## **Hidden With Christ**

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Someone once said: "You can't offend a dead man." This brings a healthy reminder for us when old Adam gives another persuasive speech in our head to convince us of the enemy's most powerful lie: we are alive only to the realm of our flesh and the natural world. We believe that it is the exposure of this lie that is the key to realizing the power of our position in Christ: the power of our weakness hidden in the secret place with Christ in God's strength.

The truth is that a focus on earthly and temporal things often creates fear and confusion and beyond this, beckons us to respond to these circumstances in the arm of the flesh. The glorious reality, however, is that we are dead to the flesh realm—not just those fleshly sins that would beset us, but to all those things of the earth realm which would cause fear and confusion. The apostle Paul makes a bold exhortation in his letter to the Colossians which we believe is revolutionary in its implications for those who are being truly conformed to Christ in His death and resurrection. He states:

If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory (Colossians 3:1-4).

The clarion call here is to seek those things which are *above*, and to set our minds on those things which are above—*not on things of earth*. Paul goes on to declare why it is that we are to set our mind on things above: *We have died and our life* 

is now hidden with Christ (Gr. Christos meaning anointed or anointing) in God. This is not merely exercising "the power of positive thinking," the idea that somehow through our efforts of thinking positively we can change our circumstances or give our souls peace in the midst of a storm. Such an approach depends upon human efforts to pull ourselves out of the quagmire of depression and despair that these circumstances inflict. This is not what Paul means by setting our minds on things above. Paul's directive to set our minds on things above can be understood only in the context of the sentence that follows: "For you died and your life is hidden with Christ in God." It is this "hiddenness" as a result of our death to the flesh that makes our appearing with Him in glory possible, having suffered the loss of all things in order to truly know Him in the power of His resurrection. So what does it mean to be "hidden" with Christ in God, and then to "appear with Him in glory?"

#### **Hidden with Christ**

We begin by asking: What does it mean to be hidden with Christ in God? We believe that there are at least two important ways in which we are hidden. *First, we are hidden from all of the darts of the enemy that would assail us.* Our flesh, which is the target of the enemy, is no longer where we live. We have crossed over from the kingdom of darkness (residing in our carnal man) to the Kingdom of Light (residing in our spiritual man), and have in fact moved from death to life so that our heart has been relocated to the heavenly realm. Our spirit, joined to the Lord's Spirit and seated in the heavenlies with Christ, is at rest and in union with God. Therefore we are actually covered, hidden and protected from physical attack, wicked schemes, fiery darts, any and all that would seek to molest and unrest. This is so, not because we will no longer be assailed by difficult circumstances. Rather, our hiddenness from these attacks is simply because we have no skin in the game, no need for self-preservation, when we are dead to our flesh and sin, as it profits nothing and no longer drives us. *We are alive to Christ!* 

Our place of hiddenness is represented symbolically in the spiritual armor that Paul exhorts us to put on in the sixth chapter of Ephesians. We must understand that our spiritual armor is a powerful symbol of *Christ's character*. When we put on the whole armor of God by an act of our spirit's agreement with His covering over us, we are clothed in His very character which cannot be penetrated by the assaults of the enemy. As we put on the armor of God, therefore, we are hidden

from the enemy in every way. The armor is actually Christ Himself expressed as His Truth (belt), His Righteousness (breastplate), His Peace (shoes), His Faith (shield), His Salvation (helmet) and HIS Word, Christ Himself as the extension of our hand (sword). We are hidden WITH HIM and BY HIM so that we are able to withstand in the evil day. The two parts of our spiritual armor which we hold in our hands are those mighty weapons which we use to take down the strongholds and imaginations which exalt themselves against the knowledge of God: His shield of faith—the defensive block of the unseen hope in the power of God that defends and protects; and His sword of the Spirit—that living Word of the Lord which is our offensive weapon. With these weapons we have what it takes to both see through and speak with authority to evil agendas and to execute God's judgment. We have advantage over the enemy as we (our Spirit man) are hidden behind Christ and are unseen by the forces of evil. This makes the battle truly belong to the Lord, as both our front and rear guard. Given the sovereign control God has over evil, as He actually created evil, and the fact that He has given us power over the enemy, what evil can possibly penetrate from this perfect hidden cover we wear?

