

**Pentecost 11**  
**August 21 & 22, 2022**

It was going to be statement that people would remember for generations. He knew how important the words were going to be. For months he planned exactly what he was going to say. He had practiced those words many times. It was important to get it right. After all, the world would be watching and listening to what he would speak. He knew those words. After all, over 650 million people from all over the world would be watching and listening to what he said. When the moment came to speak the words, some insisted that he had messed them up. His name: Neil Armstrong. The words he spoke on July 20, 1969 were the words that he said as he was the first person to take a step on the surface of the moon. *"That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind."*

For years after that day, he insisted that those words were not the words he said. He insisted that there was one little word people missed: "a." He insisted that what he said was: *"That's one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind."* He would say many times that without the "a", the sentence is meaningless. Without the "a" there's no distinction between a single individual and all of humanity.

Several years ago a team from Michigan State University carefully analyzed the words he spoke. They took a unique approach to determine if he said the "a" or not. Neil Armstrong was from Ohio. So, they went to Ohio near where he had grown up. The team studied the way that folks in Ohio pronounce the word "for" and the phrase "for a." They discovered that in central Ohio, where Armstrong was raised, speakers have a tendency to blend the two words together. They concluded that it was very possible that Neil Armstrong was right – he likely spoke the word "a." *"That's one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind."* Whether Neil Armstrong made an epic mistake by missing the word "a," the events of that day was certainly epic -- *"one giant leap for mankind."*

As Paul writes this letter to the Colossians, he wanted mankind to remember that the words that were spoken by a snake in the Garden of Eden were more of an epic failure than missing an "a" in a sentence. **"Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"** From that day forward those words plunged the whole human race into sin. It has affected every single person that ever has lived on the face of the earth. In the first chapter of this letter, Paul speaks about what that means for mankind earlier in the book of Colossians: **"Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior."** (Col. 1:29) Distraction can be dangerous, can't it? Take your eyes off the road while driving for a few seconds and it can be disastrous.

Paul speaks about some of those disastrous effects of sin in our text: **"sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.... anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.... lie to each other."** Instead of doing the epic mistake of following sin, God wants us to look up. He tells us: **"Set your hearts on things above."**

Why? Paul writes: **"You have been raised with Christ."** For someone to have been raised he must have first died... Where, then, did you die? Your death occurred on the Cross. Through faith, you are so closely tied to the cross in Jesus, that it is said that you have died with Jesus. We have sinned. But our death by itself isn't enough. We need to be tied to Christ's death. This happens because we are *"in Christ."* Just as his death is our death, so his resurrection is also our resurrection. Christ's Resurrection, guarantees you that **"you have been raised with Christ."**

Through the water of baptism our sinful nature is drowned and we are raised to life. In the chapter before our text, Paul speaks about the waters of baptism. You **"been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead."** Col. 2:12) Our death and resurrection with Christ in Baptism fills a void that that earthly possessions never can. Christ's death and resurrection changes everything. It changes our perspective on life. Life apart from Christ can only disappoint. Then the words of Solomon in our first lesson are absolutely true: **"Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless."** The parable of the Rich Fool in our Gospel Lesson also illustrates how senseless it is to set our hearts only on earthly things.

Could it be possible that our lives become so taken up with what's going on all around us and inside of us that we lose touch with the fact we have been raised with Christ? Let a story from the life of Albert Einstein help us. The famous Albert Einstein was riding on a train. The conductor came to him and asked for his ticket. He fumbled through his pockets but couldn't find the ticket. The conductor said, "*Mr. Einstein, it's OK. I know who you are, everyone knows who you are.*" Still he kept looking for his ticket. The conductor smiled and said, "*Mr. Einstein, I know who you are.*" Finally, Einstein said, "*young man, I need my ticket because I don't know where I am going.*" The brilliant mind of Mr. Albert Einstein was so full of thoughts and ideas that he lost track of where he was going.

You and I are no Einstein's. Yet our minds can become so full of things here on this earth, we don't have time to set our minds on things above. Our minds can become so full of things that aren't that all important we lose touch with who we are in Christ and the reality that we have been raised with Christ. May God help us all to set our minds on things above. Amen.