TITLE: Take the High Ground

TEXT: Colo. 3:1-17; 2nd Co. 5:18-19

INTRODUCTION: This morning I want to talk about taking the high ground.

How many of you here this morning have ever lived in a flood prone area?

If you have ever lived in the proximity of a river or creek then you probably know the importance of taking the high ground at times….

In wars the taking of high ground is also very important… Some of the most famous battles in history have centered on taking the high ground.

The high ground was the key terrain that shaped the Battle of Gettysburg during three bloody days in July 1863.  On June 30, Union Brigadier General John Buford rode into Gettysburg and instantly sized up the significance of holding the high ground south of the town.

The battle of hamburger hill in Viet Nam was one such battle over the taking of the high ground.

It is from the high ground that you can see what your enemy is up to. The high ground gives your weapons a greater range.

The high ground offers us the best defense from our enemies.

This is true in our spiritual lives as well.

Taking the high ground spiritually is very important as a Christian.

Did you know that as a Christian God admonishes us to take the high ground?

**Colo 3:1 (NIV) Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.**

**2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.**

**3 For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.**

**4 When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.**

In speaking to you and I, the Church, God says…

**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.**

What God is telling us here is that as a Christian we are to take the high ground spiritually.

We are to set our hearts and our minds on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

Set our minds=kjv says set our affections

**5426 phroneo {fron-eh'-o}**

**1) to have understanding, be wise**

2c) to be of the same mind i.e. agreed together, cherish the same views, be harmonious

The thought portrayed here is that we are to set our minds, become of the same mind, cherish the same views, be harmonious with Jesus, who has ascended to the right hand of the Father in Heaven.

Scripture then tells us how we do that. How we set our minds on things above where Christ is seated. How we take the high ground…

5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature:

First,we are to put to death, kill, destroy and put an end, to that which belongs to our earthly nature, our sinful nature.

Scripture then tells us what some of those things are….

**5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.**

**6 Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.**

**7 You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived.** (The life we lived B.C.--Before Christ!)

**8 But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.**

**9 Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices**

**10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.**

God here tells us what we must take off, get rid of in our life: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, greed, anger, rage, malice, slander, filthy language and lying.

And He then tells what we will need to take up or put on to take the high ground of Christ.

**12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.**

**13 Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.**

**14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.**

15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

**16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.**

**17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.**

What we need to take off in order that we can take the high ground of Christ in our life is sin..

Known and condoned sin in the life of a believer will keep us from taking the high ground that God has called us to take.

Example: There was a pilot who took off from a landing strip in the desert and was flying medical supplies to a village in the jungle several miles away. After taking off and well into his flight he started to hear a gnawing and scratching noise in the rear of his small plane.

He was an experienced pilot and knew that it was an animal of some kind and that it posed a real danger to the flight. It might gnaw through some vital electrical wires and cause the plane to crash.

He was too far into the flight to turn back and no place below to land so he started to climb. Higher and higher until the gnawing and scratching sounds stopped.

Upon reaching his destination safely he checked and found a large dead desert rat that evidently had entered unnoticed onto his plane before he took off in the desert.

Not able to land the plane he climbed to a high altitude where he knew the rodent couldn’t survive the heights.

Sin in our life is a lot like a rodent. The best way to eliminate it in our life after we have taken off with Christ is to head for the high ground where sin can’t survive. Head to the high ground of Jesus. A life sanctified, set apart, for Christ.

Scripture here tells us how we do that..

**Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved,** we are to **clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.**

Does it excite you to know that as a Christian that you have been chosen by God? He has selected you? You are an adopted child…

Do you realize that an adopted child is very special?

With a child born to a husband and wife you get what you get! You may want a thin child with blond hair and blue eyes but end up with a chubby little guy with green eyes and bald as an eagle…

An Adopted child is selected! I want that one!

Example: in Mideast culture a natural son, if he messed up, could be disinherited by the father, but if a father adopted a child that child could never be disinherited no matter what he did.

In natural childbirth you get what you get----an adopted child is selected! Picked out! Chosen!

We have been chosen, selected by God!

And we are not just loved but we are “dearly” loved by Him?

**25 agapao {ag-ap-ah'-o}**

**1a), to love dearly**

**2a) to be well pleased, to be contented at or with a thing**

God loves us dearly. He is well pleased and contented to be our Father and we His children..

And it is because of this love relationship that we have with the Father that we are to….

**Clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.**

These are the attributes of our Heavenly Father. They are the attributes of Jesus and we are to clothe ourselves with them. Put them on as we would a shirt.

