



SUNDAY SCHOOL AUGUST 3, 2025

Prayer:

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New Testament

Colossians 3:1-11

THE NEW LIFE OF CHRIST

(Paul writing to the Church in Colossae)

“So, if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.

“Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry). On account of these, the wrath of God is coming on those who are disobedient. These are the ways you also once followed, when you were living that life.

“But now you must get rid of all such things—anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator.

“In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, enslaved and free, but Christ is all and in all!”

OVERVIEW

Colossians 3:1–11 marks a significant transition in Paul’s letter, **moving from theological reflection to practical ethical instruction**. It directs believers to live out their new identity in Christ by focusing on spiritual values (“things above”) and abandoning sinful behaviors of the “old self.” **Paul calls for a radical transformation of life—a putting off of the old and a putting on of the new, rooted in Christ's resurrection and lordship.**

BIBLICAL CONTEXT

This passage is a part of Paul’s letter to the **church in Colossae**, written while he was imprisoned (likely in Rome, around 60–62 CE). Chapter 3 begins a new section following his theological affirmation of Christ’s supremacy in chapters 1–2. After warning against legalism and false teaching (e.g., asceticism, angel worship), Paul now focuses on **Christian ethics**—how believers should live in light of their new life in Christ.

Paul emphasizes:

- **A heavenly perspective** (“seek things above”),
- **A death to earthly vices** (like lust, greed, and anger),
- **And the breaking down of social and cultural barriers in Christ.**

HISTORICAL / NON-BIBLICAL / POLITICAL CONTEXT

Colossae was a small city in the Roman province of Asia (modern-day Turkey). It was a diverse cultural hub, influenced by Greek philosophy, Roman law, and local mysticism. This mixture gave rise to **syncretistic religious practices**, some of which crept into Christian thinking ... *meaning, Christians weren’t just believing in Christ, but also in beliefs they felt were associated to their older beliefs or even mixing in other religions and paganism beliefs.*



Paul's warnings about earthly things like greed and idolatry reflect common Roman values—status, power, indulgence—which clashed with the values of the kingdom of God. His list of vices aligns with **Greco-Roman moral direction**, but he reframes the conversation by rooting moral transformation in **Christ's resurrection and identity** rather than in self-discipline alone.

The reference to “barbarians and Scythians” shows a challenge to **cultural elitism**, as these groups were often looked down upon by Roman citizens and Jews alike. Paul is leveling the playing field.

See Addendum on Scythians

HISTORICAL TIMELINE / BIBLICAL TIMEFRAME

- **Date of Writing:** ca. 60–62 CE
- **Author:** Traditionally attributed to the Apostle Paul (some scholars suggest a Pauline disciple)
- **Context in Paul's Ministry:** Likely during his imprisonment (possibly Rome)
- **Church Age:** Early Christian communities are forming and solidifying identity, often facing internal confusion and external pressures

SCHOLARLY METAPHORICAL INTERPRETATION WITH MODERN-DAY & GRANT COUNTY CONTEXT

Metaphorically, Colossians 3:1–11 is about *identity transformation*. “Putting off the old self” and “putting on the new self” mirrors a **spiritual wardrobe change**—a visible reorientation of the heart and mind.

Think of it like a farmer in Grant County hanging up muddy coveralls after a long day and stepping into a clean set of clothes to enter the house for supper. It signals a transition—not just in appearance, but in purpose and place.

In a **modern Midwestern context**, this passage calls individuals to:

- Reflect on what it means to **live with integrity** even when surrounded by polarized politics, materialism, or a culture of blame.
- Let go of **bitterness or prejudices** that often hide behind “the way we’ve always done things.”
- Embrace unity across racial, cultural, and economic divisions—challenging in communities where **social roles and church traditions are deeply ingrained**.

Paul's radical egalitarianism (Human Equality ... “no longer Greek or Jew...”) invites the rural church to reconsider **what belonging truly means**—not conformity, but renewal in Christ.

SUMMARY

Colossians 3:1–11 calls believers to orient their lives around Christ, who is “seated at the right hand of God.” It contrasts two realities—the “earthly” self shaped by sin and the “new self” being renewed in God's image. Paul lays out ethical guidance rooted not in rules, but in **resurrection identity**. All social and cultural boundaries are rendered meaningless in the face of this new life.

This message resonates deeply in any era—including ours—where divisions run deep and people cling to the old self out of fear or habit. In Grant County, Indiana, it might be an invitation to **let go of pride, fear of change, or outdated prejudices** in favor of a community where Christ is “all and in all.”



Gospel

Luke 12:13-21

THE PARABLE OF THE RICH FOOL

(Jesus speaks to the crowd)

Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.”

But he said to him, “Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?”

And he said to them, “Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.”

