



CANDIDATES SUNDAY SERMON

What is going on...?

Scripture Passages:

- Colossians 3:1-2 (*The Message*)

‘So if you’re serious about living this new resurrection life with Christ, act like it. Pursue the things over which Christ presides. Don’t shuffle along, eyes to the ground, absorbed with the things right in front of you. Look up and be alert to what is going on around Christ - that’s where the action is. See things from his perspective.’

- Colossians 3:1-2 (*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. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.’

You may want to extend the Bible reading for use in worship. A reading from Colossians 2:20 to 3:4 will put the key passages above in context.

Key Focus:

Pay attention to what *was* going on around Christ and what *is* going on around Jesus Christ today. This year’s theme is inspired by Colossians 3 where we are challenged to ***be alert to what is going on around Christ***. It is a strong call to pay attention to all that God is doing and understand what our response must be.

INTRODUCTION

- *Illustration* - Take some photos of your local area (buildings, statues, landscaping) from an angle looking up. Ask people if they recognise the area. Do they know what goes on around it?
- *Illustration* - Share a personal illustration of a time when you had to pay particular attention to something or stay alert for a specific purpose.

CONTEXT

- Paul is writing a letter to the new church in Colossae that was started by Epaphras. It would seem that Paul never had the opportunity to visit the church, but instead sends words of greeting, encouragement and instruction.
- Paul is concerned enough to write, complimenting the Colossian Christians on their devotion to Christ, but hoping to steer them gently away from religious practices he considers questionable including what seems to be adherence to dietary practices and possibly astral worship.



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- In this particular passage the instruction is given to ‘set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated’ (3:1), or as *The Message* paraphrase puts it, ‘Look up, and be alert to what is going on around Christ.’

EXPLORATION

What *is* going on around Christ?

1) Eternal Worship

The first answer is worship. That is what *is* going on around Christ right now.

- Christ, who is ‘seated at the right hand of God’ (Colossians 3:1) receives the worship and adoration of all the heavenly beings (see Revelation 7:11-12).
- Be alert to what is going on around Christ: a never-ending act of worship that we have the opportunity to join in each time that we worship the living God.
- It is in our nature to worship and our privilege to participate in this glorious reality. Think about that! ‘Set your mind on things above’ (Colossians 3:2). Use the eyes of your heart (Ephesians 1:18) to ‘Look up, and be alert to what is going on around Christ’ (MSG).

What *was* going on around Christ?

2) Listening and Learning

When we read the Gospels we see the ministry that went on around Christ. When we are alert we see the Kingdom of God.

- Crowds often gathered around Christ to listen to what he taught because ‘he taught as one who had authority’ (Matthew 7:29). Sometimes he spoke to the multitudes and at other times to individuals.
- The religious leaders around him asked, ‘How did this man get such learning?’ (John 7:15). And though they tried to disrupt and stop his teaching, they could not because ‘all the people hung on his words’ (Luke 19:48).

Be alert to what was going on around Christ.

3) Healing and Hope

- Another reason that people wanted to see what was going on around Jesus was because of his ministry of physical and spiritual healing.
- One story that shows an example of both of these acts is the forgiveness and healing of the paralysed man (Matthew 9:1-8).



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Be alert to what was going on around Christ.

4) Preaching and Praying

- Jesus had a preaching ministry that was always on the move. 'He travelled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues' (Mark 1:39).
- Just as Jesus was active in preaching he was also active in prayer. Sometimes he prayed in solitude, at other times people gathered around him to understand how to pray: 'Lord, teach us to pray' (Luke 11:1).

Be alert to what was going on around Christ.

5) Calling and Commissioning

During the earthly ministry of Jesus many people *came* to see what was going on around Christ.

- But first Jesus *called* people to come and see what he was doing. 'The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!' (Mark 1:15). In other words, be alert! Come and see what God is doing.
- The earthly ministry of Jesus started with calling. Then came the listening and learning, the preaching and praying, the healing and hope. The earthly ministry of Jesus ended with commissioning: 'Go and make disciples' (Matthew 28:19).

Be alert to what was going on around Christ.

CONCLUSION

How can we be alert to what is going on around Christ today? How do we pay attention to what God was doing, and is doing, and is going to do?

- We start with worship. That is what is going on around Christ right now. And as we enter into that sacred presence, with our minds set on things above, our relationship with Jesus deepens. It is then that we start to see things from his perspective.
- We see that there are still those who need to listen and learn, discovering the truths of the gospel and fullness of a life lived in Christ. We see that there are still those who need healing and hope - a prayer offered in Jesus' name and the support to see their lives changed. We see that there are still places where the gospel needs to be preached and people need to pray.
- Now we must be alert to this! When we see things from his perspective, because we can see things from his perspective, we should be alert to the reality that God has already called us: 'Come, follow me' (Matthew 4:19). Now he wants us to respond so he can commission us: 'Go and make disciples' (Matthew 28:19).
- Be alert to what *is* going on around Christ - that's where the action is.



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Response time:

Lead a time of worship and prayer with the specific invitation to respond to the call of God. This could include an invitation to respond to a call to officership or territorial envoyship.