

Ascension Day.

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 1: 15 – 23

Theme: The power of the enthroned Christ is available to us!

Anchor text: Ephesians 1:19b-23:

That power is the same as the mighty strength ²⁰ he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹ far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. ²² And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

Introduction:

We all stand in awe before the revelation of God's power in nature.

A Highveld thunderstorm! A volcano erupting, an earthquake or a tsunami!

What we see in natural disasters is only an example of the great forces and sources of energy at work in the universe. We are told that our sun is one of the smaller stars in our milky way, yet it is a million times bigger than the earth. Scientific sources say there may be more than 30 000 stars, or suns, in our milky way - and that there are many milky ways in the universe.

We stand in awe before the power God has created in the universe. Even though we do not understand a fraction of what may be out there. Scientists agree that they still need a lot of information in order to fathom the greatness and the vastness of the power in the universe.

Yet nothing compares to the power revealed in the **resurrection** of a Man who died! Neither our advanced technology nor any power in nature ever raised anyone from the dead.

The release of the power in Christ's resurrection cannot be compared to any other power and might we know about or will hear about. And the resurrection power is available to us. The power that called Christ to life impacts on us. Wouldn't it be sad if we were not aware of this power and not live by its light, inspiration and life giving attributes.

1. The resurrection of Christ demonstrated the power of God.

That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead... (1:19-20a)

This verse is found at the end of Paul's prayer for the believers. Paul is praying that we may know God's power. **He says that in the resurrection power we see the power of God demonstrated.**

Christianity is built upon the resurrection. This is what Peter spoke about on Pentecost Sunday that brought more than 3000 people to Christ. This message inspired the early church to go to the ends of the Roman Empire to spread the Good News of Christ. The power of God demonstrated in Christ's resurrection is central to understanding what the Church and what Christianity is about. The truth of the Gospel is confirmed by the resurrection from the dead of our Lord.

The life and ministry of Jesus was a demonstration of the power of God. Look at the power of God demonstrated at his birth. A virgin conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit. By this power of God we see a sinless Man brought into the world, who is Christ, the Lord. We see the power of God as Jesus stretched out his hands to heal, to open blind eyes and deaf ears, to cleanse lepers, cast out demons, and raise the dead.

As Jesus went to the cross, we see the evidence of the power of God. His suffering and death was a demonstration of God's power working in him. From the cross Jesus prayed, "Father forgive them, for

they know not what they do." Only God who became man has the power to save those who persecuted him and killed him, from death itself.

And on the third day, by the power of God, Christ rose from the dead. This is what sets Christianity apart from all other religions. This is why we say that in the Gospel we find the only true way to God.

When we see what God did by his mighty power in the resurrection of Christ, we cannot help but come to worship and stand in awe!

What would it be like to experience this power for ourselves? Can such a power not revolutionise our existence? Is this power available to me on a personal level? We, like Paul, do not only want, but also need this power of God. And Christ's resurrection tells us that we can.

2. The resurrection of Christ defines his place in the universe and in the Church

...and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms,²¹ far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.²² And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church,²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.(1:20b - 23)

In the resurrection of Christ from the dead we see the power of God demonstrated. We also see the position of Christ defined.

The reason why God raised Jesus from the dead was so to give him a place above all others and a Name above all others – God seated him at his right hand in heaven! **Christ was raised in power so that he could be given a position of power and authority, because this is what it means to be seated at God's right hand.** Being at the right hand of God in heaven is described in verse 21. This position is far above all rule and authority and power and dominion. **Nothing is above Christ and nobody has more power than he has.** No one who rules can compete with the authority and power of Christ at God's right hand. Christ is also above **every title** that we know. There is no "title" that is above the name of Jesus Christ. His title is Lord. No one is above him in this world, or will be in the new heaven and earth. In his resurrection power, Christ has been exalted above all. God has put all things under his feet, under his divine, royal authority.

Christ is not only Lord over all creation, but he is also King, Head and Lord of the church. **The Lordship of Jesus Christ means that he is in control, that he rules and that he reigns.** This means that the church is not an institution that comes from man and belongs to man, but an institution of God. Jesus, once a Rabbi in Judea, persecuted and crucified, is now the Lord of the church. Because of the power of God revealed in his resurrection, Jesus Christ is alive, and King of his church.

This means that the power of God was not only **revealed in the resurrection and enthronement of Christ, but it is also given to the church, which he founded.** The church of Jesus Christ should be a living demonstration of the power of God, because the almighty Christ leads and empowers the Church. The truth of the church of God has been marching on since the Church's founding.

3. Consider the implications of his power for your life.

How would you define those implications?

3. 1 One implication is that the Gospel is true. Because of the resurrection of Christ from the dead and his glorious ascension, we know that Jesus really is who he said he was. And we know that the Gospel is not a legend or allegory, but the only true way to God. We may be confident, because of the resurrection of Christ from the dead and the highest position in heaven and earth he holds, assures us that all of the promises of God are true. When we read the Bible, we know that God's Word is true.

3.2 Another implication of the enthronement of Christ is that we know that Jesus is alive. The power of God was demonstrated in Christ's resurrection, and he was enthroned as King over all. Therefore we know that we serve a living Christ. Being a Christian is about a relationship with a living Lord.

We do not worship the memory of a dead prophet, but we worship and serve a living God. And the power with which we come into contact in this relationship, is the power of the living Lord Jesus Christ. He's alive! He has risen from the dead. He's alive and he reigns for our salvation and for the glory of God!

3.3 A further implication is that he is in control. Christ is seated at the right hand of God, in control of the universe, and of the Church.

We can trust him in any situation. Christ is in control, and because he is the living God, we can place our lives in his care, knowing that he can and will take care of us. He can and will do what is right. We can trust him even in the most difficult circumstances. We can trust his wisdom to take care of every situation. And when he allows us to go through hard times, we can be confident that he remains in control.

3.4 And finally, an implication of his enthronement is that his power is available to us. Paul prayed that we might "know the power of his resurrection." The power of his resurrection is available to us today. He gives it to us through the work of the Holy Spirit.

What a tragedy it is when we fail to trust the power of God which is available to us. It is a double tragedy when we think about the truth that all we need to do is to surrender to Christ. Surrender today and you will enjoy the resurrection power of the enthroned Lord Jesus.

In closing:

Is it possible that we know the glorious power of Christ, talk about it, witness about it, proclaim and preach it – but it is not demonstrated in our own lives?

Pray that the power of the Lord will be revealed in your work life and career. Pray that his power will resolve our concerns in our families and in bringing up our children. When Jesus is in control of our marriages and families nothing can stop Jesus to help us through his glorious power and might. When things go terribly wrong and we have to even cope with awful situations that we just never expected to become part of our lives, the almighty King can and will reveal himself as King and Saviour and Redeemer.

Do we reveal his power through the faith we received by the work of the Holy Spirit?

In our ministry in his Church and Kingdom we must stop thinking that we cannot do it, or even worse, that he cannot do it!

The Holy Spirit was poured out on the Church! And we should be a praying church! We should share this with fellow Christians, to in prayer, worship and work for the Lord, tap into the resurrection power of our Lord, sitting at the right hand of the Father!

This is how we overcome weakness, sin, foolishness, hurt and being immobilised in God's work. This is how we overcome in the authority, in the power and in the Name of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

This is the Word of God.

Thanks be to God.

Amen.