

**A GOOD DEATH****Colossians 3:1-4**

**Intro:** Lord Byron said “*Whom the god's love, die young . . .*”

When Billy Joel sang “*Only the good die young*” he was probably loosely quoting Lord Byron, but he was singing about a girl named Virginia he’d had a crush on when he was in high school. She never gave in to his temptations because she was a good girl who believed what she had been told in her catechetical classes in Catholic school. Good for you Virginia! It’s good you never settled for the piano man.

The psalmist said *Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints*. Psalm 116:15. We Christians have funny thinking when it comes to death.

When Jesus rode into Jerusalem with his followers cheering and waving palm fronds, it looked like he had the world by the tail. Four days later as he hung on the cross that was all just a bitter memory for his followers who looked at him and thought out loud, “Thirty three years old and they killed him. What a waste!”

But it was a good death. It was a really bad day for everybody who was there. But it is called Good Friday because it was a good death on that awful Cross. Jesus died in our place, then he defeated death and rose from the grave. It insured that we could have a good death too. That is the beauty of the resurrection.

Listen to this:

**(Read Colossians 3:1-4)**

A good death means being . . .

**Raised with Christ**

- Our old nature was nailed to the cross. So when we die to that old person there is a magnetic pull into a new nature. The invitation is there to walk in that new nature. It means we are different. We think differently and we act differently because we **ARE** different. The King James Version says, *But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people*; 1 Peter 2:9a (KJV). We are peculiar in the eyes of the world. We are seen as strange. But in the 1611 when the King James was first published, the word peculiar had a slightly different meaning than it does now. The translation that is more understandable is *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, A PEOPLE FOR HIS OWN POSSESSION*, 1 Peter 2:9a (ESV). Being raised with Christ means we are no longer our own – we are holy and set apart for him.
- We are not weird – but we ARE different. Being raised with Christ doesn’t mean withdrawing from the world – it means reflecting the transformation a good death brings by looking up rather than looking around. William Barclay says “*There will be this difference—from now on, the Christian will view everything against the background of eternity and no longer live as if this world was all that mattered. This will give us a new set of values. Things which the world thought important, we will no longer worry about. Ambitions which dominated the world, will be powerless to touch us. We will go on using the things of the world but we will use them in a new way. We will, for instance, set giving above getting, serving above ruling, forgiving above avenging. The Christian standard values will be God's not men's.*”
- It’s like this, when we are a new creation in Christ, we are a different person. Our minds are set on things above and much less wrapped up in the things of this earth. It’s an amazing freedom.
- Paul tells us that a good death means being . . .

**Hidden with Christ**

- This sounds strange until you look at the verses leading up to our passage at the end of Colossians 2 because Paul has been teaching about letting go of the things of earth that drag us down and instead latch on to the things of God. He says, *If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations* Colossians 2:20a.
- Why do we hang on to the old stuff? It’s slavery. It’s frustration. It’s completely unnecessary. But it’s what we know and it’s where we are comfortable. I have read 22 of the 24 books in the delightful #1 Ladies Detective Agency series. The first one came out in 1998 and in the ensuing 26 years the main character, MaRamotswe, who is the intrepid lady detective who lives in Gaborone in Botswana in southern Africa, has had the same tiny white van (which is what we would call a pickup). She refuses to give it up. Year after year and novel after novel sees her longsuffering and dedicated husband, Mr JLB Matekoni: owner

of Tlokweng Road Speedy Motors and a mechanic and a miracle worker doing everything he can to keep the little truck on the road. Time after time he has found a much more suitable vehicle for her but time after time she has refused. It's what you can do in a novel – make a tiny white van survive year in and year out through every kind of misadventure. In reality it would have been junked long ago. But my point is MaRamotswe could be in a much better and more reliable car – but she stays with what she knows rather than what's best. Paul celebrates the freedom of being hidden in Christ – we just need to let go of what we think we know best and set our minds and hearts on the One who knows what is best for us.

- This what happens when . . .

### **Christ is our life**

- Our good death insures that we have life in Christ. Paul said, *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.* Philippians 1:21. In Galatians he wrote, *I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.* Galatian 2:20. And here in Colossians he says, *When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.* Colossians 3:4. As Paul saw it, to the Christ Follower, Christ is the most important thing in life – in fact HE IS LIFE!
- He's the only way – Jesus said it himself as he was finishing up the last supper with his disciples, *I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.* John 14:6.
- He is our life. Through him is the only way to life eternal. And in this life, as we die to the old way of life, he makes life worth living until we can experiences eternal life.

**Conclusion:** Ponder this truth this week.

*God sent His son, they called Him, Jesus;*

*He came to love, heal and forgive;*

*He lived and died to buy my pardon,*

*An empty grave is there to prove my Savior lives!*

He went to the Cross to die for us.

He was laid in a grave but it couldn't hold him – he rose again and defeated death. About a week before that first Easter, Jesus told a grieving Martha, *I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.* John 11:25-26. The best was yet to come. Hang on to that promise—seek the things that are above. He's our life.

*Because He lives, I can face tomorrow,*

*Because He lives, all fear is gone;*

*Because I know He holds the future,*

*And life is worth the living,*

*Just because He lives!*

That is what I mean by a good death. Amen.