

## Setting the Mind

Colossians 3:2-4; Matthew 6:19-21

Sunday, August 11, 2024 at The First Congregational Church of Marshalltown, Iowa

12th Sunday after Pentecost

### Introduction

I have a photo up on the screen which I downloaded from the internet. The picture is of Alex Honnold, a celebrated mountaineer known for his daring ascents of mountains and cliffs. Recently he broke the world record for climbing El Capitan, a sheer cliff of enormous height in Yosemite National Park. He achieved the climb in just around four hours. The accomplishment is even more notable in that he did it “free solo,” by himself with no ropes or safety equipment. Most people, especially in the rock-climbing community, celebrated his accomplishment as a great feat of mountaineering. Some, like me, admired his ability but would never, not in a million years, ever want to do anything like that. A few people criticized him, claiming that some day someone, with a little too much to drink, would attempt to do what he did, and the situation would end badly. Honnold himself mentioned that in one of his interviews and spoke of his obsessive preparation for the climb. Even he, an accomplished mountaineer, did not simply decide to climb El Capitan and then got to work. He planned carefully. He studied the rock face from a distance, then he climbed it, with ropes, safety equipment and a fellow climber over 60 times before he felt ready to try it by himself. By the time he attempted the route by himself, he had memorized the route completely. He knew where he could climb up, where he had to traverse, where he had to climb down before reaching the rest of the route. He knew where every hand hold was located. He knew where every foothold was located. He waited until the weather was favorable and dry. He set his mind to be well prepared for the challenge. That’s why I’m talking about him this morning, because he set his mind, and Scripture tells us to set our minds as well.

### Set the Stage

In our first text from Scripture, we find the words of Jesus during His Sermon on the Mount. Consisting of chapters five through seven, this message serves as the Christian’s basic handbook for behavior and habit. It is our “go-to” text when we want to ponder our growth in the Christian life. It includes both the Beatitudes and the Lord’s Prayer that we pray together every Sunday. In verses 19-21, He tells us to “lay up treasures in heaven,” to make investments in eternity and to pursue work that is of eternal value. Do things that please the Father rather than people and seek His approval rather than any sort of accolade from men. Your heart is where your treasure will be.

### The Apostle Paul picks up the same theme in Colossians 3

In his letter to the Colossians, the Apostle Paul tells us to “seek the things that are above where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on earth.” As spiritual people, focus on spiritual things. Note that the context of the passage before this emphasized the supremacy of Christ, but after this passage there is an emphasis on how we treat other people, that we must not use or mistreat people, but the fact that Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father becomes the focal point. The things above mainly involve Christ Himself, and setting your mind on things above involves the moment you meet the Savior face to face.

### Main Point: Success in life requires a focus that goes beyond the parameters of this life.

The main point is that success in the Christian life requires a focus that goes beyond the parameters of this life. It involves a vision, not of our potential or opportunities, but of Christ

seated at the right hand of the Father. Our whole life is a journey to that moment, and this is a theme that recurs in the New Testament, in fact, the whole Bible. I'll cite just a couple of examples.

#### St Stephen

In the Book of Acts, Stephen, one of the original deacons, was a man full of the Holy Spirit and a strong apologist for Christ. His witness was so potent that his opponents caused a confrontation that led to Stephen's murder, thus making him the first Christian martyr. His last moments included a vision of Christ standing (!) at the right hand of the Father. Stephen had met his goal; he had seen the Savior face to face.

#### Paul-upward call

The Apostle Paul wrote of his prime motivation in life was to pursue the "upward call of God in Christ." He had once encountered Christ as a persecutor of the Church but from that point on he sought Christ as His servant. It was this vision that kept him going through everything. His focus was not on the challenges of life, or even of the joys of the same. It was the upward call, that moment he would meet Him face to face.

#### Set the mind-a vision in the back of your mind

Application: Set the minds, a vision in the back of our mind. Make that a matter of prayer. The application is to make that vision a matter of prayer, that our minds would be set on Christ. The word for "set" means "to exercise the mind," or "to have an intense disposition or interest." It's almost like a craving, or a passion and we are to have our minds set on Christ and to view our future with Him as so certain that it is considered as already done. Now, while we are ordered to do this, I don't think this is something that we can do by our will power. I think this is a something for which we must pray, and that it the application for this message.

#### Conclusion

We have wonderful minds, that can contemplate so much. We can do so much with our minds, but there is a vision of Christ that is to be at the back of the Christian's mind and color and influence how we see everything. We set our minds on Christ and that clarifies our view of eternity and of the people around us as well. It is more a matter of prayer than anything else, but we are to set our minds on Christ.