Then he told them a parable:

“The land of a rich man produced abundantly. And he thought to himself, ‘What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?’ Then he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.’ But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ So, it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God.”

OVERVIEW

This passage is a response to a dispute over inheritance. Jesus uses the moment to deliver a parable warning against greed and false security in material wealth. The story contrasts worldly accumulation with spiritual poverty, ending with God calling the rich man a fool for placing trust in possessions instead of in God.

BIBLICAL CONTEXT

- **Placement:** This story is found within a series of teachings in Luke 12, where Jesus warns about hypocrisy, anxiety, and misplaced priorities.
- **Theme:** Jesus turns an earthly question about justice (inheritance) into a heavenly teaching about what truly matters. He redirects focus from legal disputes to eternal truths.
- **Teaching Style:** Classic use of parable—accessible and memorable, yet rich with layered meaning.

HISTORICAL / NON-BIBLICAL / POLITICAL CONTEXT

- **Jewish inheritance laws:** Jewish tradition gave the elder son a double portion of the inheritance (Deuteronomy 21:17), but disputes were common. Rabbis often served as arbiters in these cases, and the man is asking Jesus to play this role.
- **Roman economy:** Under Roman occupation, there was growing economic disparity. Wealthy landowners were growing richer, often at the expense of tenant farmers and the poor.
- **Greco-Roman philosophy:** Stoicism (living in accordance with Nature) and Epicureanism (pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of pain) were influential. The rich man’s phrase, “Eat, drink, be merry,” echoes Epicurean ideas—but Jesus critiques it sharply.

HISTORICAL TIMELINE / BIBLICAL TIMEFRAME

- **Date of Jesus’ teaching:** Circa 28–30 CE, during his Galilean ministry.



- **Date of Gospel of Luke:** Written between 80–90 CE.
- **Cultural backdrop:** A time of growing concern among early Christians about how to live faithfully in the face of materialism, persecution, and social injustice.

SCHOLARLY METAPHORICAL INTERPRETATION WITH MODERN-DAY & GRANT COUNTY CONTEXT

- **The barns as illusion:** The larger barns represent the false security people create when they trust in wealth. The man isn't condemned for being successful ... but for hoarding without gratitude or generosity.
- **"Soul, you have ample goods":** The rich man speaks to his soul as if it could be comforted by material things—a profound theological error. His soul's real need is not goods, but God.
- **"This very night":** Sudden death serves as a narrative jolt. It metaphorically speaks to the unpredictability of life and the futility of planning for a future that excludes God. *This about this ... when you think of where you want to be in 5 years, or what you want to be doing in 5 years, where does the Church fit in to those plans?*
- **"Rich toward God":** Not a call to poverty but a reordering of priorities. *The parable warns that what counts in the kingdom of God is generosity, humility, and faith.*
- **In Grant County:** A rural area with both economic hardship and deep faith traditions. Many residents face challenges similar to the first-century audience: rising costs, uncertain employment, aging infrastructure—but also a temptation to measure success by property, savings, and comfort.
- **Practical application:**
 - Churches may ask: *Are we building spiritual barns or physical ones?*
 - Individuals might reflect: *Am I rich toward God, or storing "stuff" out of fear and self-protection?*
 - Relevant to discussions about legacy and planning, especially in farming communities where land symbolizes both livelihood and lasting family connection.

SUMMARY

In **Luke 12:13–21**, Jesus rejects the role of arbitrator in a family dispute and uses it as a springboard to teach about the danger of greed. Through the parable of the Rich Fool, Jesus warns against the illusion of control that wealth provides. He critiques not success, but selfishness and spiritual negligence. The parable ends with a call to be "rich toward God," reminding listeners then—and now in places like Grant County—that security comes not from possessions, but from a life rooted in faith, generosity, and awareness of our dependence on God.



Addendum

Who was Jesus Speaking to in Luke 12:13-21

In **Luke 12:13–21**, Jesus is initially responding to **an individual in the crowd**, but then broadens His message to **the crowd as a whole**—and ultimately to **His disciples** and **any listener willing to hear spiritual truth**.

Breakdown of the Audience:

1. Immediate Interrupter:

- Verse 13: *“Someone in the crowd said to him...”*

This unnamed person is likely a **younger brother** upset about not receiving his perceived fair share of an inheritance. He’s looking for Jesus to act as a **Jewish religion judge** in a legal dispute.

2. The Broader Crowd:

- Verse 14: Jesus directly replies to the man, but then **shifts His response to a general warning** in verse 15:

“And he said to them, ‘Take care! Be on your guard...’”

Here, **“them”** refers to **the crowd**—suggesting the lesson isn’t just for the one asking, but for all who are listening and might share similar assumptions about wealth, justice, or entitlement.

