

Dan. PIT.

If you have been tracking with us so far, we are on the 7th week of our series on the Apostles Creed, preaching Scripture on the truths about God that are outlined in a Creed that is nearly 2000 years old. Held onto as a guide to our formation on what is right to believe about God.

We've been working on Section 2 of the Creed that outlines the work of Christ. We've covered His incarnation, substitution, resurrection, and today we're going to be looking at the ascension of Christ.

Specifically, the line:

He ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.

So let's stand and let's read the creed together as we start this morning...

THE APOSTLES CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Pray.

Intro

Did anyone watch the coronation of King Charles this year? I didn't. Not only did I not watch it, I do not follow the royal family AT ALL. My wife told me a particular sibling didn't attend and that was a really big deal, apparently? And I read the itinerary which shockingly had events and scheduling from 6am to 7pm. 13 hours of decorating King Charles in different symbolic cloths, gold this, pure white that, and then a really big lunch. Go King Chuck!

I have no idea what any of it means. Even more so, I have no idea what in the world King Charles is doing right now. For all I know, his daily routine as King might as well be croquet in the courtyard with the Queen of Hearts.

Do you know what his responsibilities are? Do you know what his current agenda items are for his kingdom? Is he even the one that actually does anything?

And the thing is, if you view Jesus' ascension, like I view the coronation of Charles, you can end up doubtful and skeptical that it has any meaning at all. We blow by it.

You see, Jesus' ascension is a landmark event in the history of our faith. Here's how Acts 1 tells the story. 40 days after Jesus has risen from the dead. He's been teaching, appearing to over 500 people, giving them instructions to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit and then take the gospel to the nations. Then here's what happens

And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. 10 And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, 11 and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven." Acts 1:9-11

Jesus' ascension is the moment in history where Jesus went from being here physically present with us, to raised up as King in heaven where He is currently reigning. And I don't think we talk about that enough.

As Christians, we talk a lot about Jesus' death and resurrection. That's bread and butter to us. Or more appropriately our bread and wine... That is what Jesus *has done*.

We even talk about what Jesus will do. His second coming, a time of judgment and the ushering in of the new kingdom. What Jesus *will do*. (Next week's sermon)

But, not as often do we focus on what Jesus is *actively doing now*, as he reigns in heaven.

To do this, we are going to walk through a couple points in Hebrews - And this is what I want to do: My goal today is to show us what Jesus is currently doing, and how that can grow our confidence as His people.

We are going to do that through the book of Hebrews this morning and here is what we are going to see:

Jesus is ruling, Jesus is interceding, and Jesus is preparing a place for us.

First, let's turn to Hebrews 1:8-13.

These verses are at the end of the first chapter in Hebrews in which the author is lifting up the name of Jesus, walking through Jesus' relationship with the Father, creation, and the power Jesus has. It's truly a beautiful set of verses.

Jesus is Ruling (Heb 1:8-13)

8 But of the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom. 9 You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions."

10 And, "You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands; 11 they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment, 12 like a robe you will roll them up, like a garment they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will have no end."

13 And to which of the angels has he ever said, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet"?

The author proclaims that Jesus is the Son of the Father, that the Father is pleased in Him, the angels will worship Him, and that Jesus is blessed, righteous, and will live for eternity while His enemies are a footstool for His feet.

And right now, I want us to zoom in on the phrase "Sit at my right hand."

When Jesus ascended, He went to heaven and specifically to the right hand of the Father. Now just for clarification's sake, ascending to heaven doesn't mean Jesus went up beyond the clouds, as if heaven is some place above the stratosphere. Heaven is a realm, not a place high in the sky. Ascended is meant to point to how Jesus was lifted up, put up on high.

And not just raised up to heaven, but also raised up in power, at the Father's right hand.

We get a picture of this in Matthew 20 when the mother of James and John, two of Jesus' disciples, asks Jesus that He have her sons sit as His right and His left in His Kingdom. She is asking for Him to show them favor, honor, and give them authority in His Kingdom.

This position is as good as being in the throne. It comes with the same authority and power.

