

## Newman Looks Up

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Our text is from the Epistle reading. **“Seek the things that are above, where Christ is. Put off the old man with its practices and put on the new man, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its Creator.”** Here ends our text.

Oldman is always looking down. Oldman looks down to the things of earth. When he looks through his eyes, Oldman only sees earthly things, things he can get for himself. Oldman sees inanimate objects like cars and houses and money, and he covets these things for himself. He sees power and position and prestige, and he desires these things for himself. Oldman even sees people as things to be used for himself. Oldman is a taker. Oldman is always looking down. He looks down at his hands and schemes about what he can take with them. He looks down at his belly and craves things to fill it. He looks down at his loins and lusts after his passions. He looks down at his feet and directs them to walk in the paths of wickedness. And when godly people get in his path, Oldman looks down on them in anger. His wrath and malice fall upon them. He spews out slander and curses against them. Oldman is always looking down to earthly things and things within himself: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Oldman always looks down to things below.

Oldman is very old. He’s ancient. His origins go back to the time of the first man, Adam, whose spirit was Newman. Newman was made in the image of his Creator, righteous and holy and doing God’s will. But Oldman was conceived in a lie of the devil. Oldman was born in the mind of Adam when Newman listened to the devil’s temptation. Oldman struggled against Newman and gagged him from speaking the Word of God. And when Adam doubted God and ate from the tree which God had forbidden, Oldman killed Newman. With Newman out of the way, Oldman could do as he pleased. He immediately hid from God. He felt shame and guilt, but he blamed Adam’s wife and then blamed God.

Ever since that fateful day, Oldman has lived within every man. When man is conceived in the womb, he’s no longer made in the image of his Creator. Newman is stillborn. Newman is dead. Every human being is born with Oldman controlling his will and actions. Oldman was there in Cain when he killed Abel. Oldman was there in the days of Noah when every intention of man’s heart was only evil all the time. From the heavens above, God sent a flood and drowned Oldman. But Oldman is a strong swimmer. He popped his head up again at the Tower of Babel with pride. He lusted at Sodom. He deceived his brother Esau and sold his brother Joseph into slavery. Oldman grumbled in the wilderness. Oldman committed adultery with Bathsheba and murdered Uriah. He coveted Naboth’s vineyard and killed the Lord’s prophets. Oldman lives within every man, Jew or Gentile, slave or free, rich or poor, male or female.

And Oldman lives within you today. Your Oldman keeps your eyes looking down at earthly things. He makes you a taker who covets and steals, lusts and envies, hurts and kills. Your Oldman turns your head, extends your hands, and directs your steps like a puppet on a string.

Now your Oldman makes you feel guilty, and you should. Because of your Oldman and the things he leads you to do, you’re guilty of being a sinner and sinning. You’re condemned by God and his wrath is coming. So to soften the blow, you might think it best to try to reform your Oldman. Get some self- help books, 10 ways to improve your mind, marriage, mouth, and manners. You try to clean up your Oldman, give him a shave, brush his hair, and rinse out his mouth. But try as you might, Oldman won’t change. He’s still the same selfish, greedy, foul-mouthed criminal, drunk, and conniver as he always was. He’s simply dressed up in new clothes. There’s nothing for it. Oldman can’t be reformed. He has to die. Someone has to kill him.

So God sent the New Man. He wasn’t Old Adam, the Adam who struggled against Oldman and failed. He was the New Adam, the New Man. He was the Son of Adam, yet also the Son of God. He wasn’t man and a new spirit. He was man and God. This New Man, Jesus Christ, wasn’t made or created in the image of God. His origin goes back farther than Oldman, farther than the first man. He is God from eternity. As the New Man, he is the image of the invisible God. Jesus was holy and righteous doing God’s will.

