**Colossians 3: 1-4**

*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.*

You have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

The life that the world sees us living, that is not our real identity; that is not who we really are. Because who we really are is hidden from the world. Who we really are is with Christ in God.

I always imagine what the slaves of the Roman empire who became followers of Christ in the early days of the church made of this idea.

This person they were forced to be; that was not who they really were.

This life they were forced to live; that did not represent their true worth.

Because their true identity was they were a child of God with Jesus Christ. God valued them and loved them as his children.

And that applies to us as well.

The people they we have to pretend to be at work; or at home; or at church even; that is not who we really are.

When my children were little and I worked as a teacher, I would come home from work and organise the children, put the tea on, get them ready for bed so that I could do some marking and lesson preparation.

I could be rather bossy with the children. I would speak in my teacher voice. And I would use teacher language to speak to them. And they would say: ‘You’re not at school now you know.’ And it helped me snap out of teacher mode. It helped me to be a father instead. What they were saying to me was, ‘Dad, that’s not who you really are.’

I wonder how many of us have personas and attitudes shaped by the work we do or the work we did. That’s not really us. That’s who we were forced to be. But it’s not who we really are. Our true identity is in Christ with God.

My daughter in law has a lovely way of training my grandson not to do things he isn’t supposed to do. She sort of screws up her face and smiles and says something like, ‘we don’t eat worms, do we?’ or ‘we don’t run out into the roads, do we?’

And my grandson has internalised this and mimics this way of talking.

He will turn to me, screw up his face and say something like, ‘we don’t boil the eggs without washing the chicken poo off them, do we?’

No we don’t. It’s just not who we are.

I wonder what other things we can say in this way? What would the grown-up version of this way of talking be.

‘we don’t talk about other people like they are not also children of God, do we?’

‘we don’t boss each other around like other people’s views don’t matter, do we?’

‘we don’t assume that people cannot be transformed by the mercy and grace of God, do we?’

No, we don’t. That part of us has died. It’s just not who we are. And what we are left with is a new life with Christ in God.

At our Easter Vigil service we read this passage from Paul’s letter to the Romans:

*We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin.  But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.*

Our old self died when Christ was crucified and our new self lives to God.

So, what died?

Feeling guilty about the things we have done wrong. That died.

Feeling that we are only as good as the good works we keep doing. That died.

Feeling bitter about the things that have been done to us. That died.

Feeling broken by the trauma we have experienced. That died.

Feeling sad about the things we have lost. That died.

Feeling that things will never change and will always be rubbish. That died.

Feeling apprehensive about the future. That died.

That all died when Christ was crucified. That all died when he died.

And what arose for us when he rose from the dead?

A new life in God.

The promise of eternal life.

And an assurance that we can live that life in God now. We live that life with Christ in God. We can already have that life.

Because that is who we really are.

Our old selves. Those people we once were. Those people that the world still remembers or thinks it can see. They are not there anymore.

We have been set free.

Free to seek the things that are above, where Christ is.

Free to set our minds on things that are above, not things that are on earth.

Free to live our real lives now, lives which will be fully revealed to the world, when Christ is also fully revealed in glory.

Happy Easter everybody.

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!