3. Disciples (eventually):

- If you keep reading in Luke 12, Jesus soon narrows His focus to His **disciples** in verses 22 and following:

“He said to his disciples, ‘Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life...’”

So the teaching begins with the **crowd**, but the spiritual core of the message unfolds more deeply to those closest to Him.

Why This Matters:

Jesus isn’t just settling a financial squabble. He’s using a **teachable moment** to speak to:

- **The man** (whose priorities are off),
- **The crowd** (who might share those values), and
- **The disciples** (who need to think about kingdom living, not earthly security).

It’s a brilliant pivot from **personal grievance** (The Man) to **universal truth** (The Disciples).

Where Is Jesus?

Luke 12 doesn’t explicitly name a city or village, but here’s what we know:

- Back in **Luke 9:51**, Jesus *“set his face to go to Jerusalem.”* From that point forward, He’s traveling south through **Galilee and Samaria** toward Jerusalem.
- By **Luke 10:38**, Jesus visits **Mary and Martha’s home**, which many scholars associate with **Bethany**, near Jerusalem.
- However, the timeline is not strict or linear in Luke—he arranges teachings thematically more than chronologically.

So, by **Luke 12**, Jesus is **somewhere on the road**, likely still in the region of **Judea or southern Samaria**, teaching **publicly**.



Who Makes Up the Crowd?

1. General Public

In **Luke 12:1**, the chapter opens with:

“Meanwhile, when the crowd gathered by the thousands, so that they trampled on one another, he began to speak first to his disciples...”

This tells us it’s not just a few people—it’s a **massive gathering**, probably including:

- **Curious villagers**
- **Travelers**
- **Religious onlookers**
- Possibly **Pharisees or scribes** (whom Jesus later addresses in vv. 54–59)

2. Economically Diverse

Since the parable of the rich fool deals with **inheritance and wealth**, it’s likely the crowd includes:

- **Some landowners or middle-class citizens** (like the man with the inheritance issue)
- **Many poor or struggling individuals** (who would resonate with teachings about greed and justice)

3. Spiritually Curious

This crowd isn’t just chasing miracles—they’re now **listening to teachings**, indicating a mix of:

- **Disciples** (committed followers)
- **Skeptics**
- **People on the fence**, trying to understand Jesus’ authority and message

Summary:

In **Luke 12:13–21**, Jesus is addressing a **massive, mixed crowd** of followers, skeptics, and everyday people somewhere in **Judea or Samaria** during His final journey to Jerusalem. The crowd includes **both poor and moderately wealthy**, and the man who speaks up likely represents a class of people trying to use Jesus for personal gain. Jesus pivots to speak not just to him—but to **everyone** within earshot who might equate abundance with security.

Who Were the Scythians?

The Scythians were a group of ancient nomadic peoples originally from **Central Asia**, particularly around the **Eurasian steppe**—regions that include modern-day southern Russia, Ukraine, and parts of Kazakhstan. They were active approximately from **700 BCE to the 3rd century CE**.

Key Characteristics of the Scythians:

1. Nomadic **Warriors**:

Scythians were renowned for their horsemanship and archery. They lived in portable felt tents (yurts) and moved with their herds.

2. **Feared** by Greeks and Romans:

Ancient Greek historians like **Herodotus** describe them as fierce, barbaric, and culturally alien. Greeks saw them as **uncivilized outsiders**, prone to violence and hard living.



3. **Distinct Culture:**

They practiced **shamanism** (a spiritual healing practice, sometimes associated with Native American tribes, as well), wore distinctive clothing, and buried their dead in elaborate **kurgan** (burial mounds). They left behind sophisticated gold artwork and were not without cultural refinement—though viewed by others as crude.

4. **Ethnic and Cultural Stereotyping:**

By New Testament times, “Scythian” had become **shorthand for the lowest of the low**, a byword for **brutality and backwardness**. In the Roman and Hellenistic world, calling someone a “Scythian” was akin to labeling them **wild, uncultured, or even subhuman**.

Why Does Paul Mention Them?

In **Colossians 3:11**, Paul writes:

“...there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, *Scythian*, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all!”

By including **Scythians**, Paul isn’t just talking about cultural differences—he’s invoking the most extreme example of “otherness” his audience could imagine.

Point: If even Scythians can be included in the renewing image of Christ, **no one is excluded**.

Modern-Day Application / Grant County Context

Think of the person the community looks down on the most—the one we assume is beyond hope, uncivilized, unreachable. That’s who Paul is including. In Christ, even *they* are being made new.

In today’s terms, this challenges not only **racism** or **classism** but also **political, cultural, and regional prejudice**. It asks us: *Who are our Scythians?* And do we believe Christ is also “in them”?