



CEDAR SPRINGS

PRESBYTERIAN

Live Deeply

**SERMON NOTES
SUNDAY SERVICE**

JULY 2, 2023

8:15 + 9:30 + 11AM

SERMON NOTES

My name is Scottie, and I'm a Ministry Resident here at Cedar Springs. This means I'm taking seminary classes while getting trained in pastoral ministry. I'm so grateful for the chance to do this at a church that JoBeth and I have called home for the last 6 years. And I'm especially excited to be able to open up God's word with you this morning.

Running joke this week; "please be patient, student driver" - some kind of sticker for the pulpit

-> Apostle's Creed is a summary of core Christian beliefs; not everything, but what we must

Line this week: He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.

Sermon Text: Acts 1:1-11 - in it, see King Jesus ascended to glory.

PRAY

INTRO:

Some people remembered for one specific moment in time; almost frozen in time; complex lives outside of this moment - one defining image

- George Washington, crossing the Delaware
- Neil Armstrong - less than 1% of life in space suit
- Michael Jordan - soaring through the air

Forever defined by one image, one moment in time

Do the same w/ Jesus; few parts of his work we love to emphasize

- Birth at Christmas
- Resurrection at Easter
- Stories of life and ministry

So we end up seeing:

- Baby in a manger
- Man on a cross; maybe an empty tomb
- Man walking around Jerusalem

All incredibly important; but gives us an incomplete picture of Jesus; not the whole story; affirm Christ rose from the dead, and will come again - but what about right now? Between his death and resurrection, and his second coming - where is Jesus? What is he doing? Have we considered these questions? Christians are people who orient their entire lives around this person of Jesus; week after week we come together and spend our time worshipping him in church when we could be a thousand other places, we praying in his name, feasting on his body and blood, we try to follow him in the way that we live and talk and think, we are people called to live humble, sacrificial, selfless, extravagantly loving lives in his names - and often, it can be costly. We are called to give our lives to this Jesus - so we should know the full story, see the whole picture - we should know where he is now, and what he is doing now..and as we do, we see him in ALL of his glory. When we do - we see a King we can give our lives to.

Line from Apostle's Creed: He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty - helps us answer these questions - see Jesus in ALL of his glory. - not an infant in manger; not man on a cross; not man in Jerusalem thousands of years ago - but as God who became man and is now ruling over all things as King of the Universe.

TRANSITION: So to start - where is Jesus now?

Raised from dead; no record of death; not walking around - where is he?

Luke - author of Gospel, Book of Acts tell us; Jesus raised, walked around for 40 days; most not accounted for, know that he: revealed himself to people, taught about kingdom of God, ate w/ disciples, seen and touched - truly alive in a physical body. First verses of Acts, instructions for disciples..then..

Acts 1:9-11 we read "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. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, 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."

- 1 minute the disciples w/ Jesus, in the flesh, talking. next minute - ascending - literally being lifted up - and a cloud took him out of their sight. Not dissolved into nothing; not teleported; not turned into a spirit- no, the resurrected, physical, truly alive body of Jesus was lifted up into heaven. physical change of location - from the Mount of Olives in Israel, which you can find on a map, to the right hand of God the Father almighty in heaven.
- Where is heaven? Scripture describes heaven as "up" - word for heaven = skies - not a place we could get to if we flew a plane high enough - outside of space and time. Clearest we can get is: Right now - heaven is where God's presence is, and one day, will be a renewed heaven and earth.11 Importantly, it is where Jesus is.
- Disciples saw ascend into heaven; angels confirmed it; Creed also says specifically right hand of God the Father almighty. Comes from scripture:
- In the Old Testament, Psalm 110:1 that we read earlier, tells us where Jesus, the messiah will go; "The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool."
- Jesus himself tells us that this is where he is going! Matthew 26:64 "But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven."
- It is all throughout the New Testament letters. Hebrew 8:1 gives us one example: "... we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven"
- Right hand - human expression of heavenly reality; right hand man - giving them keys, phone, and wallet - full access; is relationship between God the Father and Jesus the Son; place of honor, glory, power
- CAVEAT - Not a Christian? OK if this seems crazy. We believe some spectacular things; have good reason to do so. Would you consider - what if it's true? Eyewitness accounts, record of scripture, thousands of years of church history telling truth? How would it change things? Disciples - willing to give up lives - not for rumor or myth; saw physical body ascend to heaven