One pastor, Justin Dillehay really helps us see the implications here when he says:

The resurrection and ascension are distinct but inseparable movements in Christ's exaltation to the throne. Without the ascension, his kingship wouldn't be complete, any more than a man could continue as king without a coronation. Christ conquered his demonic enemies on the cross, but it was in the ascension that he was exalted far above them."

Jesus is in the seat of power.

When Jesus ascended to heaven, it was His day of exaltation, where we can see Jesus as reigning King above His demonic enemies. The same enemies we face today. Satan, sin, and death.

Remember, my goal today is to show in Scripture we have confidence as the people of Jesus? The tension here is that when we face accusations from Satan, guilt in sin, and the sting of sickness and death, it can draw us into doubt and skepticism, which is the opposite of confidence.

Because King Jesus is ruling, we can be confident that His plans are being accomplished.

Jesus plans to have victory over every pang of sin and death with face in this life. And He is working in us and through us to see that happen according to His will today, pointing towards His victory in all things that is to come.

Which means we can look forward to that future day when all of His enemies are His footstool, but it is even displayed right now.

In the words of Hebrews, we get to **taste the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come**. And when we know the goodness of the word of God, and are confident in His power, then we have the eyes to see what He is doing in the midst of it.

When we feel like we have lost the same fight against our sin for the 10th or 20th time, Jesus is ruling which means that He is working in us and through us in this fight so that we can taste the goodness of sanctification and victory that Jesus supplies.

In the midst of suffering, loss, and doubt, Jesus is ruling, which means that even if we do not know all of the answers, Jesus can work in us a heart that glorifies God and proclaims that we can trust Him even when His ways are not for us to know yet.

Jesus is actively working for us a foretaste of the age to come. Where we can see the victories over sin in our sanctification, and we can offer praise and glory to God more and more.

Jesus is ruling, we can be confident that His plans are being accomplished.

And He is doing even more than ruling. He is also interceding.

Jesus is interceding.

Let's turn a couple pages to Hebrews 4:14-16 where we can see this.

Jesus is Interceding (Heb 4:14-16)

14 Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

The author of Hebrews is referring back to the role of a high priest I want to make sure we all have a good understanding of, so I want to give some good context here.

In the Old Testament, we see a line of high priests that would represent their people before God. They took on an important position where they would make an animal sacrifice within the temple to pay the penalty for all of Israel's sin. This was outlined in the law passed down from Moses and a crucial part of Israel's relationship with God.

When the priest made this sacrifice, they did not just enter the temple, they went to a room that was called the Holy of Holies, where behind a veil contained the presence of God.

Let me be very clear on this. It was a mere human's job to step into the presence of God. Here is how God is talked about in [1 Timothy 6](#)

[He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, 16 who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see.](#)

It was a priest's role to enter into the same room as God, King of Kings, who dwells in unapproachable light. To Approach the unapproachable.

To walk behind this veil was terrifying. When you read the book of Exodus, you see that the first high priest Aaron was instructed to wear bells when he went here in case he died. So that the people would know he wasn't coming back out.

The priests feared death because God cannot be in the presence of sin. So if a priest had not appropriately followed the cleansing instructions God had given, they would not be able to step into the presence of God and offer the sacrifices necessary for Israel's atonement.

But verse 14 says Jesus is the Great High Priest. He is without sin. He can actually ascend to heaven and be at the Father's right hand without any fear. Jesus didn't need any bells! He's without sin!

Not only is Jesus able to be in the presence of God, He was the sacrifice for us, He gave His life over as the final sacrifice needed. And He enters the presence of God, King of Kings in unapproachable light, so we do not have to.

Let me get at it this way,

[Before I worked for Citizens, I had a job in Higher Education at a university in Charlotte and interviewing for that job was really tough on me. It was a new city, my wife had already gotten a job here, and I wanted this specific job really badly. It was a great fit and it felt like I had to do anything and everything I could to get it.](#)

[Also, the day of the interview I actually had a horrible allergy flare up. I could barely speak, my throat hurt, I was nauseous, like nothing felt like it could go right.](#)

[And I remember logging into this interview, and the first thing my future boss said to me was "I've heard a lot of great things about you from your wife's boss. I am excited to meet you."](#)

[I cannot tell you the surge of confidence I felt that someone like that vouched for me and spoke on my behalf. It made all the difference in the world to me. I felt like I was no longer working from a deficit, but I had something to offer.](#)

And Jesus' intercession is not even like that, it is better. When Jesus intercedes on our behalf, He isn't just puffing us up by saying the good things we have done. He is approaching God the Father on our behalf giving us His resume. He gives us His qualifications!

