

Sermon for Ascension Day 2014

Collect Prayer of the day: Almighty God, as Your only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, ascended into the heavens, so may we also ascend in heart and mind and continually dwell there with Him, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. *Amen.*

Greeting: Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ! *Amen.* (^{ESV} 1Cor 15:57)

The Word of God for this Sermon is written in Ephesians 1, 20b -23:

ESV 20b ... and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places,

21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

22 And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church,

23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Vote: Come Holy Spirit, open our ears, enlighten our minds and bless our hearts with Your holy Word. Amen.

Dear Congregation of the ascended Christ!

On the Day of the Ascension of our Lord Christ Jesus, forty days after His Resurrection, we as believing participants of His Body are reminded of the Lord's glorification. God “**raised Him from the dead and seated Him at the right hand in the heavenly places...**” writes Paul. That is where Jesus Christ is right in this moment. He is not lost. He is alive. He is the One, the only One, who sits at the right hand of the heavenly Father. But what does this mean?

God's Word reveals it to us: (1) Jesus Christ is Lord of the whole universe and (2) Jesus Christ is the head of His Church. [verse 22].

(1) Jesus Christ is the Lord of the universe. His Father and our heavenly Father raised Him from the dead and seated Him above all rule and authority, above all power and dominion and above every name that is named. God the Father has put all things under His feet. That is the reality since Christ's ascension. Very important: It was the almighty God who did this. Jesus didn't greedily grab for glory. His Father gave it to Him. Jesus didn't honour Himself. The Father honoured Jesus and gave everything under His rule. That is: God works in this world only through Christ Jesus. So, knowingly or unknowingly the whole world has something to do with Jesus Christ. Every single being in this universe cannot breathe without Christ, cannot eat or drink without Christ. All already depend on Him, because God keeps this universe running through Christ, and through nobody else.

Jesus Christ determines what happens on earth. The history of this universe is determined by Him and by nobody else. The governments of this earth cannot simply do what they want, although it may seem that this is the case. The powers of all evil forces are subjected under Him. They cannot simply do what they want. They are not in control! Satan, the fallen and rebellious angel, is not in control. He is not the ruler of the earth nor of the universe. It is Jesus Christ, and here we have to remember who He is: Jesus is the crucified Christ for the world. This is what makes the Ascension day of our Lord so magnificent and important, that God the Father took the crucified Lamb which took away the sins of the world. It is Him that God placed above everything and all. Dear congregation: It is our man who sits on the throne of the universe! He knows you by your name and you know Him.

Does any of the G8 presidents know you by your name? Does our president in South Africa know you by your name? Does he know your fears, your sorrows, your problems with sin or your joys and your uniqueness? No, of course not. It is impossible for him to know the names of all his citizens. We should really not expect it from our president. That would be unfair. Yet, we have someone in a higher position than all the presidents combined that knows us, that knows you. He knows what you think at the very moment. He knows what you

will say before you speak. On God's throne sits none other than Jesus Christ who still *is our brother as well as our Lord*. He didn't drop us. He stays true man and true God, our brother and Lord. We may speak to Him, directly, any time. And He wants you to speak with Him often, all the time. But why do we seem to see so little of His effective working in the world? He governs the world through His word and sacraments. This takes us to the fact that:

Jesus Christ is the head of His church.

The same Jesus Christ who stands above all powers and rulers is also the head of the church. Jesus Christ is present in the world. He even works in the world. Yet, the presence Jesus has in His church is another kind of presence. The church and Jesus are body and head to each other. Without the head the church has no life. All knowledge and wisdom come from the head. And more. All life and senses are initiated and controlled by the head. The body follows the impulses coming from the head.

The evil powers and other dominions are not part of the body of Christ. Only the church is His body. This is no picture language. This is reality. The One Holy Christian Church throughout all times is the Body of Christ. In other words in His Body Christ is present in yet a different way than He is present in the world and elsewhere.

In the Body of Christ Jesus is present in His fullness. In the Body of Christ you will find the fullness of the One who fills the whole universe. What is the fullness of Christ? All the gifts and powers of Christ are present in His Body. Those are all the spiritual blessings listed before [1-19]: God's Grace, that we have redemption through the blood of Jesus, forgiveness of our trespasses. The gift of wisdom and insight to understand the mystery of His will to unite all things in heaven and all things on earth in Him. In His Body faith is given to those who hear His word and they are sealed with the promised Holy Spirit through Baptism. In the Body of Christ prayer happens, where believers are praying for one another and for those outside so that all might receive the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation. Revelations happen through the word of Christ, so that the members of Christ's Body come to know the riches they will inherit and how immeasurable great the power is that creates faith in stony hearts.

Out of faith follows the love to all the members of the Body, the saints, and to the enemies of the Church too. So, from the head, going through the Body, the love and peace of Christ flows into the hostile world. In His Body the fullness of Grace and His gifts are present and there they are administered and given to the members. This Body of Christ is immortal. No-one can overrule it, no-one has authority over it and power and dominion except Jesus Christ. The One Holy Christian Church is indestructible. Jesus guarantees it Himself.

Conclusion: We don't need to be afraid of anything or anyone, especially if something really bad happens to us. Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father. He is everywhere and nothing happens in this universe without Him knowing it. To be in Him, is to be under His authority, power and dominion. Nothing and nobody can separate us from His Love. It is only I who can push Him aside, who can reject His love to me. Then I place myself outside the Body of all spiritual, that is godly and immortal blessings. That would be a real foolish move. The fact that Jesus ascended to sit at the right hand of His Father has far reaching consequences for all people. The effectiveness is clearly visible by faith. The Bible is the most read book in the world, even in our age. In Africa and in Asia the forgiveness and peace of Christ pulls many people out of the dominion of darkness and evil. That is how Christ works. What a blessing is it to participate in His Body. Jesus is not lost. He is here with all His blessings.

Let us thank our Lord: We thank You Lord for enlightening our hearts so that we could get a better insight of where You are and what You accomplish as head over all things in the Church for us. We praise You and thank you for being with us. Dear Lord abide with us! **Amen.**

Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you. Amen. (2Thess 3,16)