While our flesh man will be subject to the tribulation and affliction of this world in turmoil, we experience this with a certain holy detachment, covered in God's spiritual armor and weapons. This position of being hidden with Christ is much like a baby developing in the womb. This baby will experience, on some level, everything that mother experiences, yet from a hidden place within her. The baby in mother's womb is protected from the many cares and troubles that mother will deal with first. Mother is the "screen" or "censor" through which any assault on that prenatal infant must pass. So it is with us when we have put on Christ. We will be affected YET protected. We navigate in this fallen world hidden in Christ as we are at the same time not of this world. We do this remembering our hidden place within the armor OF GOD, and that its' purpose is to increase the Spirit Man within us, which is Christ Himself, in this temporal experience of life. This spiritual armor is not for purposes of defending or preserving our flesh as natural armor would do. We were meant to deal with external evil from an internal place of hiddenness. There truly is no other place on earth from where to fight this good fight. We remain hidden in Him as He is in us.

But as if this is not enough, there is yet an even more profound sense in which we are hidden with Christ. The glory of that new man who we now are, as we are in Christ and He in us, is actually hidden from our own carnal minds as well as the

carnal minds of others. The carnal man cannot see this glory, any more than God can look upon our sin and carnality. As sons of God we look through the eyes of our Lord and see ourselves as He always was and still is is—hated by the world and invisible to its ways. As He is, so we are in this world. Invisible to even our own carnal minds, the enemy of Christ, we are lovingly protected within this necessary spiritual womb of hiddenness. David calls this the "secret place" in Psalm 91. We occupy this hidden place, even at the cost of others not understanding us, so as to grow into the divine union with Christ within. As a seed falls to the ground and is buried to die and hidden with dirt, we (old Adam) must decrease as He increases until we actually disappear from the earthly realm of souls so that we may reappear with Him on a spiritual plane from where we operate and have our life source as His resurrected sons and daughters, having been raised with Him.

As we are going through this dying process, our souls (natural minds, wills and emotions) are vexed and they chafe, desperately gasping to remain alive. God, who loves and chastens His sons, remains faithful to bring His purging fire to complete this process despite our squirming and resisting. As He does, we will increasingly come to understand and accept this painful process, though most of those around us will not understand what is going on with us. Our natural (carnal) tendency is to want recognition from others. This desire of the carnal man does not go away when we come into Christ and when we enter into the realm of sonship and spiritual union with Him. This is why we are crucified with Christ and no longer live to the carnal man, which is now defeated and rendered powerless, through our dying daily to our flesh. This is hindered when we try to put the best face on our flesh man, supposing that old Adam can somehow, through our own good efforts, be reformed. This can no more happen than can the law be used to save us (rather than, as Paul said, to simply expose our sin). Old Adam can only rest in peace and our soul be quieted like a weaned child against mother's breast when we are conformed to the death of Christ; when we arrive at that place where our flesh no longer drives us, but now it is the Spirit who leads, directs and moves us. We come to recognize that we have no righteousness of our own even if we were able to adhere to the law perfectly. We

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> We do not believe, as some do, that the old Adamic nature is put to death in the sense that we are never again confronted with temptations. Indeed, Christ was tempted in all ways such as we are. Rather, the power that this old nature once had within us is now neutralized and under the authority of the new man, Christ within. This is why Paul so strongly argues that we are to "put on" the new man, to put on the mind of Christ, to put on the armor of God—all so as to walk in newness of life as the new man.

live in the knowledge that our perfection and righteousness is Christ alone. Our faith in Him to work through our spirit is actually our recognition of His divine life and Godliness. The natural man can no more understand this place of rest that ultimately comes through this death to the flesh than it can understand the painful dying process itself. Those around us—even and especially carnally-minded Christians—will interpret this rest in dishonorable ways. We will be regarded as "uncaring," "out of touch," "sticking our head in the sand," "lazy" or any of a multitude of other derogatory attributions because of their failure to understand the nature and source of this rest. Our divine Spirit Man is hidden from the world in exactly these ways, being of ill repute.

