

In the Heavenly Places

Ephesians 2:1-10

The Eleventh Sunday after Trinity, August 12, 2018

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

The culmination of the ministry of our Lord was His ascension into heaven. Our Lord physically died on the cross. Joseph of Arimathea buried Him in Joseph's own tomb. On the third day our Lord bodily rose from the dead. He instructed His disciples for a period of forty days. Then on a Thursday He bodily ascended into heaven. A cloud hid Him from the sight of the apostles. Two angels appeared to the apostles and ask them why they were staring into heaven for Jesus who had gone away from them into heaven would return in the same manner that they had seen Him go into heaven. Once in heaven Jesus sat at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

Now the reason that we say that Jesus ascended into heaven is because the Apostles' Creed says it that way and there is nothing wrong with saying that, but in Ephesians it says that Jesus ascended into the heavenly places. That means that our Lord is not confined to one place in heaven. He is not trapped at the right hand of the Father as if held there by some kind of chain. He is in the heavenly places and free to move about.

According to Ephesians the point of Jesus ascending into heaven was not some mere spectacle for the apostles. The apostles had seen enough spectacle when the Lord rose from the dead. The ascension of our Lord into the heavenly places was so that He may take up the authority that He had earned over every principality, power, and authority in heaven and on earth.

Therefore Jesus is Lord of all. He is Lord over every principality, power, and authority on earth. He is Lord over the President, the Congress, and the Courts. Here I am talking about objective reality. I am not talking about the President, the Congress, and the Courts subjectively acknowledging that fact. Jesus is simply Lord over them. All of them are beholden to Him. All of them owe their positions of authority to Him. All of them will answer to Him for how they have executed their offices.

That means that Jesus is Lord over the majorities that elected them. Jesus is Lord over the population of the United States of America. He is Lord over the voter and the voter will answer to Him for how the voter executed his office. Furthermore the Lord is Lord over the superpacs and whoever else it is that funds the campaigns of these politicians. Whatever corporations it is that want certain individuals in power in this country will answer to the Lord for how they gave their money and how they executed their vocations.

Jesus is Lord over ever power, principality, and authority, whether that authority is governmental or corporate, whether it wields the power of a gun or it wields the power of the dollar and billions of them at that.

Jesus is therefore Lord over state legislatures and governors. He is Lord over county boards and municipal boards. He is Lord over mayors and every other authority that there is. He is also Lord over foreign governments. He is Lord over Kim Jung Um. He is Lord over

Vladimir Putin. He is Lord over the Muslim Terrorists. He is Lord over the European Union. He is Lord over all these powers, authorities, and principalities. All of them will answer to Him in the judgment regarding the discharge of their duties whether they did it in accord with His will or not. He is the one who sits at the right hand of the Father. They are not.

Furthermore Jesus is Lord over the principalities, authorities, and powers of heaven. He is therefore Lord over all of the angels. There is some debate in Christian circles as to whether or not Michael, the archangel and our Lord are the same person or two different people. I think it is clear from the prophet Daniel that they are two different people. So even though Michael commands the heavenly host in Revelation 12, the Lord Jesus who sits at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven commands Michael. Therefore there is no angel in heaven or on earth that is not subject to His will.

That includes the evil angels. They are commonly called demons or devils. They too are subject to His command. I have recently noticed a little anomaly in the Bible. It is clear from the book of Revelation and from the Gospel according to Saint Luke that Satan, the ancient serpent, the Devil, is thrown out of heaven as soon as our Lord does His earthly ministry. Satan therefore no longer has access to the throne of the Father like he did in Job's day. But that does not mean that others of his agents do not have access to the throne of the Father in the heavenly places. The book of Ephesians points out that our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. That means that there are still spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places! But even they are subject to Jesus. They can do no more than He will allow.

He is the One who ascended into heaven. He is the One who sits at the right hand of the majesty in heaven. He is the One who is seated in heavenly places.

Now, here is the deal, in Christ Jesus, so are you.

You are in Christ Jesus. He has raised you from the dead. He has raised you from the death of your trespasses and sins. If God has not raised you from the death of your trespasses and sins then in the Garden God was a liar.

