

Sermon Draft

Text: Colossians 3:1–11

Sermon: “Someone New”

Years ago there was a movie titled *El Cid*. Some of you may have seen that epic motion picture about a Spanish knight who almost single-handily saved the kingdom of Spain from Muslim invaders. The story of this remarkable leader is based on truth. The movie told the truth in recounting his many victories. The movie told the truth when it showed his death. The movie told the truth when it depicted his generals, desiring to stop panic among the troops, pretended their leader was alive, dressed his corpse in armor, strapped him to a horse, and tied a sword into his lifeless hand. All these things happened.

The rest of the film, unfortunately, is fiction. The movie ended with the horse-carried-body of El Cid routing the frightened Muslims. History says it didn't happen that way. The corpse fooled nobody. The Muslims didn't buy it, the Spanish soldiers didn't follow, and the attack failed. That's because the body of a dead man is a poor leader (1 Corinthians 15:14).

As Christians we know that even as the body of a dead man cannot lead men into battle, so also a dead Savior cannot lead souls into heaven. As Christians, we know that we do not follow a dead teacher. As Christians we know that Christ is alive. He has risen from the dead, and because that is so, the Holy Spirit has given us new hope and new lives. When the angel rolled the stone away from Jesus' empty tomb on Easter Sunday, everything was changed (1 Peter 1:3).

How tragic it is that the stone remains in place for hundreds of millions whose political leaders have tried to keep Jesus in the grave. From the time of the Roman emperors until now atheistic and idolatrous rulers have tried to quiet any talk of an empty tomb. Not to many years ago in Egypt Christians at worship were machine-gunned for their faith. In Pakistan, thousands of Christians lost their homes and were denied shelter, food, and water. In Kuwait, where Americans have died for the cause of freedom, the government forced a Christian to divorce his wife, confiscated his property, and threatened his life. Why?

Because that man believes in an empty tomb. For that man, the tomb is empty and Jesus is alive. But, for millions, the stone remains in front of the tomb.

Even in our own country, where freedom of religion is acknowledged, where the Bible is freely distributed, and where the church has access to radio, press, and television, the tomb remains firmly sealed for many. True, politicians roll out religious references when it is expedient or it's time for people to cast a ballot.

After the winner has been installed in office, it becomes painfully evident that in many a political heart, the stone stays in place. In our land where mothers conveniently abort God-given children, the stone is in place. In this land founded upon the ethics of Christianity, drugs are in demand, drive-by shootings frequent, pornography prevalent, morality maligned, values valueless, and religion often a way for hucksters to separate people from their cash.

If we were to judge our living Lord by the way many Americans lead their lives, we would be forced to confess that the stone remains in place.

Within the halls of higher education, we can ask, “Is the stone in place?” When the Bible is banned from our nation’s classrooms and some college professors use their position to put down any answer that proclaims a students’ faith in a living Lord, the stone remains.

Ask some scientists and they will say that the stone is still there. The wisdom, love, and grace of God often have no place in their world (2 Peter 3:3–5). God is written off as meaningless and unimportant. Human beings are nothing more than speaking animals who have evolved an opposable thumb. We are, for many, only products of nature—made and shaped by laws of causality and random selection. For such learned individuals the stone stays before the tomb.

In the business world, Christianity is often brushed to the side. The principles of Christ may be good for presidents of Synod, popes, and pastors, but they appear meaningless to many in the dog-eat-dog business world. “Out there,” so some think, “you can forget Jesus’ words of love because it’s every man for himself.” Out there one can forget giving to others, because the job says “get all you can” (Matthew 6:19–21). Out there one can ignore feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the imprisoned (Matthew 25:41–45). Out there one has to watch out for “number one.” In much of the business world, the stone stays in front of the tomb.

But in the church surely in the church the stone must be rolled away. Surely, in the church, we who know the glorious resurrection story are raised with Christ and have our hearts set on things above (Colossians 3:1). Sadly, it is not always so. All too often churches and pastors, modifying the message of a living Christ, bow to modern thought. Too few pulpits publicly proclaim, ***“Christ crucified and risen.”***

Our presence at worship says that we know the facts. Our presence in church says that we have heard that God sent his Son to live, suffer, and die for us. Our presence says that we know God rolled the stone away from the tomb so that all might see Jesus is alive. But do we believe like that Sunday school superintendent believed? Is our children's faith in the Savior strong and living, and are they rooted in the Gospel promises which will sustain them throughout their lives? Has our old, sinful nature been replaced by the new life that Christ wishes to give?

I pray it has I pray we are not like the elderly man who, while carrying a heavy load, was overtaken by a stranger driving a wagon. Seeing the man's plight, the driver felt sorry for him and offered him a ride. The man climbed aboard and off they went. After ten minutes or so, the driver turned around to see how the man was doing. To his surprise, he found the man sitting, but still stooped under the weight of his pack. He had not removed the load from his shoulders.

Similarly, too many Christians believe in a risen Lord, but they continue to walk under the burden of sin and guilt. God wishes to comfort them but they hold on to their grief. God has forgiven them, but they continue to wallow in fear and shame. God wants to lift them from the gutter to new life in Christ, but they have an unnatural longing to return to the “old self,” the old nature.

Dear friends, the stone is rolled away from the tomb. Jesus is alive, and because of his blood and the healing which takes place through his sacrifice, our lives are changed. Jesus has come so we might have a new life, a better and fuller life. Of course, we might say, “I don’t feel like I’m changed. I don’t feel like my heart is set on things above. I feel I’m still locked into my old, sinful nature.” We may believe these statements are true, but God knows better. Because of Jesus’ substitution, God brushes aside a Christian’s old nature and recycles us into something usable and new.

Amen