IN FACT - ascension is the very thing that gave disciples power to establish church in face of persecution. 2 things it did for them, also does for us:

- Jesus told disciples “to your advantage that I go away”² WHY? So could send Holy Spirit! God’s presence not in a temple, one person at one place/time - available to all who believe. Jesus sent Holy Spirit to disciples; we today have HS b/c Jesus in heaven
- Jesus in heaven - testament that our sins are truly forgiven - He too sins upon himself on the cross. - But only a perfectly Holy, righteous Jesus could enter into heaven. Jesus took our sins from us, onto him; but now they aren’t on him - truly clean.
- Raleigh - loves rolling around smelly stuff - can clean/scrub, can’t get rid of stench; it lingers. She approaches and go to pet her then turn head in disgust; even the lingering stench is too much
- Feel this w/ your sin? No matter how hard you scrub and no matter how long you try to wash yourself the stench just won’t go away. It lingers. And we imagine God turning his face in disgust at you. by own strength, there is nothing you can do to rid yourself of sin. But 1 John 1:9 says “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” When we see Jesus ascended to heaven we have the assurance that by his blood we TRULY have been washed clean.

TRANSITION: Where is Jesus now? In Heaven, seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. When we see him there on his throne, we can start to see Jesus in all of His glory. But it still leaves the question - What is Jesus doing? Even right now, in this moment, what is he doing?

- Might wonder - doing anything? Said “it is finished”³ - meant it; did everything necessary for salvation to be possible - unlike priests in temple offering sacrifices over and over - his once and for all sacrifice enough.⁴ So Jesus sits at right hand - not lounging in a camp chair w/ feet up
- Jesus sits - more like judge in courtroom - calls it to order; or literally - he is a King, sitting on the throne to get to work ruling and reigning his people - applying salvation and all its benefits to His people.
- What kind of work does he do? More than we can imagine; at least two aspects for us to see today;
- Jesus intercedes as our great high priest. Mediator between Holy God, unholy people; enter God’s presence b/c Jesus’ blood⁵; sits at right hand of God, eternal testament to obedience and sacrificial death; God looks at us, sees righteousness of Christ
- Grew up Clarksville, TN ; Ft. Campbell - heavily armed, secure entrances - friendly, serious guard; w/o proper credentials - no chance of getting in. Foolish to try. BUT - if you are with someone w/ proper credentials; they can simply say; he’s with me, and you are good to go. Imagine you were w/ the Colonel - when they say “he’s with me” get access AND red carpet; their access becomes our access - their honor becomes our honor
- Jesus does this for you and me; no chance of getting to a Holy God on our own; Jesus shows his credentials - his own blood and his nail scarred hands - and says he’s with me. His access becomes our access; His intimacy w/ Father becomes our intimacy w/ Father; can come boldly before throne of grace
- So what is Jesus doing? He sits on the throne and serves as our great high priest, giving us access to God the Father through His own blood, by his own sacrifice. AND he sits on the throne and rules as the true King.

- All throughout the book of Psalms we see the description of a true King – who is powerful and mighty and reigns over the universe...when it describes this King – it is talking about Jesus. Psalm 47 is just one example: For the LORD, the Most High, is to be feared, a great king over all the earth. He subdued peoples under us, and nations under our feet.....Sing praises to our King, sing praises! For God is the King of all the earth; sing praises with a psalm! God reigns over the nations; God sits on his holy throne.
- THIS is our savior and redeemer Jesus – King of the Universe. And as a King he protects His people and preserves His church and ordains all things and by his very word holds the universe together.
- The fact that Jesus' rightful place is on the throne with God the Father makes his death on the cross that much more incredible – Philippians 2:6-8 says: Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.
- Out of his great love for us he gave up his position in heaven and emptied himself, lowered himself to an excruciating death on the cross – theologians call this the “humiliation” of Christ..But then.. He is exalted! Philippians 2:9-11 continues: Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
- Though he lowered himself to greatest extent – He is then raised back up to power and glory. Jesus is the one to whom every knee should bow, and every tongue confess, that He is Lord. He sits in glory with the Father even now, crowned as King.

So what is Jesus doing in heaven? He is serving as our great high priest, interceding on our behalf, and he is ruling and reigning as the true King. When we see his work at the right hand of God the Father, we start to see Jesus in all of his glory.

