

The Faith We Confess

A Series of Sermons Based on the Core Doctrines of the Christian Faith

Jesus Christ Our Minister: “The Ascended One Who Intercedes for Us”

Today we come to a most liberating part of the creed; liberating for you as a church and for me as a pastor.

We are focusing in on that part of the creed which says that Jesus Christ “rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures and that he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.”

This portion of the creed is liberating because it gives us a “springboard” to jump from so to speak, so that we might consider what it is that Jesus Christ is doing for us today. The creed is not exhaustive; it does not tell us everything; for it is a succinct summation of the faith. It does not explicitly tell us what Jesus is doing right now, but it certainly provides us the springboard.

In the creed today we are told that Jesus Christ is “seated at the right hand of the Father.” This is our springboard from which we can make our leap. He is there for a reason. The Son is sitting at the right side of the Father for a reason.

The Ascended One Who Rules and Reigns Over the World and Our Lives

One of the reasons Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father is so that he can rule and reign over the world. That is what a right-hand man does, is it not? You’ve heard that phrase before: So and so, he is my “right-hand man.” A right-hand man is the one who is counted on for everything. Complete trust is put in him.

This is why the Father has raised the Son from the dead, so that he might sit at God’s right hand and rule God’s universe. Psalm 110:1 says,

The LORD says to my Lord:
“Sit at my right hand
until I make your enemies
a footstool for your feet.”

It is liberating for us to know that Jesus Christ is the Sovereign One who is in control of and ruling this universe. He is the one whom the Father sent to die for us so that we might be reconciled to God and neighbor. Jesus Christ, right now, is reigning and ruling over this broken world and he is working his ministry of redemption, restoration, and wholeness in it just like that little bit of yeast that is worked through the whole batch of dough. Slowly but surely he is accomplishing his will in the world.

This is liberating because it means that nothing in our lives happens apart from Christ’s prior knowledge or will. The Ascended One knows what is going on in our lives and he is working through it even if it is unpleasant or difficult for us.

Our text from Romans tells us that “in all things God works for the good of those who love him and have been called according to his purpose.” This does not mean that everything that we experience is good; for Christians are not immune from evil and suffering, but it does mean that in all of these things God is able to work for good in our lives.

Our text then asks the rhetorical question, “What shall separate us from the love of Christ?” It then lists a long string of infirmities. “Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?” The reason Paul lists all of these things is because he rightly presupposes that these kinds of things will be a part of our lives. But none of these things will separate us from the Ascended One, Jesus Christ, who sits at the right hand of the Father and rules not just over this world in a general sense but over our very lives in a specific sense.

Some of us need to hear this word of assurance today. If we are in Christ, if we are his, if we trust in him, if we love him, if we obey him, then we are his. He will not let us go and he will see us through our difficulties. The One who sits at the right hand of the Father will see to it. Jesus said he will lose none of his sheep. Nothing can snatch them out of his hand. (Jn. 10:28-29) This we need to believe.

But it even gets better. Not only is Jesus ruling and reigning over our lives with his eye on us and is working through all that we experience in this world for the good of our lives, but he is also ministering to us and for us. That’s why I have called the message this morning, “Jesus Christ Our Minister: The Ascended One Intercedes for Us.”

In this text the apostle Paul tells us what Jesus Christ is doing right now, for us. He says that he is seated at the right hand of the Father and he is “interceding for us.”

An intercessor is one who stands in the gap for us. And intercessor is a mediator. He mediates back and forth between two parties so as to bring about a resolution.

This is what Jesus is doing now for us. He is standing in the gap on our behalf and he is connecting and reconnecting those who have put their trust in him back to God.

But what exactly is Jesus mediating?

Jesus Is Mediating His Sinless Life and Work on the Cross to God on Our Behalf

First he is mediating for us his sinless life and work on the cross before the Father.

Christ died for our sins and was raised to life two thousand years ago but he has never stopped mediating his life and work on the cross to the Father on our behalf. This is something he still does right now.

Jesus is standing in the gap in a present and active kind of way before the Father and he is saying to the Father “here is my life, my perfect holy, sinless life; please take it and accept it in the place and on behalf of the unholy and sinful lives of my sheep who have put their trust in me for their

salvation. Father take and receive my life in place of their lives and declare them to be righteous because of my righteousness. Not only that Father, but take also my death on the cross and receive it as a sufficient payment for the wages that my sheep owe for their sin.

Jesus paid that sin debt once and for all and consequently he ever keeps it before the Father. That is what Jesus is doing right now for us on our behalf. He is not in heaven “twiddling his thumbs” looking for something to do. He is still ministering to us and for us. It is a mind blowing idea. His ministry is a present and active and he is constantly offering it up to the Father and he will continue to do it until he brings us all into his Kingdom.

