

Isaiah 41:8-13, Ephesians 1:20-23
“Seated at the right hand”

My favorite day of the week is Friday, and not because of why you think, you know the weekend. Friday is when I have chapel with the kids from the preschool, about 15 in the morning and 15 in the afternoon. I am teaching them the 10 commandments in a simplified way. When we got to no idols they had a bit of a difficult time understanding that work. But they got it. The next week we repeated the commandments, There is only one God, then they all said in unison, no needles.

What a beautiful time of year to be a part of First Presbyterian Church here in Strasburg. Jane and her many minions and the worship committee worked so hard to make sure that our sanctuary and our church building look ready for the season.

This week we are going to have the chance to look at the phrase in the Apostle’s Creed that comes after he ascended into heaven and that is that he sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. God’s power is seen in Jesus Christ and what we will see is that the power of Christ is manifested through the church.

Today we look at our relationship with Christ as part of his body called the church and I am going to encourage you to have the type of faith that has as its foundation the fact that Jesus Christ is no longer in the manger, even if we do find ourselves in Advent, he is no longer walking on the shores of Galilee, he is no longer hanging on the cross in agony, but rather our Savior Jesus Christ is right now in heaven sitting at the right hand of God. So what? What difference does it make? We will see that it gives us, the church, all the power because he is seated at the right hand. Let’s look at Ephesians chapter 1.

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When you talk about the right hand of anything, either in Scripture or even culturally, there is a plethora of baggage that goes with that. The right hand has always been considered the favored, the more important, the more powerful. At a dinner party the guest of honor would sit at the right hand side of the host. The right hand has been considered predominant where those with left hand designs used to be forcibly discouraged to use the left hand. In some cultures the left hand of another person would never be touched because, well, they use it to clean themselves.

But the right hand all through Scripture we find the right hand not only is favored but also denotes a certain amount of power, as in all of it. Psalm 110:1 from which this Scripture in Ephesians comes states: The Lord said to my lord, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool." There is a sense of protection under the right hand. Our Isaiah Scripture speaks of the right hand as that which is victorious in battle.

So when Paul mentions in Ephesians 1 that God raised Jesus from the dead and seated him at his right hand you should understand that to mean that Jesus has been given all power. That no longer is Jesus confined to his earthly, limited, and mortal body but rather as the Son, the second person of the Trinity, Jesus is able to yield the power of God.

When Paul writes this letter to the church in Ephesus you notice that Jesus' power, and rule, and dominion are talked about not as something that is yet to come, but rather as if it were already here. The victory of Jesus has already happened, he is already in charge, it is a fait accompli. There is no understanding that the kingdom of God is yet to come but rather that it is at hand. 1st century Christians lived in the victory of Jesus Christ, now. It happened. Sure we have heaven to look forward to but Christ is now seated at the right hand of God.

In fact, Paul and the 1st century Christians understood their place as servants, as vessels for Christ's power that is seen through the action of the church. Christ in vs. 22 is made head of all things **for the sake of the church**. Jesus' power is meted out **through the church**. Paul tells us that **the church has victory now** and ought to live in light of that statement.

I think many of us have focused more upon the nostalgic, pre-resurrected Christ than the real, current post-resurrection Christ. We feel more comfortable with the Gospels because they tell us nice stories of the past, of Jesus' life. These stories don't really demand that we do too much. Just believe, and dwell on who Jesus was. We are confused by Paul's letters that are theological statements of what we actually have to do. Some churches stand for the Gospel reading and sit inattentively while the letters are being read and the church's doctrine is being spelled out.

We find ourselves wishing we could walk on the shores of Galilee and we ask the question, What Would Jesus Do? Instead of realizing that Jesus used to be a baby, a

servant, a sufferer, but he is not that now. We cannot have a relationship with a nostalgic, in the past Christ, but rather our relationship is with an ascended, powerful, sitting at the right hand of God ready to wield his power through the church God.

Rather, Paul tells us that Jesus, the one who sits at the right of God the Father, has been made head of all things for the sake of the church, and the church is actually the completeness of Christ. What this means is that we, as a church, are the power of Christ. We are the ones through whom Christ works. With our words and our deeds it is our responsibility to that we are loving God with our utmost and our neighbor with all that we have.

Friends today we will shortly celebrate the Lord's supper. It reminds me of a time in the church of Stacy, my wife and her father who is here today, where there was a boy who had cerebral palsy and could not make his way down to the communion table, he sat in a wheelchair at church. One Sunday two of the kids who were in his Sunday School class spontaneously took him down, in his wheelchair, up to the pastor serving so that he could be fed. The church at work bringing people to Christ, those who long for him appearing. Look at this meal as a reinforcement of our responsibilities as a church to be the power of Christ, who has been given all power so that the love of God and neighbor would be realized throughout this land. Amen.