

“The New Life Given to Christians” Colossians 3:1-11 / Luke 12:13-21 (8/3/25)

As I mentioned earlier, I served as an officer in the Korean Air Force. I still remember the first day of officer training. When the candidates came to the training base, we had a week of final tests. During this week, we had the last physical and medical test. Before we passed these final tests, we were not officially the officer candidates, so the instructors were still very kind and respected us during this final test week. On the last night of the final test week, the head instructor gathered us at the training ground. Then he announced, “Tonight will be the last night that we are kind and gentle to you. From tomorrow morning, you will be officially officer candidates. You will be under our instructions, and we will have the authority to make you an Air Force officer, which means we will not be kind anymore; we will be Satan from tomorrow. If anyone wants to leave this training program, ask the instructors, they will help you go back home tonight.” That night, several people dropped out of the training program. They went back home. Then, the next morning, the hell gate was opened. Instructors were no kinder to us. I have never heard so much shouting and yelling in my life as on that first day.

On the first night, each platoon gathered at the training ground as a group. Then, the instructor of each platoon asked us what we wanted to have through this training. I thought it was a very weird question because I wondered how there could

be other goals in military training. I thought there would be only one goal in this training: to become an Air Force officer. However, I was surprised by the answers of other candidates. Most answers were, “I want to be transformed” or “I want to be a new person.” Yes, truly, the instructors did their best to make us new people. They strongly trained us to make us officers. Every life schedule was under their control. We had to wake up, eat, and sleep at the exact time and schedule. We believed that we had become totally new, strong people.

However, it didn't take long for the new officers' lives to return to normal. After completing basic training, we officially became officers and were granted freedom. After working hours, we were free to leave the base, and many new officers would go out in the evenings, eat, drink, and return drunk. Everything was messy, they did not clean their rooms, and their daily routine was broken. We were back to the people we were before we were trained.

This is a problem that many people have repeatedly done. People want to be new people. So, many people discipline themselves. Self-control is one of the most valued virtues today. However, when people lose their self-control or self-discipline, they turn back to old behaviors very easily.

While I was waiting for my visa status, I decided to walk a lot. I walked to

Walmart and Aldi for grocery shopping and walked to McDonald's to have some morning coffee, pushing a stroller for my children. It was really difficult to walk to Walmart in the first few days. However, I eventually became familiar with walking to Walmart. It was not difficult anymore. I thought I could walk to Walmart for grocery shopping with my children even after I renew my driver's license. However, after I renewed my driver's license, I have yet to walk to Walmart. I thought again, 'It is impossible to walk to Walmart with two kids.'

It is very difficult to become a new person through self-discipline and self-control. Perhaps people must spend their entire life disciplining and controlling themselves. Christianity also talks about discipline and self-control. Christianity also talks about becoming a new person, becoming a perfect Christian who loves God and neighbors. However, Christianity has a different start. While people talk about changing and transforming themselves, Christianity says growth. Christianity does not teach us to transform and change from old to new. Christianity says that through Jesus Christ, our old sinful nature was dead, and we had new life through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and we grow up to become perfect Christians. In this understanding, we were dead on the cross with Jesus Christ, and we were born again with the new life given to us through Jesus Christ.

This “born again,” in Methodism, we say, The New Birth. It is one of the most important doctrines in Methodism. Wesley said, it happens by the grace of God, and we are born again by the Holy Spirit. I hope to have some chance to talk in more detail about our death and new birth later.

In today’s Scripture, Paul also mentioned the new life given to Christians. In Colossians 3:1-3, “Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 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 a life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.” And in verse 10, “and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.”

Now we know the cities mentioned in the New Testament are very important and big cities in the Roman Empire. Colossae was also placed in a very important location in the Roman Empire. Colossae was the center of the cross-cultural exchange between the West and the East at that time. So, lots of philosophies were brought into Colossae. And the Colossian church was not founded by Paul. Therefore, this Colossian church also had some struggles about how to believe in Jesus Christ and live as Christians. Christians in the Colossian church, of course, believed in

Christians, but at the same time, they worshiped angels, and they believed that spiritual things are the greatest thing in the world. Some of the Colossian Christians believed only in the spiritual aspects of Jesus Christ. In easier words, they believed in Jesus Christ, but at the same time, they pursued spiritual things for their spiritual practices.

The same things happen in the present day. We say now it is the generation of AI. And many people say that the work of a pastor will survive in the AI generation. The reason why clergies, like church pastors, will survive is that the AI cannot handle the spiritual part of human beings. For this reason, we can see many people try to do something for their spiritual wellness and to fill themselves with spiritual things. They sometimes worship nature, seeking spiritual insights and strength through various teachings and life experiences.

We also pursue spiritual strength at the church. But we do not pursue the spiritual strength for our transformation, change, or inner peace. We pursue spiritual strength for growth to become perfect Christians. We have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. And we believe Jesus Christ is the only God who can satisfy us spiritually.

Our sinful nature died on the Cross when Jesus was crucified. Then, the new

life was given to us with the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We were born again by the Holy Spirit, so now we live our new life to grow up into perfect Christians. Paul said the Colossian Christian should live this life against earthly nature. I would say we should live this life to be perfect Christians who love God and love our neighbors.

Today, God prepared this Holy Table for us. This is the evidence and promise of the new life given to us. Jesus died for us and he gave his life to give us new life. Now I invite you all to this Holy Table. When we receive the body and blood of Christ, may God's grace open our eyes, ears, and hearts to see our new life given to us. Amen.