

Today's reading is from the Book of Colossians, chapter three, verses five through 17. So put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you have nothing to do with sexual immorality, impurity, lust and evil desires. Don't be greedy, for a greedy person is an idolater. Worshipping the things of the world. Because of these sins, the anger of God is coming. You used to do these things when your life was still part of the world. But now is the time to get rid of anger, rage, malicious behavior, slander and dirty language. Don't lie to each other, for you have stripped off your old sinful nature and all of its wicked deeds. Put on your new nature and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like Him. In this new life, it doesn't matter if you are Jew or Gentile, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbaric, uncivilized, slave or free. Christ is all that matters, and he lives in all of us. Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Make allowance for each other's faults and forgive anyone who offends you.

Remember, the Lord forgive you, so you must forgive others. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony. And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your heart. For as members of one body, you are called to live in peace and always be thankful. Let the message about Christ in all of its richness fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts. And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father. This is the word of the Lord. Please stand for the reading of the Gospel. Today's reading is from Luke, chapter 12:13 through 21. Then someone called from the crowd, teacher, please tell my brother to divide our Father's estate with me. And Jesus replied, Friend, you made me, a judge over you to decide such a thing as that. And then he said, Guard against every kind of greed. Life is not measured by how much you own. And then he told him a story. A rich man had a fertile farm that produced fine crops.

And he said to himself, what should I do? I don't have room for all these crops. Then he said, I know. I'll tear down my barns and build bigger ones. Then I'll have room enough to store all of my wheat and all my other goods. And I'll sit back and say to myself, my friend, you have stored enough away for years to come. Now take it easy. Eat, drink and be merry. But God said to him, you fool, you will die this very night. Then who will get everything that you worked for? Yes, a person is a fool to store up earthly wealth but not have a rich relationship with God. This is the word of the Lord.

God help us to understand you better. We want to understand your holiness, your goodness, and give us wisdom to understand you so that we can love you more and obey you.

Well, all right. Would you all join me in prayer? Heavenly Father, we are so glad that you hear our prayers. Where would we be without you? We ask, Father, that you would give Your Spirit in abundance, that you would pour into our hearts, our minds, our bodies, our souls, the word of God that as it's been read and heard and now as it's preached and proclaimed, it will have the desired effect. It will make us both as individuals and as a people more and more like Jesus. It's in his name we pray. So we're in Colossians chapter three today. Colossians, chapter three, if you want to turn there. But as you turn there, I wanted to share a word with you. I don't know if it's Mr. Rogers or Sesame Street, one of those. I always have kind of the word for the day. Well, the word for today is recidivism. Can you say that? Recidivism? It's not completely an easy word to say, but most of you probably know what it means. Recidivism is that technical term that basically means that a criminal who offends when they recidivate or whatever, they offend again. So recidivism is the rate at which offenders reoffend, and in the United States, that's almost 70%.

That is, those who go to jail are very likely to repeat offend and be back in jail at some point within five years. Here's the deal with a term like recidivism, we don't think about it much. If you're a fairly law abiding citizen, you don't think about a term like that because you're like that just doesn't apply to me, right? I hope you're saying, right, if we are sinners, our recidivism rate is what, 100%? The Bible tells us that if we say we are without sin, we lie, and the truth is not in us 100%. And yet we come to a chapter like this in chapter three, we also come to sayings of Jesus along the way where he says to the woman caught in adultery, go and sin no more, where he says to a man that he's about to heal, he tells him to stop sinning after he heals them, or something worse may happen to you. And here we have

Paul holding up two great lists of sins, and he said, don't do them, don't do them. So that we've got this kind of tension as believers, right? We know that we've got the old nature that before Christ came and forgave all our sins and wipe them away and canceled the prison sentence that we were sinners.

And yet now we have the old nature right along with our new nature. We're a new creation. But the old nature longs and pines for sin and occasionally falls into sin. And so we have Paul in his letters urging the people of God, don't go there, don't fall. It's a problem, right? Because when we look at these lists, they're formidable. I mean, some of them are things that kind of take place in the heart lust and jealousy and greed and things that almost come unbidden to us, almost come naturally to us. Others of them come spewing out of our lips anger and malice and frustration. And they seem very formidable. How do we get rid of those? Well, sometimes in church, the Old Testament account of David and Goliath will be read in a moment like this, where pastors decided it is time for our people take sin by the horns and just wrestle it to the ground. So I'm going to preach about David and Goliath, and you know what I'm going to tell the people? Be like, David, pick up those stones. You can slay that giant. And people get charged up and they run out and they go to pick up the stones and then they recidivate.

