**Colossians 3:1-11**

**A Life Hidden in Christ**

We’re really going to focus on the problem of greed this morning, because greed is an infection that gets into the roots of our hearts far more effectively than many other things. Webster defines greed this way: **selfish and excessive desire for more of something (such as money) than is needed.** Notice right off the bat that money is used as an example of something that human beings often get greedy for, but it’s not the only thing. There are articles and articles, research piled on research, trying to determine how money and happiness are tied together. But with all the research done, there’s a lot of conflicting results. Some people say that money can literally buy happiness once you have enough of it; some say that money can buy you happiness up to a certain point and then it tapers off; some say that it can’t do so. I’m landing here: sure, money can buy happiness, but so can a lot of other things. A good relationship can buy you happiness. Status or prestige can buy you happiness. Humor that people flock to can buy you happiness. There’s a lot of things, people, places in life on earth that can catch a sinful person’s eye and send them chasing off into the sunset in pursuit of happiness, but a happiness that will only last temporarily. And that’s the issue we’re gonna tackle this morning. To what are you attached in your life? What do you identify with? Who do you identify with? The answer, as Christian people, is Jesus. I identify as a child of God, bought by the blood of Jesus; my life is wrapped up and hidden in Christ. Let’s unpack that.

This sermon is gonna take a big picture view of all the readings for this morning, for this reason. In Ecclesiastes, the wisest man to walk the earth, King Solomon, clearly puts the problem out in front of us. The gospel shows us a biblical picture of that problem. And Colossians gives us the solution. So we begin in Ecclesiastes with one word: vapor. Most of us here are probably more familiar with the NIV translation which calls everything “meaningless,” but they mean the same thing. If you imagine, for a moment, some water vapor in the air, you can see it. You can imagine it. You can chase after it. But you can never catch it. You can never hold onto it. You can never capture the vapor and possess it forever. The same is true about created things; all the things that you can see, and touch, and feel. All the people you can talk to and grow relationships with. Just like vapor, you can see them, but you will not be able to hold onto them forever. The things of this world will never bring you everlasting fulfillment. There is nothing on planet earth that can satisfy the human heart in the way it needs to be satisfied. Think about it this way. Our lives on earth have an end date. There will be a day that we die. There will never be a day when your soul dies. God created mankind to last for an eternity. So, why would we set our hearts and minds on things that only last a lifetime. Some of the things we set out hearts on don’t even last that long! Take it from the smartest man to ever live: **Everything is just vapor that vanishes.**

The wisdom that Solomon explains is what Jesus uses to tell his story this morning: **The land of a certain rich man produced very well. He was thinking to himself, ‘What will I do, because I do not have anywhere to store my crops?’ He said, ‘This is what I will do. I will pull down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and goods. And I will tell my soul, “Soul, you have many goods stored up for many years. Take it easy. Eat, drink, and be merry.”’ But God said to him, ‘You fool, this night your soul will be demanded from you. Now who will get what you have prepared?’ “That is how it will be for anyone who stores up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.** There’s a similar story I came across about a man who found the ole’ genie in the bottle. And he makes his wish wanting to see his future, and his obituary appears. A pretty sobering picture to see when looking into the future, and yet, that’s the end to all the things of this life that you could possibly go chasing after. And like I said before, it doesn’t just have to be money. The greed, the excessive desire for more of something than you need. That could be your career, it could be time doing your hobbies, it could be time spent in front of the tv, it could be time spent with the people you love. Notice, in Paul’s list of stuff to let go, he separates greed from evil desires. This is his list: **sexual immorality, uncleanness, lust, evil desire, and greed.** Put it all to death. But greed and evil desires are separate–you see that? Because greed is usually chasing after something good. Your career is a wonderful thing, a job you enjoy and can use to put food on the table is a wonderful blessing. Your hobbies, hunting, fishing, sewing, biking, camping, are all awesome blessings. The tv is a fun place to relax. No one would ever say it’s bad to spend time with family and friends. But if any of those things become the thing that our heart chases after—God promises us a meaningless life.

**Put to death whatever is worldly in you** because your life is hidden with Christ in God. What does that mean? You died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. There was a part of you that was crucified that Good Friday. There was a part of you that was nailed to the cross. There was a part of you that took its last breath when Jesus took his last breath and said “It is finished.” That part of you died! And now you are completely and fully hidden in and connected to your Savior. The part of you that would go chasing after money, or your career, or fun relationships, or the perfect garden for joy and fulfillment is gone. The new you is able to enjoy those blessings of God as secondarily important because your life is completely wrapped up in your Savior. You have an identity that does not change as your career may. You have an identity that is not hindered when there’s bad blood in your circle of friends. You have an identity that maintains its growth and greenery all through the winter months. Because your life is hidden with Christ.

Paul says it this way: **Do not lie to each other since you have put off the old self with its practices, and put on the new self, which is continually being renewed in knowledge, according to the image of its Creator.** The way Paul writes this is actually really cool. The image of its Creator. The title Creator is used three times in the New Testament. Two of those times, it is used to describe God who created all things, the Creator God. But then there’s this usage Paul has. It’s used only one time to specifically talk about Jesus. This is why this is so cool, Jesus himself created your new self. Which means that in his life, death, and resurrection, through the faith that God himself has created in your heart, Jesus has made you new and has hidden you with himself. I had this image pop into my head of Jesus walking around with his wallet and he pulls it out and a huge string of pictures falls out, and just like a proud grandpa starts name all his grandkids, so Jesus points at each and every one of our pictures and says he’s mine, she’s mine, they all belong to me. Put on the new self that Jesus created you to be. There is only one place where you can find satisfaction. It’s not found in money, it’s not found in other people, it’s not found in success, it’s not found in your career, or your accomplishments, and achievements. You will never find eternal satisfaction in anything that has been created, you will only ever find eternal satisfaction in the one who Created all things. Solomon called everything under the sun meaningless. But recognize what God did. God watched mankind chasing around all these meaningless things in life, things that would distract us and pull us away from him. But God saw something worthwhile under that sun—you. Out of all the things God has created, YOU are the most important thing under the sun. So Jesus went chasing, he went chasing something under the sun—he went chasing you.

This is what makes Baptism so beautiful. As the waters of baptism rush over a person’s head into their heart, God puts His name on that person and declares that they belong to him. Sins are washed away, a new self is created to live how God desires, and eternal life forever in heaven with Jesus is promised. If you’re baptized, find a way to remind yourself of it everyday. If you haven’t been baptized, please come talk to me about it. Baptism is the clear, tangible evidence of your everlasting identity—your identity is a child of God. What does that mean for you today? Enjoy the things of this life, all the created things under the sun, all the blessings that your God gives you, but don’t make those things the things you chase after. Don’t let those be the things that you stress over. Recognize that your everlasting peace comes from having a life hidden in Christ. Amen.