So... where does this truth meet you today?

- For some – maybe your view of Jesus has been too small, and you've seen him simply as a good man, a symbol of love and sacrifice, or a nice idea; maybe today for the first time you can believe the truth that the King of the Universe loved you enough to lay down his life for you, was raised back to life for you, ascended into heaven for you, and now offers forgiveness of sins and eternal life with God.
- Maybe struggling w/ guilt and shame over sins and past mistakes. Know in your head that God is forgives our sins and cleanses us from ALL unrighteousness – but in heart you feel like you are too far gone; promise must not apply to you. When you see Jesus in all of his glory – we can see Jesus in his resurrected body, holy and blameless and yet with nail scarred hands, sitting on the throne, lovingly looking at you and saying “he’s with me!”
- Maybe you find yourself in a situation where following Jesus is going to cost you something. A student who feels like you might miss out on the fun the world has to offer; a business owner realizing obedience to God might mean a cut in your profits; or just feeling the sense that following Jesus is going to lead to rejection, scorn, even persecution... When we see Jesus in ALL of his glory – we, like the disciples who witnessed Jesus ascending to heaven – can find strength and power to boldly proclaim the Gospel in the face of all kinds of obstacles.

- maybe the circumstances of life just seem overwhelming. Through the sorrow and pain of each day it can be hard to believe that Jesus is King – and if he is, maybe he doesn't seem to you like a good one. When we see Jesus in all of his glory – we can see a King who both weeps with us, and who promises that one day “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”⁶ When we see Jesus in all of his glory we can start to believe he is a king powerful enough to do it.

CLOSING: day is coming when Jesus will crush his enemies, defeat evil once and for all, and bring heaven down to earth...long for that day. But as we wait.. how do we know we can trust this King? How do we know he is worth our praise? Worth giving our lives to? Well, as I've been preparing, and thinking about Jesus ascending to the right hand of God..one idea has really struck me: Jesus the King sits on the throne in a physical, human body. We have a King, a Priest, a representative in heaven, who knows what it is to be human.

Tour de France Illustration:

- Started yesterday; 21 day bike race through France, tackling mtns like Alps and Pyrenes; may not know, cycling team sport – every team, coaches; watch races, see coaches yelling and screaming out the window; sometimes motivating, scolding, encouraging, comforting, strategizing; as a fan at home 2 things might stand out; really need a coach? Just ride faster right? And how can they just coast along in cars asking riders to do crazy, dangerous things; more I've learned – thanks to podcasts and documentaries – see there is so much more going on; complex strategy and technique; times for riders to push, times to wait, times to help a teammate, time to sprint – coaches see bigger picture from team cars, race radios, TV coverage and maps – see the whole picture the riders can't. So they direct their teams, making decisions that might seem crazy to us at home, but turns out to be brilliant coaching – only can be made by seeing bigger picture.
- But one other thing I've started to realize is that a lot of these coaches used to be cyclists themselves. They've raced the tour. They know what it is like to spend hours a day, every day, with your heart rate almost maxed out and your legs heavy and tired. They know what it is like to pedal into a headwind for hours on end just so a teammate can get the win. They know what it is like to fly down a mountain at 60 miles per hour wearing nothing but a tiny layer of spandex. And so they lead and direct and push and encourage as people who can sympathize with the riders, who know what it is like, who know what they are asking of them.

This is our King Jesus! He sits on his throne in heaven and he holds the world in his hands. He sees the bigger picture, he has a perfect plan. He knows things we don't and sees the world in a way we could never understand. We can trust him- even in those moments when it doesn't seem to make sense. He is mighty in power, worthy of all glory and honor and praise. AND – he knows what it is to be human. He loves us enough to have set aside his crown of glory and humbled himself to the point of death on the cross. He endured every temptation and trial known to man. He is the Lord, the King over all things. And he is our great high priest, who sympathizes with us in our weakness. When he asks you to pick up your cross and follow him – he does so as one who knows the full weight of his cross – and the full glory of life forever in heaven on the other side of it.

When we see Jesus in all of his glory, not just as an infant in a manger, not just a man walking around Jerusalem, or just a man suffering on the cross – but ascended into heaven, seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty – we see a savior worth giving our lives to. Let's pray.