He is a present source of confidence at our side when we approach God. Which means if Jesus does not have to fear being in the presence of the Father, those in Christ do not have to fear being in the presence of the Father.

And it is even more beautiful than that. Not only do we not have to fear, but we can expect from the Father everything the Father freely gives to Jesus. Because Jesus stands in our place. He gives us His qualifications.

So be confident, church:

When you are doubtful in your prayers that you are worth being heard and cared for, Jesus is interceding for you. He is by your side.

If you are wondering if this time, your sin was too much, and you've pushed the limits of God's patience, Jesus is interceding for you and your sins are already forgiven.

And if you are here today and you have not accepted Christ, and this all sounds too good to be true, I assure you it is such good news and Jesus would delight to cover you in His sacrifice and His work on your behalf, so that you may know the Lord.

Look. Jesus knows you, through and through, and paid for your sins fully, and is now advocating at your side that His work is complete and covers you.

So you can approach the throne of God in prayer with confidence that Jesus is actively interceding and on your side.

Which brings us to our last point. Jesus is Preparing.

Let's turn ahead to Hebrews 6:19-20 for our last part of what Jesus is doing now.

Jesus is Preparing (Heb 6:19-20)

19 We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, 20 where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

Before I can get into what Jesus is preparing, I want to show you what it means that He has gone as a forerunner on our behalf.

When I was in college, I learned about a practice that occurred in native lands of Canada since 2,000 BCE, Inuit tribes have a practice of constructing human-looking figures out of stone in the wilderness. These figures are called an Inukshuk. And they would make these figures for a number of different reasons. They would mark an area that would be a good source of food, prevent future travelers from going down an unsafe trail, or show that another way or trail was actually safe.

Ultimately, what was being communicated to anyone of their tribe that found these was this: "Someone has gone ahead of you, this will lead you to safety." It provided hope and direction to their people.

And the book of Hebrews, in chapter 6, is saying that there is hope and sureness found in Jesus because He has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, behind the curtain of the temple, into the presence of the Father, when He ascended to heaven.

Knowing that Jesus is our forerunner means we know that when Jesus entered into the presence of the Father in His unapproachable light (Back in 1 Timothy 6) He went showing us that we can follow Him and it is good for us.

This is why Jesus said to his disciples before He left:

14 "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. 4 And you know the way to where I am going." John 14:1-4

Jesus was going first to lead the way and prepare a path. His ascension, His leaving us physically is a sure promise that He will return and He will bring us with Him, where we will be for eternity.

Jesus is preparing a place for us.

That is why the ascension is a landmark event in our history. It is a day not to be ignored or brushed past like I do with King Charles. The ascension actually gives us confidence as the people of God.

And that confidence is an invitation to a practice I think would be really good for us.

If Jesus is ruling right now, victorious over satan, sin, and death

If Jesus is interceding for us, going to the Father on our behalf,

And Jesus is preparing a place for us in Heaven, what is there left for us to do but rest in that reality?

I think most of us in the room wouldn't say we are skeptical about this, we just don't rest in it.

Like for me,

I am not skeptical that one day I will be with God forever, but when I lay down on Monday night, I'm consumed by the weight of an unexpected \$2,000 vet bill.

I do not doubt that I am covered by Jesus' life and death, but I think that what everyone in this room thinks of me is somehow more important than how God looks at me right now.

And I am sure that everyone in this room has similar bends, similar distractions, and ways that the confidence we could have in the ascension of Jesus is crowded out by other things.

But when we remember that Jesus is ruling, interceding, and preparing a place for us, every one of those things will fall into place, underneath the truth that Jesus is King.

I want to invite you to practice resting in the work of Jesus today, shown through His ascension. Let the reality of His active work today draw you to believe and rest in Him.

Communion. Prayer. Worship.

Pray.