Of course, like he tempted Adam in the garden, the devil tempted Jesus in the wilderness. Oldman was waiting for his chance, wanting to gag Jesus like he did Adam. But Jesus brushed the devil aside and spoke the Word of God. But Oldman didn’t give up. Jesus was in the way of the Pharisees and Sadducees, their power and prestige. So Oldman criticized and blasphemed Jesus for looking to his Father in heaven above. People were hungry, but Jesus didn’t send them away. The New Man was a giver. He looked up to heaven, said a blessing and fed 5,000. But Oldman wanted more to fill his belly, so he directed many of Jesus’ followers away from him. Oldman was there in Judas’ hands which grasped the thirty pieces of silver. Oldman filled Peter’s heart with fear so

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he denied Jesus. Oldman was there at Jesus' trial, giving false witness against him. And Oldman spoke through the verdict of the Sanhedrin, accusing Jesus of blasphemy and condemning him to death. Oldman was even crucified with Jesus. He mocked Jesus from the cross beside him, "Save yourself and us." But Jesus looked up to heaven and said, "Father forgive them." Oldman thought he triumphed when Jesus died and was buried in the tomb. He sent a guard to make it secure. Once again the New Man was dead. Oldman had killed him. Oldman looked down in glee to the tomb in the earth below.

But the New Man didn't stay dead in the earth. Jesus was made alive by God the Holy Spirit. No guard of Oldmen could contain him. Jesus Christ arose from the grave and ascended into heaven. He now sits at the right hand of God the Father in heaven above.

And now from heaven above, God sends another flood to drown Oldman. It's the flood of Holy Baptism. By water and the Word, Jesus Christ kills your Oldman. By sprinkling, pouring, or dunking you in water, Jesus washes you clean of Oldman. He takes your Oldman and all your sins, wads them up, and buries them in the tomb. Your Oldman died with Christ.

But God the Holy Spirit created a new spirit within you, your Newman. Up out of the tomb, up out of those baptismal waters, rose your Newman, clinging to Christ like a bride to her husband. Your Newman rose with Christ.

And Newman looks up to heaven, where Christ is. Newman is always looking up. Newman looks up to the things of heaven, the things of Christ. Newman looks to the Word of Christ. By that Word he's being renewed in knowledge after the image of his Creator. Newman looks to the promises of God. Newman looks up to the glories of heaven and eternal life given in Christ. The apostle Paul exhorts us today, **"If then 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 appears, then you also will appear with him in glory."**

Newman is always looking up. But because Newman is always looking up to Christ in heaven, he sees the earth and the things of earth in a different way than Oldman does. Newman sees earthly things, not as things he can get for himself, but as things he can use for others. He sees people not as things he can take or take from but as men and women created in the image of God. Newman lifts up his hands to serve them. From his heart he has compassion and kindness. He picks up his feet to walk in the paths of righteousness. And when other people get in his path, bump him, and make him stumble, Newman is patient with them. He forgives them as the Lord has forgiven you.

Of course, you've probably noticed a problem. Though your Oldman was drowned in your baptism, he's still a strong swimmer. Just like after the flood, he pops his head up again. He still clings to your flesh. Oldman wrestles with your Newman. He struggles against him, trying to seize control. It's not your Newman but your Oldman who causes you to stumble and sin again. So what do you do? You kill him again. You drown him again. How is this done? Do you get rebaptized? No. If that was the case you'd have to be rebaptized every day, because every day your Oldman wins a skirmish and causes you to sin. You aren't rebaptized, but every day you return to your baptism. You return to what God did at your baptism, because what God did at your baptism is still valid despite our failures. How do you return to your baptism? By daily contrition and repentance, confessing your sin and turning to God for forgiveness. Luther writes in our Small Catechism, "The Old Adam in us, (Oldman), should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires, and that a new man should daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever." Every day, you kill your Oldman by contrition and repentance, and every day your Newman rises again.

Now, if this doesn't happen, if there's no sorrow over your sin and turning to God in faith for forgiveness, then Oldman wins. Eventually he kills Newman. There's no more struggle. You sin without remorse. Faith is dead. You no longer look up to heaven to Christ, but down to earthly things below. That's why in our text today, Paul so emphatically tells us, **"Put to death, therefore what is earthly in you. . . put off the old man with its practices and put on the new man which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its Creator. Set your mind on things above."** Set your mind on Christ. By raising your Newman with Christ, God has begun to rebuild his image in you. He's renewing you day by day in the knowledge of the New Man, Jesus Christ. In the life to come, you'll finally be free of your Oldman. As Newman rose with Christ at your baptism, so Christ will raise you, body and soul, on the Last Day. **"When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory."** So keep looking up. Look up to the things above where Christ is, and from thence he will come again. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.