

## Living the **DREAM**....New Life in Christ

### Colossians 3: 1-17

slide

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 2007 John Darwin walked into a West End Police Station in London and announced. "I think I am a missing person".

Which was pretty surprising. Seeing as Mr Darwin had been declared to be legally dead at a inquest in 2003. In 2002 John jumped on his canoe and went for a paddle on the English north sea coast. But he disappeared.

There was a big air and sea search. And they couldn't find him. And a couple of days later they found his canoe...washed up on some rocks. And he was presumed drowned.

Now here he is, five years later, looking remarkably tanned and well nourished. Claiming he's got amnesia. Doesn't know who he is. Or where he's been for the last five years.

Police were a little suspicious. And they had a few questions.

*Slide – photo of Darwin and his wife*

It didn't take long.... some photographs turned up with John and his wife living it up in Panama just 18 months before. And they were Busted.

Mr Darwin and his wife admitted it was all a scam. They admitted..... he'd faked his own death.

Now, .....why would you do it? Why would you fake your own death? Why would you go to all that trouble to set up the scenario. To lie and lie and lie .... To live in hiding. To live with that risk of being found out. With the guilt. Knowing people were grieving. Knowing you could be liable for prosecution. Why would you do it?

What could be so bad about your life that you had to die and start all over again?

AS it turns out they had money troubles. Tens of thousands of dollars of debt. And they could only see one way out. And they were willing to do all that. And even lie to their own sons about their dad's death. To be able to dump the old life. And start again.

The surprising thing is. John Darwin's not alone. There's plenty of others who'd love to do the same or who actually have done, given the right circumstances.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of October 1999 this article appeared in the Washington Post.

Just about everybody must have had this fantasy: You survive a horrendous accident.

Everybody assumes you're dead. So you slip away to the airport, hop aboard the next plane to some distant locale and start a whole new life.

Evidently a number of people lived out that very scenario two weeks ago in the confusion and turmoil following the fiery collision of two crowded commuter trains just outside London's Paddington Station...

This was a huge train smash. At first they thought something like a hundred people had been killed. But in the end. It was more like thirty. For two reasons. One...some people just got on with their business. They went home or to work – didn't think to tell anyone they'd been on the train until a few days after. Which didn't help. But the other reason. Others took the opportunity. To just walk away. To disappear altogether.

Some survivors of the accident, Scotland Yard says, walked away without a word to anyone and boarded international flights later that day.

IT's intriguing isn't it. They hadn't planned it. But given the opportunity. They walked away from their old life. To start a new one.

Now, as Paul writes to the Colossian church, he's not cooking up some sort of insurance scam. But he is saying. If you're a Christian. You've already walked away...from your old life. And you're living a new one. In Christ.

That's the reality. Which is important to understand. If you're going to continue. Because you're IN CHRIST. you died with him. And there's some things you need to leave behind. And because you're IN CHRIST you've been raised again to a new life. There's some new things to pick up.

And there's some specific things Paul's got to say there in chapter 3.

But let me backtrack for just a second. We'll get the logic behind the argument.

If you jump back to verse 6 of chapter 2. And we're hammering this verse. But I don't apologise for that. Paul says it's about continuing in him. And not being sidetracked.

And Paul goes metaphor mad here. He says verse 6

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted (picture of a tree with it's roots going way down), rooted and built up in him(like a house), strengthened like a powerlifter, strengthened in the faith as you were taught and overflowing(picture of a plant after I've been given the job of watering it.) Overflowing with thankfulness.

Don't be deceived he says. Jump down to verse 9. Don't be deceived. You're in Christ. That's where your roots are. And your strength. And you overflow with thankfulness in him. In

Christ all the fullness of God's deity lives in bodily form. Verse 10 and you've been given fullness IN HIM.

And you have to keep your eye out for those two little words. IN HIM. That's they key for Paul.

There's this close identification with Christ. And in Christ... with God. That's what it IS to be a Christian. That's how you CONTINUE to be a Christian.

But if you follow from verse 11 he unpacks it a bit more for us. With another metaphor. He says IN HIM... you were circumcised.

Which of course is a reference to that Jewish practice where all Jewish males were circumcised to identify as being one of God's special people. Which is what you had to do if you were a gentile. And you wanted to become a Jew. But Paul says. If you're IN HIM....You've been circumcised already in a sense, by Christ.

Which conjures up some very strange imagery. But the point is this. And it's explained there in 12. In the same way the flesh is put off in circumcision. When you came to Christ you verse 11 you were circumcised, in the putting off...of the sinful nature....with the circumcision done by Christ.

Paul's going to go on to say a bit further on. The circumcision done by men was one of those rituals. Done in the flesh. That pointed to the reality. Of what God would do in Christ.