And we are to Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances we may have against one another. We are to forgive others just as the Lord forgave us.

We are to bear with one another!

**430 anechomai {an-ekh'-om-ahee}**

**1) to hold up**

**3) to sustain, to bear, to endure**

To bear with one another is to hold one another up--Sustain one another--- Endure with one another!

How do we do that?

We do that primarily by… forgiving whatever grievances we may have against one another.

We do that by forgiving others just as the Lord has forgiven us.

We will never take the high ground that God has called us to take in Christ Jesus if we are unforgiving.

If you are a Christian and you feel like there is still something missing in your life and relationship with the Lord, and you just can’t seem to get to the high place that God has for you, then look into your heart and see if you are forgiving others just as you have been forgiven by God.

Often our forgiveness is not true forgiveness. Often It is something less then true forgiveness.

The Greek word for forgiveness is:

**charizomai {khar-id'-zom-ahee}**

**1a) to show one's self gracious, kind, benevolent**

**1b) to grant forgiveness, to pardon**

**1c) to give graciously, give freely,**

**1c1) to forgive is to graciously restore one to another**

We have been called to forgive just as God has forgiven us in Christ Jesus!

How is that?

We were all guilty! We did the crime and we deserved to do the time!

In Christ God has forgiven us! He has pardoned us!

He has graciously restored us to relationship and fellowship with Himself!

2Cor 5:18 (NIV) All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation,:

**19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.**

Church, as Christians we have been given the ministry of reconciliation.

What is this ministry of reconciliation that we have been given? What is the message of reconciliation that God has committed to us?

It is twofold!

#1. **that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them.**

As Christians we have been called and commissioned to take this message of reconciliation-- that God wants to reconcile the world to Himself, to all those who need to hear that message.

To go into our world proclaiming the Gospel message of Jesus Christ.

We are to spread the message that God wants to reconcile Himself with sinners! He does that through the forgiveness that is only found in Christ Jesus by not counting those who come to Him sins against them.

#2**. and we are to forgive others just as we have been forgiven!**

The only way that we will ever be able to properly convey that Gospel message is if we are willing to forgive others with the same forgiveness that God forgave us… To forgive just as we have been forgiven!

You show me a Christian that is not willing to forgive others and I will show you a Christian that is powerless in their relationship with the Lord and devoid of a personal testimony that will effect change for the Kingdom of God…

Hear this! As a Christian if we are not willing to forgive others with the same forgiveness that God forgave us with, it will rend us powerless in our relationship with the Lord and we will be devoid of a personal testimony that will affect any kind of positive change for the Kingdom of God!

Show me a Christian who forgives just as they have been forgiven and I will show you a Christian with a powerful testimony that is effecting change in their world and effecting change for the kingdom of God.

If we claim the name of Christ, then total and complete forgiveness of others is not optional on our part.

We must forgive just as we have been forgiven!

Forgiveness is not something that a Christian does; forgiveness is to become a vital part of who we are!

If you really want to take the high ground of Christ, then you must forgive just as He has forgiven you.

And then it says:

**And over all these virtues we are to put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.**

We are to allow the peace of Christ rule in our hearts, since as members of one body we were called to peace.

And we are to be thankful.

We are to **allow the word of Christ to dwell in us richly as we teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as we sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in our hearts to God.**

**And whatever we do, whether in word or deed, we are to do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God through Him!**

As we forgive with the forgiveness of Christ and as we love with the love of Christ and as we allow Gods peace to rule in our hearts by simply being obedient to what God has called us to, we will take the high ground..

We will become the ambassadors for Christ that God has called us to be. Our lives will become a powerful testimony of the reality of Christ at work in our lives that will effect change in our world-- Change for the Kingdom of God.

Have you taken the high ground of Jesus Christ?

Have you set your life on the high place of Jesus by living your life sanctified in Him?

Seeking to become all that you can become in Him?

Is your life a living testimony of the power and might of God?

Have you allowed God to effect change in your life?

Allowed Him to give you the ability to forgive and love and care for others just as He forgives and Love’s and cares for you?

Folks this is the high ground that we have been called to take…

And if we take it, we will find that the high ground is a safe place, a peaceful place, and the only place that we will find true contentment in this life.

Is it your desire to take the high ground in your life and relationship with the Lord this morning?

The strive to Learn to be obedient as Jesus was obedient, to forgive as Jesus forgives and to Love as Jesus loves.

Then the high ground you will secure!