I guess. I don't know if that's the right word, right? recidivate. Maybe I'm making up a word here we come to that stark reality of our recidivism rate. So what do we do when we're facing these giants? How do you slay them? Because I know this I don't think Jesus would ever tell you to stop sinning unless he believed it was possible. Go and sin no more. When he's speaking to the woman caught in adultery, he's obviously saying, stop committing adultery. There's a better way. He obviously believed that she could take those words in, heed them and amend her life. And so when Paul tells us to put to death the misdeeds of the body, he must believe, like Jesus, that we can, that it really is possible. Yet we might say, how? Let's take a look here in Colossians and see if we can wrestle with that. Because the house is important. It really is. Otherwise we become pretty darn discouraged. Or we settle in some ways where we lie to ourselves. Even worse, these commands are meant to be obeyed. So how do we obey them? Well, we started in verse five today and I'm reading from the New International Version.

Put to death therefore whatever belongs to your earthly nature. But hold on a minute. There's a word there therefore. And you always know when the word therefore is there. You got to see what it's there for. And in this case, besides all the rest of what Paul has been saying, we skipped the first five verses of this chapter. 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 unearthly things, for you died and your life is now hidden with Christ. And God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Paul wants us to understand, therefore, if we're going to put to death the misdeeds of the body, that something comes first, and it's Jesus, and he's, the glorious One. And even David understood this, right when he faced Goliath, what did he say? He said, you come at me with sword and javelin, but I come at you with the word of God. In the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defiled this day.

David says, this is where I stand. This is what my identity is built on, the God of Israel. And in the same way, Paul is urging the people, set your minds on things above where Christ is. That's where you are. That's where your hope lies. That's where your identity is. It's in Jesus. And when we forget that the fall to sin is quick, it's so quick. Therefore he says, put to death whatever belongs to your earthly nature. And here he gives us a couple of lists. He's letting us know, the Lord is above us, the Lord is above us. So whatever belongs to what's below the earthly nature, the nature to which you once belonged, but no longer do, though the sinful nature is still part of you, you are a new creation in Christ, who is above put to death what's below sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, and greed, which is idolatry. He's speaking the language of this world. He's speaking what the world looks to for comfort, what the world looks to for strength. Do you ever feel like, if I made more money right, my life would be set? Do you ever feel when it comes to regards to money or success, that you're something as less than, that you fall short, that you fail, and that if somehow you could be more successful, more affluent, you'd be doing all right in this world?

Well, the world believes that 100% and so 100% in every possible way, we're told the ways to be

affluent, the ways to succeed, the ways to achieve more and more, the ways to build bigger barns, and to say to ourselves, now we can retire, now we can rest, now we can enjoy the good things coming to us and so much more that you were created for. Therefore, put to death greed, puts death, sexual desire and lust, these things that sometimes seem to come to us unbidden, these untamed appetites. How do you develop an appetite how do you develop an appetite how would you develop an appetite for Asian foods? Say, try it again and again you go back to it. Well, that Singapore food is good. Now I'm going to try that Thai food. That Thai food is good. Now I'm going to try what Korea has to offer you develop an appetite by tasting these things in the same way in life, we develop an appetite for sin by continuing to sin, by sampling the way years of sin. And so in the church, in the church, there are things we hide. I never know when I'm speaking to a congregation.

I never know. But I know, right? I never know everything that people are dealing with secretly, but I know that they are, because it's human nature. And that's what Paul's speaking to here. Put that stuff to death among you. Starve that appetite. When you go through a season of Lent, if you give up something oftentimes you're surprised to find that at the end of that season, your appetite for that thing has grown less, your reliance on that thing has weakened, because the more you give that thing to yourself, the more it grows. So Paul says to put it to death. How do you put something to death? Pick up a sling with a stone and throw it into the giant's forehead and crack his head. To put something to death, you do violence to it, you stab it, you smother it, you kill it or you starve it. There's all kinds of ways to put something to death in life, something physical. Paul says, let your imagination work towards that in the spiritual life and in the spiritual realm, and let it work out in your physical bodies. Figure out how to put things to death.

And that's why Paul says, I beat my body to make it my servant. Right? But there's more to it than that. Because I think just saying that you could say, wait a minute, the giants are giant, right? When David went to face the giants, there was a whole army of people safely behind their lines that didn't want to face that giant because they knew what a giant could do, right? And so, as I say, these things I want to acknowledge these things can be giants in our lives. When somebody says put it to death, you may be right to say, hey, Patrick, it ain't that easy. I'm trying. Crisis above us giving you resource. Christ is also upon us. Christ's life is upon us. Let me just go a little further here. So he goes onto another list. But now you must also rid yourself. You used to walk in these ways sorry. Verse seven in the life you want live in, and I'm not skipping verse six because I don't like the wrath of God. The wrath of God is coming against these things because these things hurt people. These things hurt you. They hurt people and they hurt you.