Furthermore, once we behold the Christ within, we will never have need to confer with flesh and blood again...ours or others.<sup>2</sup> We will be carriers of His grace as He is in this world to manifest *as Christ* in His glory through His sons, the temple within whom He rests and dwells. It is a matter of moving from believing facts about Christ to *knowing* Him by personal revelation and His life being lived through our beings. In HIM, we live and move and have our being. We confess with our mouths our belief unto our full salvation, which is knowing Christ in union with Him. This confession births spiritual manifestation of His Divine order. This is the manifestation of the sons of God; not for us to be seen, recognized, or honored by others, but for us to be manifested AS HIM and be like Him as our spiritual sight is now adjusted by His appearing in us, to see Him as He is.

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. (1 John 3:2)

## **Appearing with Him in Glory**

Paul goes on to say, in Colossians 3:4, that this Anointing (Christos) WILL appear and that *this Anointing is our life*. At God's appointed time, we will appear with Him, as one with Him, in all of His glory. What an incredible thought. The *fact* of our appearing with Him is made clear here by Paul. Elsewhere, he talks about the *"earnest expectation...for the manifestation of the sons of God"* (Romans 8:19).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> We are not suggesting that we never seek the counsel of other faithful members of the body of Christ. That which we seek, however, is not carnal advice, but rather truth and counsel that emanates from the Spirit of Christ within that other body member.

What is not so clear is how this appearing will take place and what it will look like when it does. We have had conversations with any number of people on this path about this "appearing," or manifestation of the sons of God. Most of those we talk to about this subject suggest that there is coming a moment in *chronos* time when the sons of God will be manifested with Christ to a grateful world. The suggestion is that at some time in the presumably near future, those who are fully mature and perfected will be made known to the world as sons of God. This understanding is typically accompanied with the often unstated belief that the world will respect and even pay homage to the manifested sons at this time, for this manifestation is, after all, what all of creation has been groaning for.

While we do not dispute that there may be a season of unprecedented manifestation in future *chronos* time, we contend that this manifestation takes place in many unexpected kairos times and ways at any given moment within the life a true believer. These are God-timed moments when Christ's Anointing (who teaches us all things) is manifested by the speaking of the Word of the Lord in various ways to bring life to particular persons or situations at a particular time of need. These moments are life-giving moments because Life is spoken forth or demonstrated and that Life (Christos, Anointing) is supernaturally transformative. Indeed, we have experienced this any number of times in reading the writings of many of the saints who have gone on before and of those who are still with us. Many of these individuals laid down their lives for this gospel, for the most part being "hidden" at the time (at least in their awareness), but in the passage of time (and for many, after their physical deaths), they were made manifest to some through their testimony in writings; His words and life have brought Life to others through them. Whenever and wherever their lives, through actions or inactions and through words or through silence, have brought His Life, these saints were "made manifest." This incredible work of the manifestation of the sons of God, we contend, is present perfect continuous, suggesting that this is something that has been taking place in the past and is yet ongoing, precisely at the time of God's choosing so that His purposes may be accomplished. It has happened throughout history through the "many brethren" after the First Born, and it continues to happen and will happen in the future. This is the promise to those who have entered His rest and believe in the ceasing of their own labors. This is our promised land that we must see, enter, inherit and possess!

This is, in fact, the Kingdom of God that Jesus spoke of in what has come to be known as the Sermon on the Mount. The beatitudes presented in this Sermon are, in truth, the anointed positions of Christ's divine godliness, which treasure we have in this earthen vessel. These are not spiritual goals we should have as if we could or should somehow strive to attain these attributes so that we can have the promised reward. Rather this is the beauty of Christ expressed through His creation; or to state it differently, the manifestation of Him in and through us! We are His possession and another totally unique expression of His infinite and divine character. HE IS the poor in spirit (divine spirit joined with human spiritual need), the mourner (divine grief joined with human lamentation), the meek (divine humility expressed as utter dependence on God), the spiritually hungry and thirsty for righteousness (God given spiritual desire for satisfaction in the Divine union joined with human desperation for His grace), the merciful (divine compassion joined with merciful acts undeserved), the pure in heart (His heart purifying all things through which to see Him as all in all), the peacemaker (His peace breaking down every wall) and the persecuted (His shame and reproach borne by man as a paltry price for living from the Kingdom of heaven on earth). Think of this. When we are joined in spirit with the Lord and one with Him, we become the Spirit of Christ incarnated within our unique human language and expression. In this we receive the reward of His glory just as He received the reward of our punishment. The beatitudes are simply a depiction of Christ in us and the glorious reward of a life so hidden in Him and in perfect union. How could it be more simple?

