise when we face pain, suffering and obvious injustice—and perhaps especially when they come on the kind of scale that we're now seeing with the COVID-19 outbreak.

The trouble is, of course, that there are no easy answers to help explain why so many people suffer. We can point to the fact that we live in a fallen cosmos, where the unholy trinity of "the world, the flesh and the devil" still cause a great deal of trouble. We can highlight the free choice that God gives us all to go our own way, sometimes with disastrous consequences. We can mention the vagaries of circumstance to which we all are subject—often through no fault of our own.

But why should "x" suffer and not "y"? This is the kind of question to which we often have no meaningful answers, except to try to trust in the overarching providence of a God who has promised to order all things for the best of those who love him.

Colossians 3 also suggests another important word of advice wherever we are in the Christian life. And that is to keep our focus in the right place.

The apostle Paul is writing to his readers in Colosse with instructions on how to lead a "new life in Christ." So he talks about the changes that we all need to make to leave our old way of life, in fact, what Paul calls our "old self," behind.



The apostle's main thrust, therefore, is moral and ethical. In verses 5 through 9, Paul urges that his readers get rid of the negatives that belong to the past, including "sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, and greed," as well as "anger, rage, malice, slander and filthy language." And the apostle's main rationale is that through faith in Christ, the Colossians have effectively become new people. They have been born again by the Spirit of God.

"You died," Paul says in verse 3, "and your life is now hidden with Christ in God." He couldn't express the situation much more dramatically. "You have taken [or stripped] off the old self with its practices" we read in verses 9 and 10, "and have put on [or clothed yourselves with] the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its creator."

So as Christians we are called to march to the beat of a very different drummer from the world around us. We are not the people we were, because Christ has made us new. And this transformation should affect not only our standards of behaviour. It should revolutionize our whole outlook.

"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ," the apostle writes in verses 1 and 2, "set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things."

"Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things." There we have the issue of focus which can be so very important if we are to keep the right kind of balance and perspective. For it is when we forget how things really are that we can start to allow the sufferings in our lives and in our world to do more damage than they need to.

God obviously doesn't expect us to be passive or inactive. It's vital for us to help those who suffer. But at the end of the day, our last court of appeal and our proper place of repose remain with God.

With the coming of Jesus, the new age of Christ and his



gospel are here. We are already new creations in Christ. The powers of darkness have been defeated on the cross. But we are yet to see the full realization of Christ's victory until the end of human history.

In the meantime, Colossians 3 urges us not to lose heart or lose hope, whatever our sufferings. God and God alone has the ultimate solutions. God offers them freely and unconditionally by grace through faith in Christ. And in him, we can find the right perspective for all that lies ahead.

Pastor John Oakes



Prayer Needs

- Our church leaders
- Our sick and shut-ins
- Government leaders
- Doctors, nurses and health care workers
- Our witness to the gospel
- Our online services
- All who are anxious and/or lonely

Staying in Touch

This newsletter is intended to be a source of community news and devotional materials. With that in mind, please let Pastor John know of any updates, content ideas, or feedback. Meanwhile,

- We have organized a teleconference prayer meeting for Sunday, March 29 at 7:00 p.m. The phone number to call and the access code are communicated by email with the release of this newsletter. Watch this space for further details about a Skype prayer meeting next week.
- Our leaders are now calling people and/or households to check in with you and to ask about possible prayer and practical needs.
- Our Prayer Chain remains fully functional. Confidential prayer requests can be made by phone or email to Sharon Iseli or Freda Ross.
- Pastor John can be reached in the event of an emergency at any time on 604-779-2356. His email is seniorpastor@rockofhelp.com.
- We will be posting updates on our church website: www.rockofhelp.com and different social media.