



"The Truth of Christ's REAL Power"

a sermon by Matthew Christians

based on Ephesians 1:15-23

The Ascension of Our Lord

May 1, 2008

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Sam was twelve years old, but he was also small for his age. He didn't live far from school and he walked to and from school every day. Getting TO school was never a problem, but going home was brutal. It was hard because one of the school bullies had it in for him. Like I said, Sam was small for his age and the bully found it easy to pick on him. Every day on the way home, the bully would be waiting. Little Sam knew what would happen; every day he knew what would happen, but he had no choice. Everyday after school was a nightmare.

Then one day, a new kid named Tom started at school. Unlike Sam, Tom was big for his age. He made the bully look like Thumbelina. He was the biggest and strongest kid in Sam's class. Even better was the fact that he moved into house next door to Sam's. Sam and Tom became friends and started walking home together every day. All of a sudden, Sam's fear of walking home disappeared. He felt like superman with his new friend at his side. Tom's presence at Sam's side took care of his fear.

You know, I'm sure, that there are mighty forces in this world, bullying forces that have it in for God's people. There are powers of air and darkness in this world that would

like nothing better than to bully you into a sense of fear and failure. There are strong, powerful, frightening forces of evil in the world. Some of which have faces— the Hitlers, the Pol Pots, the Jeffery Dahmers of the world... but many of course are nameless, faceless powers of darkness. There are powerful forces of evil in the world, much worse than any schoolyard bully, but I am convinced that the One who is at work in us is far greater (certainly far more loving! but also) far more powerful than any of those forces which oppose us. St. Paul certainly believed this, when by the Spirit's power, he prayed that God might "*give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of [Christ], having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know ... the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe*" (Eph. 1:17b, 18a,-19).

Today we are celebrating the Ascension of Jesus to the right hand of God. Celebrating how, 40 days after the ascension, and after numerous appearances to the disciples proving He was alive, how Jesus was taken up to heaven. How, as He went higher and higher, He was eventually hidden from their sight by a cloud.

Where did He go? And what does it mean for us? St. Luke's Gospel tells us that He was "*carried up to heaven*" (24:51). St. Mark adds in his Gospel that when Jesus got there, when He got to heaven, that He "*sat down at the right hand of God*" (16:19). What this means is that Jesus has all the power and the glory of God. Jesus is not just in heaven, He is seated at God's right hand and that means that there is nothing more powerful than the ascended Jesus.. Nothing! That means there is no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth" more powerful than the ascended Jesus. No one!

God the Father has seated Jesus... (how did St. Paul put it?) "*God [the Father has] seated [Jesus] at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come*" (19-21). Doesn't seem to be any way to skinny around that is there? To be seated at the right hand of God means you have all the power of the creator, all the power of creation, all the power that ever has been and ever will be.

Jesus is seated at the right hand of God, Jesus is all-powerful, omnipotent, and that means that the Lord Jesus doesn't just CARE about you and your problems... He doesn't just WANT to help us as we go through the struggles and hardships of life... the Ascension

means that Jesus has the power to do something about it. In Matthew's Gospel, just before the Ascension, Jesus promised that "[He] will be with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt 28:20). The most powerful person in the universe has promised to be your help and support when life is getting you down, when you don't have the strength within you to keep on going or when you're stressed at how everything will turn out.

When you dread what the doctor will say... when you stand at the grave of a loved one... when your kids give you one headache after another... when you worry about finances, retirement... when you don't know how to cover the high price of feed, or the outrageous cost of a gallon of gas... when you toss and turn at night with every kind of fear and anxiety spinning around in your head...

When these fears and anxieties come, remember the truth of the Ascension: that the ascended Jesus is far greater than any trouble that distresses you. When your sin upsets you, when your guilt plagues you, when fears of death steal up on you, remember the love of Christ for you in conjunction with His power. Psalm 118: *"With the LORD on my side I do not fear. What can man do to me?"* (v.6). Or consider this word of God from Hebrews 13: *"He says, 'I will never fail you nor forsake you.' Hence we can confidently say, 'The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid; what can man do to me?'"* (vv.5a–6).

God loves you and wants only the best for you... we know that. In addition, Jesus—ascended into heaven—is far more powerful... more powerful than anything or anyone. That's a potent combination, don't you think? It seems like a smart thing to do would be to look to God when in turmoil. It seems like a smart thing to do would be, in times of struggle, in times of fear, in time of guilt or sin, or in any time of need, would be to look to God, to pray to God. Most people don't, of course. Even many Christians don't. I'm not talking about extremes— in extreme danger, or as a last resort, lots of people turn to God... but surveys show consistently that only a very low percentage of people regularly count on God for help, to help them in their suffering, to help them see the way forward. What that means is that most people fail to count on the power of Christ in times of need. And yet... and yet! In the midst of our indifference, our unbelief... in the midst of our laziness, our forgetfulness, the invitation still stands: *"Call upon me in the day of*

trouble; I will deliver you" (Psalm 50:15).

When tests are taken for cancer... when personal fears of inadequacy mount within your soul... when raising a family turns out to be more challenging and frustrating than you'd ever anticipated... when you need to make a decision about the future— getting a job, or changing a job, or retirement... when that voice of self-condemnation points out something you've done that you know you shouldn't... the question is: what do you do? Do you remember that Christ is Lord? Do you remember that Christ Jesus loves you and has the power to help you?

Even pastors are guilty—truth be told, even THIS pastor is guilty— of at times failing to take seriously the omnipotence of the Ascended Jesus. Too often we fail to take seriously the fact that Jesus can carry our burdens and make our load lighter. Often we don't take seriously that Jesus has the power to answer our prayers and can make a difference. We don't take seriously the fact that Jesus has bought us with His own blood on the cross, that He has given us a new life in His kingdom. I mean, think about it: if Jesus was prepared to die for us— if He was actually willing to go through with that dying for us!— surely He stands ready to help us in the matter of everyday living.

This is the truth of God's REAL power. Just like little Sam needed a big friend to walk him home, we all need a big friend to walk through life with us. Jesus is that friend. He died for you and rose again for you and now has ascended to the right hand of God.

May the peace of God— which surpasses understanding— guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

[\[Home\]](#)

[\[Sermon Archive\]](#)

[\[Site map\]](#)