Just as nature reveals its ultimate beauty in certain times and seasons and then fades into the backdrop of another dormancy, so too is the very nature of the manifestation of the sons, which takes place at times of His choosing. Even the resurrected Lord did not appear to a large crowd all at once, but first to a heartbroken woman who was grieving His absence and then to a few on the road to Emmaus. Our Lord made His appearing here and there, but not everywhere to everyone at the same time. Not yet. So it is with those who are His living martyrs in the same fashion as our Lord. They are misunderstood and misrepresented for the most part during their lives here on earth. Even now, in many cases long after their death, they are recognized by only that small remnant that has been prepared to see them for who they are, or rather who He is in them. We would ask, however, is there not a greater glory in the hiddenness of Christ that allows for an even greater manifestation of the sons at God's appointed time? We

confidently affirm that there is. We are not convinced, however, that this manifestation will conform to the expectations that many have come to embrace.

Let us humbly consider the possibility that the "manifestation event," that so many in this movement are hoping for, may be the imagined vindication of the flesh (yet to be crucified) of these who have endured much and who long to be "manifested" or recognized by the world as a Son of God. All of us who have been truly faithful to the call of God to "come out from among them" have experienced rejection and persecution in various ways and measures. Our flesh man longs to be recognized by others for the faithful stand that we have taken. We secretly (or openly) wish especially for those who have rejected and persecuted us to stand corrected at some point and recognize us for who we really are This, however, is our carnal flesh man who wants recognition, and wants to take credit for thereby seeking to replace the work of Christ in us.

In contrast, let us consider our pattern Son. Ironically, Jesus received His greatest honor from men while in this world, as per His Father's instructions, in a bed of straw and on the back of an ass on the way to Golgotha. Both of these "honorable positions" were in fact positions of humility not at all fitting for a King. Jesus knew He was hated by men and dishonored by even those who claimed to know who He was. He knew that the time for His truest manifestation was yet to come WITH HIS SAINTS in another age—through us—as "greater works than these will we do." We would suggest, however that we too, the vessels through which these works will be accomplished, will be largely unseen and unrecognized, even misunderstood by the natural man.

Please also consider this. Christ came to us and for us as LORD in the name and place of His lords. He is Lord of lords, and we are His lords. In the name (character and fashion of the Adamic race) of all of His lords who would follow Him by the way of the cross and hidden in the shame and suffering of our sin, He came as us...for us, not only taking our sin but becoming sin. The proclamation and declaration of truth on the day that the church celebrates Christ as King on Palm Sunday was this: "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." He was making that public walk in our stead and in the humility of our brother servant sent to die for His many brethren. The true message of who Jesus was and who we are is symbolized with the waving of a palm branch signifying us, the many

brethren, as the branch of the Vine if we will abide in Him, the first born son of God.

This requires first that we identify with Him in His death as He became sin for us that we could become divinity (spirit union with God) clothed in humanity as He was. The death with which we identify is not merely His physical death, but the spiritual death to our flesh so as to fully yield to His immortal and rightful Kingship in our lives. He came, as His followers must also come, cloaked in humility. His majesty was hidden as He willingly laid down His glory to share in our suffering as human captives of sin; and He would intercede and bridge the gap so that man could finally become perfect in one with God. In return, the ones who would follow, having been counted worthy of Him by the taking up of their own cross would also come humbly as He did and would be honored as His lords and kings by the sharing of *His* suffering so that we could share *His* glory. Yes, we also now are the blessed who come in the name and character of our humble Lord; not seeking vain glory but His glory through the honor of following His way to the cross by taking up our own cross; by resting in the manger as a helpless baby; and by allowing Him to embrace us in His arms as we ride on the back of that colt of humility of God's own custom fit choosing for us.

