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St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
2100 16<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Austin, MN 55912-1749  
Pastor Ted Barthels  
Sermon preached on  
May 8, 2016  
Sunday after Ascension

Scripture Lessons: Psalm 47; Luke 4:44-53

Hymns: 213; 212; 221; 37:3 (238:3-5)

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Ephesians 1:15-23

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. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, our Risen and Ascended Lord, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Considering the Humiliation and Exaltation of Christ.

As we proceed through the first half of the church year we meditate upon the life of Jesus. We start the festival half of the church year at the end of November or the beginning of December. During Advent we prepare for Christ's coming. While we include Jesus' coming into our hearts and His coming on the Last Day in our meditations our focus is usually already on Christmas and preparing ourselves to properly celebrate Jesus' birth. The incarnation marks the beginning of the humiliation of Jesus. Throughout most of the first half of the church year we stay focused on this period of Jesus' life. Even as we look to the manifestation of Jesus' glory during Epiphany we are still looking at that period of Jesus' humiliation. During Lent we meditate upon Jesus' passion. We wonder at the greatness of Jesus' love for us sinners that He would "**humble Himself and become obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross**" (Philippians 2:8). We develop strong associations between Jesus' humiliation and our salvation.

But then comes Easter and with resurrection of Jesus from the dead there is a shift, a great and important shift in the life of our Savior. Paul wrote of that shift also in Philippians 2.

**Philippians 2:9-11** Therefore God also has highly **exalted** Him and given Him the name which is above every name, <sup>10</sup>that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, <sup>11</sup>and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

**Jesus is exalted!** That began with His resurrection. In His ascension we celebrate His return to His native heaven. What we do not celebrate is that He returned to being only the Son of God. We don't celebrate that because that didn't happen. Jesus was glorified as both true God and true Man, exalted to the full glory that was His as the Son of God since before the world began. So today we celebrate Jesus' ascension, considering--

## **THEME: The Impact of Jesus' Ascension's upon Us and Our Salvation.**

One might conclude that in the first verses of our text Paul wasn't really thinking about Jesus' exaltation in His ascension. However, right in these verses Paul makes the point that in Christ's ascension we see –

### **I. A Demonstration of the Power of God that called us to Faith.**

In the opening verses of our text Paul expresses his joy and thanksgiving for all that he has heard about the faith of the Christians in Ephesus. He commends their faith in Jesus and the love that they have shown to all the saints, that is their fellow believers, not only in Ephesus but elsewhere as well. He mentions how this is a regular subject of prayer for Paul, but we need to note exactly what Paul's prayers are about. While he is giving thanks to God for the faith that is evident in the congregation in Ephesus, Paul also prays that they might be blessed with the Holy Spirit that they might grow in wisdom and revelation that only the Holy Spirit can bring that to them. He asks that their understanding be enlightened, (remember that we are darkness without the Spirit of our God.) All this comes to the child of God through "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory."

But how does this connect to Jesus' ascension? WE read in our text:

**Ephesians 1:18-20** "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, **which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,**"

Recall for a moment how after His resurrection Jesus opened the understanding of the disciples that they might believe the gospel. The power that brought us to faith in Christ does not come from within us. The spiritual understanding that we possess does not

start in our minds. It starts with Christ and a full and complete gospel. It comes to us from the Spirit opening our understanding so that we see Jesus as our Savior from sin, and know the redemption that is ours through His death and the justification that comes to us by His resurrection from the dead.

The Lord reveals to us is the very glory of Christ, and the hope that we have to share in the riches of that glory. This is the inheritance which Christ has secured for us. This is what God worked in Christ when He raised Jesus from the dead, and exalted Jesus, *also according to His human nature*, to the right hand of God in the heavenly places. Jesus, *also as true man*, possesses that position of power and influence with God the Father because Jesus, the only begotten Son of God, came down to earth and took on that mission of securing our salvation, of rescuing us from sin and death. Jesus, the Son of Mary and the Son of God, was received back up into heaven having accomplished all that the Father had given Him to do to deliver us from the guilt and condemnation of sin. That is what we are assured of by the wonder of Jesus' ascension.

But it doesn't stop there. Indeed that is but the beginning of the grace that is communicated to us by Jesus' ascension. In His ascension we see the –

## **II. Establishment of Jesus' Majestic Power as Head of the Church.**

**Ephesians 1:20-23** “*God raised Jesus 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.”

Paul wanted the Ephesian Christians to understand the blessing of security that comes to us by Jesus' resurrection. They lived in a terribly immoral culture. Ephesus was the center of the worship for the Greek god Diana. Life for the believer in Jesus was fraught with danger, and also temptation and social pressure to return to the evil heathen ways. Paul presented these Christians with the

assurance of Jesus' power and majesty as it is presented to us in Jesus' ascension.

Every child of God needs to know the power and majesty of Christ. He has been exalted above, **far above** all principality, and might and dominion. Any kind of earthly power you can imagine is nothing before Jesus, our exalted Lord. He is so much greater, so much more powerful, indeed Jesus assured us that **all** power, "**all** authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." (Mathew 28:18). This statement covers everything imaginable, "**every name that is named not only in this age, but in that which is to come.**" Jesus is superior. Jesus is all powerful. **Jesus IS in control!**

That is the part that we know in our heads. We have heard this many times, but this truth slips in our lives when we fail to live with absolute confidence in the Son of God. Absolute confidence in the power and majesty of Jesus as our Lord is what we should absolutely derive from the ascension of our Lord Jesus to the right hand of God. That act signifies God putting all things under Jesus' feet. When we look at the world and what going on in the world we have difficulty seeing Jesus' control, but that doesn't make it any less true. We need to live by faith and not by sight! Jesus is in control. He does allow the nations of the earth to run amuck; He does so in His grace that the gospel of repentance and remission of sins might still be preached among the nations of the world.

Jesus is the head of all things for the Church. It is His concern for souls that dictates the way Jesus directs the course of human events. We are not able to see how His plan will develop, but He knows. He has us in His loving care. Paul reminds us that He is our Head and we are His body. This is of course not meant in a physical way, but in a spiritual reality. We are the body of Christ and Jesus cares for His body. After all He did give Himself for us!

He is the One who fills all in all! That is the ultimate comfort for us that comes by the ascension. Jesus is no longer confined to one place. Jesus is no longer limited by the restrictions of human limitations as during His humiliation. The divine majesty has taken control, and we are the beneficiaries of this majesty of Christ. He is with us always and everywhere, for He does fill all in all.

So then the wonder of our salvation found in Jesus' exaltation is no less marvelous and gracious than that which we see in His humiliation. As our ascended Lord, Jesus cares for His Church on earth. Jesus cares for you. The truth and the glory of Jesus' ascension assures us of bountiful blessings of grace as Jesus watches out for our every need of body and soul, and as our exalted Lord He blesses His Church according to His gracious good will for the salvation of a fallen mankind. And so it shall be until that glorious day when He shall so come in like manner as the disciples watched Jesus ascend into heaven (Acts 1:11).

**AMEN.**

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Amen. (Romans 15:13)