Jesus is Mediating His Prayers to God on Our Behalf

Jesus is not only mediating to God on our behalf his sinless life and work on the cross, but he is also mediating his prayers to the Father on our behalf. To intercede for someone is to pray for them.

A little earlier in Romans 8 the apostle Paul talked about the Holy Spirit interceding for us when we did not know how or what to pray for. When we were at a loss for words the Spirit would come in on our behalf and he would intercede for us with “sighs and groans” too deep for human understanding. In a similar kind of way the apostle Paul tells us that Jesus Christ also shares in this ministry. It is not only the Holy Spirit but it is Jesus the Son and the Holy Spirit who prays for us on our behalf before the Father.

This is a wonderful truth for us to take comfort in. Jesus whispers in the ear of the Father perfect prayers on our behalf. His words and motives are always true and always right on time. He is quite unlike us. We are sinful creatures. Sometimes we miss the will of God in our prayers and often times we pray with the wrong motives, but not Jesus; he knows the heart and mind of the Father perfectly and completely so it is only he and the Holy Spirit who can make perfect intercession for us.

Do you ever think about that? That Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, is right now sitting before the right hand of God and he is praying for you? That he is upholding you, keeping, and sustaining you by his ministry of prayer? Do you realize that you are just as privileged, if not more so, than the original twelve who first prayed with him over two thousand years ago? Jesus is actually doing the same thing for you today that he did for them, but the good news is that he is now doing it before the right hand of the Father.

Jesus Is Mediating the Holy Spirit from God for Our Behalf

The final thing that Jesus is mediating is the Holy Spirit.

Thus far we have talked about two things that Jesus Christ is doing in his present and active ministry for us. Those first two things are things that he is mediating to God on our behalf. He is mediating to God his perfect life and his perfect death; he is constantly keeping that before the Father for our sake. Second he is giving to the Father his perfect prayers on our behalf; it is his whispers to God that keep us and sustain us in this life. But this third thing is something that goes

in the opposite direction. It is something that he mediates down to us from God. Jesus Christ in his present and active ministry for us is constantly giving to us the Holy Spirit for our daily Christian lives.

In John 14 and 15 Jesus tells his disciples that he must go away from them; that is he must be crucified for our sins and then conquer the sting of sin, which is death, by his resurrection from the grave, and that then he must return to his rightful place and home in heaven where he lives in eternal communion with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Jesus told his disciples that these things must happen in order for his mission to be complete, but he also told his disciples to not let their hearts be troubled Jesus would send the Holy Spirit to live in the hearts of those who trust in him.

The Holy Spirit would be the One who would replace the physical presence of Jesus in the lives of his disciples. And ironically it would be an even deeper and more profound presence because the Holy Spirit would actually live in the hearts of Jesus disciples. Strangely Christ's presence would actually become more real and more tangible because Jesus would send the Holy Spirit to live inside of us.

“When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me” to you. (Jn. 15:26) Not only that, but because I am going back to the Father to finish my work of redemption, the Spirit will empower you to do even greater things than I did in my ministry.

In short, you are not alone and you are not weak as a Christian. The reason you are not alone is because Jesus has not abandoned you in his ascension to the right hand of God. From his exalted place of power and authority he is constantly meditating and giving to you the Holy Spirit. And you are not weak because the Spirit, whom Jesus is constantly giving to you, empowers you to live the Christian life.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this message I told you that what I had to say to was both liberating for me as the minister and for you as the congregation.

It is liberating because in a very real sense I am not the minister here. I am not the one in whom you should put your trust in. I am a sinner and I have feet of clay. Truly Jesus Christ is the minister of this church, not you or I. I did not and cannot die for your sins. I cannot mediate my life to the Father on your behalf because mine is not worth mediating. Nor can I mediate Jesus' life and his death on your behalf; it is something only he can do. I cannot pray for you in the same way for you that the Son does. My prayers are often weak and filled with mixed motives; only the Son can whisper the perfect prayer in the ear of the Father. Nor can I give you the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit does not come from Scott. The Holy Spirit comes from the Father and it is given to us through the Son, the Ascended One who ministers to God for us on our behalf.

It should not be so, but often people follow the preacher and not Christ. The attendance at a local church is sometimes dictated by how well the minister is liked. I can understand some of this. I know that bad ministry is no ministry and that it can drive people away, but I say this to warn

against the cult of personality. Jesus Christ is the true minister of this church. I point you to him, not myself, and everything I have shared with you today only he can do. I can't do it and you can't do it.

Friends this is liberating. It takes the heat off of us so let us rejoice today in the only one who can do it: Jesus Christ, our Minister, the Ascended One who sits at the right hand of the Father to intercede for us so that we can grow in our faith, endure our afflictions, and enter into the Kingdom when our Lord calls us home.

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.