Have we sold ourselves short—still not being able to conceive of Christ within and the hope of this glory, and have we mistakenly mused the manifestation of the sons of God as something of an ego trip, to finally be recognized by this world as honorable? Would our preconceived ideas of the manifestation of the sons of God event pre-empt that new thing that God is now doing for an even greater revelation of His glory? Would we allow the lust of our flesh to seduce us into imagining a manifestation event that would merely bring recognition to us as natural men and women? God forbid it. We must hope and wait for such a time as John saw when we would ride behind the victorious overcoming Messiah, our King, this time on a white horse and coming in HIS name and glorious resurrection! Indeed, is the vision that John saw not the heavenly reality of what actually takes place when each of His disciples chooses the way of the cross?

For us to be preoccupied with some future chronos event where all the sons will be manifested as kings simultaneously, gratefully recognized by the world, and bypassing the way of the cross that is the mandatory way of suffering for a son, is to miss our God's glorious appearings and manifestations in His sons throughout A.D. history up until even NOW. Could it be that we would actually miss Jesus again as He manifests His perfect strength through our weakness in the same way that Jews of old missed the presence of God in the form of a lowly carpenter's son in their very midst because they were looking for some future political liberator as their Messiah? Might we be so bold as to suggest that those who shortsightedly look for a future chronos manifestation of the sons of God as something separate and distinct from purging and refining work of the cross are really no different than the many Christians who are looking for the pre-tribulation rapture as a physical external event at some future time, to escape the coming wrath. Both are expecting a future event, sometime soon, that will bring to an end all suffering and persecution. We contend, however, that the many afflictions and tribulations that are so intrinsic to this process of manifestation are the very incubators of the Overcomer. These were promised to us in this life by our Lord and Savior. But be of good cheer...our Lord has already overcome the world!

Friends, let us not simply exchange the idea of physical rapture for the applause and recognition of men as little messiahs in this world. This has, at one level or another, been the path of any number of dead-end cults throughout history, whose leaders at least, have sought to be regarded as the messiahs of their time. Such occurrences in history beg us to consider the reason for God hiding Jesus Christ in so many ways while he was on the earth and especially through his ministry, limiting him to speaking to the masses in parables LEST they heard and understood. Rather than speaking in the temple, Jesus preferred nature as His sacred venue. He kept His miracles and itinerary under wraps so as not to draw too much attention to Himself, knowing that this would prematurely take Him out before the glory of God had been revealed through His obedience at Calvary. The Father lovingly kept Jesus relatively hidden in so many ways, even in His ministry years. He was never fully seen in His life or ministry on this earth for who He truly was by his own disciples, let alone the masses. Yet some, like John, had glimpses of who he truly was. Furthermore, Jesus' disciples followed this same pattern after His ascension. They were not well received as they preached the gospel. They were ultimately martyred just as Jesus said, "You shall be My witnesses..." (martyrs).

### Appearing AS Him

A series of incidents in the life of Christ demonstrate the nature of our ultimate appearing as manifest sons of God. We first take note of the events surrounding Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist. When Jesus humbled Himself to be baptized by John, the scripture says that when He came up out of the water, the Spirit descended on Him like a dove, and a voice from heaven declared, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). Jesus was, with this Word from heaven, made manifest as the very Son of God. But to whom was He made manifest? We can presume that He was revealed to John the Baptist, as God had already prepared him for this revelation, as we read in verse 14 of the same chapter, that John indicated his own unworthiness to baptize Jesus when he said, "I have need to be baptized of thee..." We would further presume that Jesus' was made manifest to those disciples He called, as they dropped everything to follow Him. He was, in short, manifest to those whom God had prepared to receive Him as the Christ, the Anointed One. Jesus was not recognized by the masses, however. Nor was He recognized by the Jewish religious leaders. They could see Him only as a man who was making outrageous and blasphemous claims about Himself. Even as a manifest Son, Jesus would have to endure the rejection of the world. This was all according to the plan of God, of course, as through His shameful death and powerful resurrection He not only took upon Himself the sins of the world, but opened the way for many sons to share in His divine life.