God told Adam, "You may eat from the fruit of any tree that grows in the garden, but the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat for on the day you eat of it you will surely die." Now here is the deal: when Adam did eat of the fruit of the tree he did not keel over dead. He lived another 930 years and then he died. God did not say that he would live another 930 years after he ate the fruit of the tree. God said that he would die on the day that he ate the fruit of the tree. That means that Adam must have died in some other fashion than physical death. He died in his lack of communion with the One who gives life. To be out of communion with God is to be dead even if you are physically alive. Therefore your sin and yours sins throw you out of communion with God. You are therefore dead in your trespasses and sins.

But God who is rich in mercy made you alive together with Christ Jesus. In Christ Jesus God has lifted you from the death of your trespasses and sins and brought you into new life with Jesus Christ.

A number of Sundays ago the Bible told you that you were baptized into the death of Christ. If you were baptized into the death of Christ then you were baptized into His resurrection also. The Bible told you that Sunday that the two are inseparable. But if you have been baptized into the resurrection of Christ Jesus, then you have also been baptized into His ascension. Since He ascended into the heavenly places, you also have ascended into the heavenly places.

Here is where the biblical percept, "We live by faith and not by sight," is necessary, or you will not understand what God is talking about at all. In order to understand how it is that you are seated in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, you have to understand it when God tells you that you live by faith and not by sight.

Your sight tells you that you are sitting in pews at Immanuel Lutheran Church in rural Broadlands. Your sight will indicate to you when you get in your car and go home. Your sight will indicate to you when you take your Sunday afternoon nap and when you get up for some supper. Your sight will indicate with whom you have Sunday dinner. Your sight will indicate when you go to work on Monday or when you proceed with your daily tasks on Monday. So it will go with the rest of the week. What your sight will not tell you for the entire week is that for the entire week you are seated with Christ Jesus in the heavenly places.

At Divine Service we sit in the presence of the Word of God. Because we sit in the presence of the Word of God we are listening to God Himself speak to us. That is no different from Christ Jesus sitting at the right hand of the Father conversing with the Father. You are here at Divine Service not only listening to the Word of God, but also conversing with Him as the congregation offers to Him her prayers. We would be sitting in the bodily presence of Christ Jesus who sits at the right hand of the Father if we were celebrating the Sacrament of the Altar today, but since we are not celebrating the Sacrament of the Altar today we will forgo sitting in the presence of the One who sits at the right hand of the Father. If we were though that would clinch the deal. We are listening to Him. We would be physically present with Him. What else is there except to see it? We are in the heavenly places.

And that sitting with Jesus in the heavenly places which is rooted in the Divine Service continues throughout each and every moment of your life. You are seated with Christ Jesus in the heavenly places. You cannot see it, but it is true.

And if you are seated with Christ Jesus in the heavenly places then in Him you also have authority over every principality, power, and authority in heaven and on earth. You have authority over the rulers of this earth. Do you not know that you will judge angels? If you will judge angels, how much more will you judge the people of this world? You stand in judgment against the rulers, authorities, and powers of this world simply by being here at Divine Service. You are bearing witness to them that this is where their forgiveness is found also. This is where the Word of God is found also. You bear witness to them regarding the matters of repentance

and faith and you stand as a witness to them that even they will answer to the Lord Jesus Christ in the judgment. By doing all of this you stand in judgment over against them offering them the salvation of the Gospel.

It does not matter if these authorities are presidents, congressmen, judges, corporate officers, or rich people. You have authority over all of them. It does not matter if they are American or foreigners to you. You have authority over all of them.

If you have authority over the principalities, authorities, and powers of this world, then you also have authority over the principalities, powers, and authorities of heaven. You have authority over those evil angels who are still in the heavenly places. You have authority over their temptations. You have authority over their enticements. You are not subject to them. They are subject to you. You have authority over every temptation that you face. You have mastery over it because you are seated with Christ Jesus in the heavenly places.

You have authority over your sin. You are not enslaved to it. You do not have to do it. You are liberated from it in Christ Jesus. You have authority over Satan himself. You do not have to listen to him. You are not constrained to hear his voice. You are liberated from him and from his lies. Christ Jesus has liberated you from him.

And just as Christ Jesus sits at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven and thus you sit with Him at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven so also no one has authority over you except God Himself. You are the slaves of no one. You are bondservants of no one.

It is by grace that you have been saved through faith. And this is not from yourselves. It is the gift of God. It is not by works so that no one may boast. You are God's workmanship, seated at his right hand, in order that you may do good works.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.