

Sermon for Easter Sunday
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Holy Nativity, Plano
23 April, 2008

St. Paul tells us in his letter to the Colossians to set our “minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.” I think we need to say a little about what that *doesn't* mean before we can talk about what it *does* mean. That line reminds me of a song that I've heard in various Christian settings. It was written in the 1920s and has been recorded by several artists over the years. You may recognize the chorus. It goes like this:

Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in his wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of his glory and grace.

I'm sure that the author of those words was trying to assure people of the love and compassion of God in Jesus Christ. And that's all well and good. But if that's all there is, then we end up treating Jesus as a spiritual opiate, something to make the pain go away. The fact is that he is much more than that.

“In the light of [Jesus'] glory and grace,” the things of earth don't go all hazy and undefined for us. The light of his glory cuts through the fog of the world. In his light, the “things of earth” show up sharp and clear and defined. We see them as they are. C.S. Lewis once wrote, “I believe in Christianity as I believe that the Sun has risen, not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.”

But here's the point: That kind of clarity only comes to us *after* we have stopped focusing on the “things of earth”. Mary Magdalene is the perfect example. She is standing right in the middle of *the* miracle. She's standing there between two angels on the one side and a resurrected Jesus on the other, talking to both parties. But she cannot see it, because she's focused on the problem at hand. It's only when Jesus speaks to her and she turns her full attention to him that she is able to see the truth of the situation.

So to “set your minds on things that are above” is not somehow to ignore what's going on around you. It's not “Calgon, take me away!” To set our minds on things that are above is to rearrange your focus so that everything becomes clear and so that you can deal with whatever God has called you to deal with. If we put Jesus first in our hearts and minds, then everything else will fall into place properly and we'll be able to see the truth clearly. If we don't put Jesus first in our hearts

and minds, then we will go through our so-called lives in darkness and confusion, never seeing beyond our petty lust and terror and jealousy and boredom.

Christ is our life, because he is the one who conquered death and rose to life again. He is the righteous one who has paid the debt of our sins. And there is no life except in him.