

Ascension Day

May 10, 2018

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**Ephesians 1:15-23** <sup>15</sup> Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, <sup>16</sup> do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: <sup>17</sup> that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, <sup>18</sup> the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, <sup>19</sup> and what *is* the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power <sup>20</sup> which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated *Him* at His right hand in the heavenly *places*, <sup>21</sup> far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. <sup>22</sup> And He put all *things* under His feet, and gave Him *to be* head over all *things* to the church, <sup>23</sup> which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

When one leaves, we often make high sounding promises to our family and loved ones. For example we might say, "I'll be with you in spirit." This of course means very little. Our loved ones might take some comfort from the fact that though we are far away we still think about them and love them. They might take comfort in the fact that we will someday be reunited. They may even call us on the phone and we can help them out a little there. But the truth is the farther away we are, the less we able to help.

Christ's ascension might at first seem like this, empty platitudes that sound good, but really the truth is that Jesus has left us alone. I mean wouldn't it be better if Christ were here on this earth and then we could go to him in Jerusalem and say, um what are we to do with this joint statement? But Paul makes it clear in our text that, "No, that wouldn't be better."

Paul says that He ascended into heaven and then, God "seated *Him* at His right hand in the heavenly *places*." What does this mean?

The Calvinist would say that this means that Christ is up there not here, or at least His body is. And by saying this they would to some degree agree with that idea that Jesus left us and went

away when He ascended. But notice this is not the way that Paul explains it. Rather he says “He is above all” and that “all things are under His feet,” and most importantly He “fills all in all.”

His ascension and sitting at the right hand of the Father is nothing less than this that He shares with the Father in ALL things equally. He is all powerful. He is all knowing. And He is omnipresent, that is He is not up there and not here, but He is everywhere, even right here by our side.

Notice how important that last phrase is: He “fills all in all.” We call it His ascension because for a short time He showed himself going up to the Apostles, but that was just a symbolic ascension to teach us that He was ascending in power. Physically it’s not so much His ascension as His spreading out. This is so that he could be not just in one place, but so that he could be with us.

Yes it would be nice to have Him sitting in Jerusalem where we could go ask him about the joint statement, but how much better that He is right here with us, so that we can discuss anything and everything with Him whenever we want.

And that He has all power to actually help us with every problem and work all things for the good of those who love Him.

Where is Jesus? He is right here. It’s just that we so often don’t recognize Him even when He is talking to us, even when His strong power is present to help.

How many of you did those “Where’s Waldo” books?

I was looking up an address a few weeks ago when I noticed Waldo peeking out of a corner of my Google maps. Sure enough Google was doing a “Where’s Waldo” thing. You could click on him there and get a page and search around for Waldo.

Waldo can be hard to find but Christ is not if we bother to open our eyes and look.

Paul says “I do not stop giving thanks.” We get something we are excited about and that excitement lasts maybe a week. Even our spouses, what a wonderful gift they are but when was the last time you were excited and thanking God for your spouse.

Paul is so excited about their faith that years later he has not stopped giving thanks. And He recognizes in that faith and love, there’s Jesus I found Him. For faith and love like the Ephesians have is certainly not something that comes without Christ from our own hearts. No says Paul

here is the mighty power of God at work. The same power that raised Christ from the dead, this is no less of a miracle that he produces in you SUCH faith and SUCH love.

Now you look around at our congregation or you family even and you might think, “Do we have such great faith and such great love for each other that would cause Paul this much joy?” And the answer is almost certainly not, so that you might even wonder, “Is Jesus here?”

But the truth is Paul is not thanking God that the Ephesians have such great faith and love. He is thanking God that He with His almighty power gave the Ephesians such faith and love. And that is where we can find Jesus and rejoice with Paul.

Even in the midst of the darkest sin, or even when surrounded by hatred or even filled with hatred in our own hearts, we don't look and say, “I can't find Jesus; He is not here on this page.” Rather we look and say there He is with His power and forgiveness and love. Jesus has conquered sin and death. So even in the depths of animosity and hatred, a believer can look and say Jesus is here. He can pull us out of this with His power. He can give us that love and faith.

Even if I were to cheat on my wife, the Lord can bring us back even from that. He can restore love and even trust even in that terrible situation.

The same power that raised Him from the dead, with such great power there is nothing beyond His ability to help. Our Lord ascended to be with us and to help us in every need, even the darkness of our sin.

**AMEN**