How's that you say? Please explain!

Paul knows that's what you're asking.

What's this circumcision that puts off the sinful nature? Verse 12 Paul says. It's not what happens when you say your hail mary's. It's not what happens when you pull up your boot straps and try to be the best moral person you can be. It's what happens when you die with Christ. And when you're raised with him.

This is the circumcision of Christ.

Verse 12. Having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

Now, theology lecturers LOVE verses like this. This is pure doctrinal heaven for them. This explains the atonement so well.

Jesus ...takes on humanity. God becomes flesh in the person of Jesus. And not only does he take on humanity. At the cross he takes on the SIN OF HUMANITY. Your sin. My sin. And the consequences of it. The punishment for it. Which is death.

And because we're IN HIM. We die with him. He takes the old you. And your sin and rebellion. And even your efforts at being good which stink to high heaven. And he takes them on himself. And they're buried with him. I hope you can picture that.

If you're IN CHRIST....the old you. The consequences of being the old you. The debt to God. Your guilt. Your shame. ALL OF IT....died with Christ.

And through faith. You live again. Forgiven. Raised with Christ. Raised not just to life. But to eternal life. So much that Paul's going to say in chapter 3. Your risen life is hidden with Christ in Heaven.

Now, you're going to feel one of two ways about this whole new life thing. One you're going to feel the same way the Pharisees and the rich people felt when Jesus started saying the same thing. You're going to feel angry. What an insult to say that to me. What an insult to say that my life is so bad. That I need to die. I'm not a bad person you say. I'm respectable. Or I'm rich. I'm ok, you're ok, we're all ok. And you say I need to die. So you'll be offended.

Or .....you'll be overflowing with thankfulness. Like the poor and the humble. Who if they're honest know what Jesus is saying is true. That they're rebels. And they can't make peace with God on their own terms.

Well Paul says you ought to be thankful. You know why. Because whether you're offended or not. Whether you're Jew or not. No matter how good you think you are. Without the righteousness that comes from being in Christ...YOU WERE DEAD.

Verse 13.

When you were dead. Talking to the gentiles here. Non-Jews. People like you and I. When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ.

He forgave US – that is, us Jews, all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulation, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the

cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

In Christ. At the CROSS. His triumph is your triumph. If your faith's in him.

What looked like weakness at the cross was his mighty power and strength and wisdom at work.

And the language is that of the victorious general in battle who'd parade his poor captives through the streets and publicly humiliate them before the world.

Except here.... Paul says Jesus who's been put on public display of the worst kind. Is at that point. In that very act at the cross. Beating down the powers of the world that keep us captive to sin. He's triumphing over them. And giving life.

That's the logic you need to see. Before you start to tackle chapter 3. I want you to look at verse 16 and the first word. You see the first word of verse 16. Therefore.

You died. And you live with Christ. You're in Christ. Therefore.

Therefore..we looked at it last week. Therefore don't let anyone judge you by religious rituals or laws. Therefore don't submit to all sorts of rules about things you can't eat or touch in an effort to be spiritual. Because you can't get any more spiritual than having new life in Christ.

Which brings us to chapter 3.

And Paul says three things that flow out of the new life we have in Christ. None of which let me say, are rules. They're ways of behaving because you're in relationship with him.

And Paul's got three things. Which I've listed there on the outline.

Number one. He says set your minds and your hearts on heavenly things.

Which is where your new life is.

Number two. There's some things you need to put to death. To put off. You need to ditch some things.

And number three. There's some things you need to put on.

So lets start with number one. Verse one of chapter 3.

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

Which sounds like something Jesus said in Matthew 6. Jesus said this. He said. Where your treasure is, there your heart will be too.

And Paul says. Set your hearts on things above. And not only that, let that reality fill your head space too. Set your MINDS on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

Again. Interesting picture. If you're a Christian you're so united to Christ that you're here sitting in a building at 60 Maygar Street/28 Macgregor street, and at the same time you're with Christ who's at the father's side in heaven.

Now, if you think I'm going to explain how that works I can tell you....you'll be waiting. No way I can do that. But Paul doesn't try to explain the how. He just states it as a reality and says to live in the light of it.

You died he says. If you're in Christ. And your new life awaits. So let that reality drive you. Let that be your passion. Set your heart on it. And let it fill your head too. Think about it. Live for it.

As you know Rowan got married yesterday. Pretty early as weddings go. 9am. At the Windsor Presbyterian Church. Be very strange wouldn't it.....at 8.55.... if Rowan was down at the PIE SHOP!