But now you must also rid yourself of all such things as these anger, rage, malice, slander and filthy language from your lips if one are untamed appetites. Now we see unbridled expressions that seem to come pouring from our lips from time to time towards one another. In some churches, there's a big focus on being sexually pure, but in the desire to be successful. People are run over, people are spoken too harshly. And Paul said, don't let that be a part of the church. In other churches, people are very kind to one another, and everybody's trying to keep peace all the time, but they'll never confront anybody about sexual immorality or greed or any of those other sins about the untamed appetites. No, Paul is saying both of those do damage to the people of God. Both of those do damage to others untamed appetites and unbridled expressions. Get rid of them, do away with them, put them to death, all of you, and do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and you've put on the new self. And it's here where Paul tells us Christ is not only above us, he is upon us.

His life is within us. Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcise or uncircumcised, barbarian, sidhian, slave or free, but Christ is all and is in all. There's not a person that comes through the door who names the name of Christ who this is not true of. But so often we think it's not true of ourselves. I'm just not worthy. You're right. None of us are worthy. But Christ freely gives Himself to his people, pours out his spirit upon us, Christ above us, intercedes for us, so that Christ within us might have his full expression. If anything is to be unbridled in the church, it's the praise of Jesus Christ. If anything is to be unbridled in the church, it's the love and joy and peace that we share with one another. And that's where Paul goes. Christ is above us, and he is upon us and within us. But there's something more. Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another. If any of

you has agreements against someone, forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues, put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

What Paul wants us to understand is not only is Christ above us and within us and upon us, but Christ people are with us. Such a mistake to read the account of David and Goliath and to lay on the people of God that you ought to be like David. The whole point of David and Goliath is a giants. Normally on any given day kick our tails. We need a hero to come and stand for us. So David stands out in the power in the name of the Lord, for the armies of Israel, and he slays the giant who's the new David who does the Bible tell us is David's greater son? It's Jesus. Jesus is the giant slayer. Jesus stands in our place. When sin had absolutely destroyed us, Jesus stepped in, and rather than killing the giant. Jesus allowed the giant to slay him. And in being slain upon the cross, all our sins were washed away. We were forgiven. And in rising from the dead, Jesus gave us ultimate resource to live this life as the people of God unashamed. Unafraid. And so here's the point with David and Goliath, you cannot face the giants alone.

Can I say that again? You cannot face the giants alone. And sadly, that's what American Christians so often do. We gather in church together and we go off alone to face the giants. But the reason we gather in church together is to go off together, to face the giants together, to forgive one another together, to love one another, to bind it all together in unity, and to hold each other up in the midst. What happens when you're facing the giant and you can't defeat it? That's the time when you got to go, I can't defeat it, but I've got brothers and sisters. So when you get to AA, if you've got an addiction, what do they do? They give you a sponsor, right? And that sponsor says, you can call me any time I'm feeling the need to drink. Call me. I stumbled, I fell, I blew it. Call me. We've all been there, we've all done that. Get up. You can. And so consequently, people in AA a lot of times know even more firsthand than the Church knows, that we're in this together, right? If you're dealing with a sin that is kicking your tail, it's time to find someone in the church that you can call, whether it's your pastor, whether it's the person sitting to your left or your right or behind you in your life group.

And to say, I just keep falling and I can't beat this giant. So that person can say to you, come on, I'll lift you up. Let's read the Bible. Let's read the Bible correctly. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, not in your singular heart, but all our hearts right together. Since as members of one body you were called to peace and be thankful, let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, right? Just pick up the scripture, read a psalm through hymns. Oh, measureless might ineffable love while angels delight to worship above. I mean to take the great hymns of the church and say, our brothers and sisters have been there before. And spiritual songs, those love songs we sing to Jesus. Jesus, we love you. Oh, how we love you. To encourage one another to develop that kind of heart for the Lord, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. 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. We're in this together.

And if God will build a church here right in this garner Cleveland Clayton Johnston County area. Where this authentically happens, giants will be falling left and right. Amen. Well, Father, we do pray that your power, your grace, your wisdom, your love would be upon us. That our eyes would be lifted up to see Jesus above us. Hearts would be inspired by the Spirit to know Jesus within us. And, Lord, our guards would be taken down to know Christ's people among us and with us to share with each other our needs, our desires, our fears, our brokenness and to encourage one another as long as as today is today and until the great day of the Lord comes. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.