Then we will remember, that after Jesus was resurrected, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb only to find it empty. As she was pondering the empty tomb, Jesus appeared to her in His glorious (now fully manifested) body, but she did not recognize Him. Later, when Jesus appeared to the other disciples where they were gathered, Thomas also failed to recognize Him and demanded that he see the wounds of the nails and the spear. Indeed, just prior to Thomas joining them, Jesus had revealed His wounds to the rest so that they might see and believe. Clearly, they did *not*, in their *natural minds and vision*, recognize this resurrected Christ! He was being revealed to them for who He really was, but this fully manifested and now glorified Son of God was not even recognized by the disciples as the man they had walked with for the past three years until they saw the physical evidence of His wounds. Their spiritual eyes needed to open just like the eyes of the two on the road to Emmaus had to be opened before they would recognize Christ for who He now was.

And so it is that while we are certainly hidden with Christ to the carnal man in this hour, we (as Christ) are being unveiled to those whom God is preparing, in various ways, times and places, only to be Hidden away again as Jesus was until it was His time. We are honored to be the dilapidated barn and hidden room of the Anointing who brings Himself once again through these unlikely vessels of unpolished humanity to be discerned first by others who are being made into kings and priests (symbolized by the wise men or kings who came from afar at the time of Jesus' birth) who can perceive who we truly are with eyes of the spirit. We become ever more visible to spirit-prepared men and women as we make room for Christ to assume, once again, His humble estate of a King through us who feel unworthy and broken as we carry about the dying of our Lord in our bodies. This leaves us as a stench to the world which continues to reject the Christ, but a sweet aroma to those who are receiving His salvation. By this rejection and sharing in the Lord's suffering as we bear His shame, we are unwittingly made acceptable for such an honor of sharing in His glory.

Scripture does declare, however, and we affirm it, that "...every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:11). Paul further declares boldly, "...having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven" (Colossians 1:20). Indeed, there will come a time when all of creation shall be reconciled to Him, and confess Jesus Christ as Lord. This will be the time of the full and complete manifestation of the sons of God! All of creation will be affected and brought into reconciliation to Christ as He is made alive to them in the sons who have been conformed into His image through their many difficult processings.

We are compelled to once again emphasize that, contrary to that which is being implied in much "sonship" teaching today, this will not be a glorification of our natural man. It will not be Charles and Sarah, or Tom and Julie who will be shown to a grateful world as sons of God. In fact, Charles and Sarah, and Tom and Julie will likely be more despised than ever. *Christ, however, will be manifest through them to the world.* We should never grieve the loss of our spiritual superegos who aspire to be like Jesus; but speak forth as though it is, the manifestation of the hope of glory when the Father appears within us and we are entrusted by God to see and relate to Him through our spirits and other's spirits who are one with Him. This is the replacing of us with HIM in the earth. This transaction of Him for

us *is* the coming of Christ in His sons for which we earnestly wait, expect and hope. Through our death the Christ-seed will ultimately be raised in our unique manifestations of Him for the hope and sake of His glory.

This glorious revelation to all of creation will take place only as the work of the cross is completed in that remnant, the sons whom God is even now preparing. These sons-in-preparation are even now falling to the ground and dying, hidden there in the ground of our earth, or corrupted seed. We are branch and not vine. We are the vessel to hold His substance and then to be poured out so we can contain even more of Him. Jesus is all IN all of US! He is everything supernatural and Divine that He manifests in us from the dying seed that comes to full harvest. It is in the dying that He becomes fully manifest as we, His vessels, extend His grace in manifold ways throughout creation. This will be the time of the full and complete manifestation of the Son of God in the sons of God! *This* is what all of creation is groaning for!

We would close with these two important takeaways: First, we live to die. "Whosoever shall save his life shall lose it." Our goal in this life is to die to our life and this requires the acceptance of our life being hidden in Him. Not hidden so that we can be revealed or manifested as "God's super-humans" to an adoring world at some future point in time. Rather, we are hidden to stay hidden so that He can be revealed as resurrected life through our death. And thus, our second takeway: We die to live. "...[A]nd whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."