Be bizarre wouldn't it. I mean. 9am. Your new life awaits. And you're wolfing down a beef and burgundy. It doesn't make sense. There's something wrong with that picture. And even if it's a really GOOD pie shop like the one down the road here. Chunky steak I recommend it. That aside.

But surely your head space is filled with the wedding. Surely your heart is THERE.

And that's Paul's point.

Why does someone decide to go to training and swim up and down and up and down the pool..instead of going to macdonalds, or the pub? They've got their mind and heart on their goal. And they're convinced it's worth it.

HE's not saying live with your head in the clouds. He's not telling us to be star gazers. HE's just saying. Don't get sidetracked and let the good things of this world take centre stage. Nothing wrong with having a hobby but don't live and breathe for it. Nothing wrong with having a career but don't let that be what drives every decision in your life.

You've been raised with Christ. Let that reality drive the way you live. Because when Christ appears, you also will appear with him in glory.

Second point. Verse 5. Because you died with Christ. Because you've been raised with HIM..There's some things you need to put to death.

Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.

Pretty strong language.

Pretty comprehensive. Whatever belongs to your earthly nature. Kill it.

Treat it like you would a funnel web spider heading towards your two year old.

Don't flirt with it. Don't minimize it. Don't suppress it. Put it to death.

Sexual immorality belongs to your earthly nature. Not talking about sexuality. Don't get that confused. That's God's gift. Sexual immorality is God's gift misused. And as a result. People abused. Lives wrecked. Relationships strained and broken.

And yet you might be shocked to know it's alive and well in churches.

Sometimes you see it in the headlines. Like we did a year or so ago in our own denomination.

Minister arrested on child pornography charges.

If you don't think it's a problem you're kidding yourself.

But that's the tip of the iceberg. The rest's buried down in the dark places. Well hidden.

Maybe by you.

So easy to access. Just a click away on the internet. We've got laws that say you need a licence for a gun. And if you've got one of those you need to have it locked away. You need to have the ammunition separate.

But it's just a click on the internet...to a smorgasboard of pornography. Which is maybe more dangerous. The fact that Paul mentions it points out the fact that it's something we struggle with. And he's not saying – you ought to be ashamed. He's saying. Do the humane thing. And put it to death. Along with impurity of any kind. Lust. Evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.

Verse 6 you know what he says. God hates these things. Think about something you really detest. Well God's wrath is coming because of these things.

He hates them. So get rid of them.

You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these;

And there's five things.

anger, rage, malice, slander and filthy language from your lips.

I often wonder. How great would it be if I could get rid of all the stuff I don't need in my house. If I could clear out all the junk.

What would your life look like without these things. If you had a jar for each one. If you had a slander jar. And you had to put in a dollar for every time you slandered somebody. How often would it get filled? Or an anger jar. A rage jar. A malice jar. If there was an audible ding every time you harboured malice. How often would it be going off?

Paul says you need to get rid of these things. And not lie to one another.

Why? Because verse 9. Because you have taken off your old self.

And the image is like a piece of clothing.

You've taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of it's Creator.

Which brings us to the last point. And the last therefore of verse 12. Paul's told us to set our hearts and minds on things above. To put to death certain things. To get rid of them. To take them off.

And then he says. Here's what you put on instead. And this is what Matt Sanders tells us parents to do. When you're kid's doing the wrong thing. He says. Tell them to stop the wrong thing. But give them the right thing in it's place. Don't to that. We know that much that's easy. But do this.

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with these things. And there's five things here.

And let me just say, that in the very putting on of these things. Is a good way of putting the other things to death.

Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

As far as I can see compassion is that inner attitude that breeds the act of kindness. Kindness springs up out of compassion. Compassion and kindness are about your attitudes and actions toward others.

Humility's about your attitude to yourself isn't it. You hear the stories about people all of a sudden changing when they get a promotion. What's changed. Mainly their attitude towards themselves. So put on humility in the way you think about yourself.

Then you can be gentle with others.

And be patient, which is more about coping with how others treat you so you're not living in that constant state of resentment.

Did you pick up on all of the relational issues there. This is about getting on with each other.

You might remember in the old TV's they used to have a vertical hold and a horizontal hold. And to get a good picture you had to have both right.

God's purpose in Christ wasn't only to repair the vertical hold. It's not all about you and God. It's the horizontal as well. In fact in a way..the way we get on with each other is a pretty good reflection of the other.

Paul says bear with each other. You're going to rub each other up the wrong way. Suck it up. And forgive each other. The way God forgave you in Christ. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues. Here's the overcoat. Put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Then the peace of Christ will rule your hearts. And you'll be thankful. Teach one another with God's rich word. Sing to one another with thankful hearts. Because of the new life you've been given in him.