

May 25, 2019

Ephesians 1:16-23

“What’s he doing?” That’s different from “What in the world is he doing?” We’ve wondered both, haven’t we? So what’s he doing? We’re told he’s seated at God’s right hand in heaven. What does that mean? Is he sitting in a comfy chair next to the Father’s comfy chair, resting and waiting for Judgment Day? Or is he sitting at God’s right hand in heaven’s command center with maps and screens in front of him, keeping his eyes on us, calling and commanding his angels, turning up the wind dial, turning down the temp, wondering how long we’ll wait before we change the oil? What’s he doing? I don’t think enough about what Jesus is doing up in heaven. And I’m worse off for it.

Today our lesson takes us up to heaven and gives us a picture of what Jesus has going. Paul tells us that God “seated” Jesus “**at his right hand in the heavenly realms.**” That can be a bit confusing. We’re told God is spirit; he doesn’t have a right hand or left. God is everywhere; he isn’t limited to one place or one chair. And Jesus isn’t limited to one place or one chair either. Today we heard how Jesus ascended into heaven. Before that he had promised: “**Surely I am with you always, even to the very end of the age.**” And before that, he had promised: “**Wherever two or three come together in my name, there I am with them.**” Who is the “two or three”? Who is the “you”? Not just his disciples in Galilee, but his disciples to the end of the age. That means he is with you; he is with us here. Jesus is with his people, his church wherever they are in this world. That’s his promise. So when we say that Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father, we don’t mean he is bound to one particular space or place. The right hand of the Father doesn’t refer to a place in space.

Instead “the right hand of the Father” refers to a position of honor. As Paul said in Philippians: “**God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 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.**”

God gave Jesus his highest position of honor. Do we do the same thing? Where do we set Jesus in our lives? When you set your day, your week, your life, what part does Jesus get for devotion time? Prime time? Or left-overs? When you set your budget, what part does Jesus get? The first part, a part that says “Jesus is Lord!”? Or left-overs? When the world is tempting you, testing you .. when your world is ornery, what place does Jesus get in your heart? Command seat, front and center, with peace, hope, and love? Or when the world is tempting you and testing you, does Jesus get sent to the back corner? This past week we’ve bumped Jesus, stood him up, pushed him back, and worse, haven’t we? What if Jesus were to abdicate and say: “That’s it! I’m done! You’re on your own”? What would happen? Not just today, but on Judgment Day? Picture Jesus walking away. Picture Jesus standing tall sending you away. Not something we want to see, is it?

Now, instead ... instead of picturing Jesus with his back turned walking away ... instead of picturing Jesus standing tall, voice raised to demand you, arm raised to crush you, picture Jesus sitting in heaven. Not walking away, not sending away, but sitting. That’s such good news! Good news for my guilty heart, good news for guilty hearts that see trouble and think: “Jesus is out to make me pay.” Good news for tired hearts, for insecure hearts, for hearts that think: “I’ve got to do something to make right with God.” Jesus isn’t walking away from you, and he’s not sitting and watching you with his finger on the “make them pay” button. He isn’t standing and commanding “Do this; do that!” And he’s not sitting in the captain’s chair barking orders for you to jump. No, there’s this neat section in Hebrews that tells us that Jesus is sitting because he’s done! With his life, he kept the commands, he satisfied the demands of our holy God - “it is finished!” At the cross he paid the price for your sin and mine - “It is finished.” Jesus sitting down in heaven means you don’t have to work your way right with God ... you don’t have to pay your way right with God ... Jesus did it. It is finished. For guilty hearts, for hearts that want a place with God - what a relief!

And for worried hearts .... When our world has us worrying, sometimes we might think: “What’s he doing up there, sleeping?” No, Jesus isn’t just sitting, snoozing in some comfy chair. When God seated Jesus at his right hand, God seated Jesus on his throne - **“far above all rule and**

**authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age, but also in the one to come.”** Seated on his throne, with the saints and angels praising ... Jesus isn't just sitting back soaking it all in. No, Jesus is King and Jesus is ruling. Jesus decides how far the devil can go and there Jesus puts a stop to him. Jesus decides who, when, where, how death touches; he decides when to save and give another day on earth; he decides when to save and give an extra day in heaven. Jesus rules and decides how much oil leaks; he rules and decides how much arthritis creaks.

Jesus rules and decides how and where to stop evil, and how and where to let evil go. He decides how and where to turn trouble to good; and how and where to bless you with good. Nothing is out of his control. He sits with the Father; he rules with the Father. And how they decide who does what, we don't need to worry. They are one in heart; one in mind. Together they work God's power for you.

So, does your life ever seem a bit out of control? Don't worry; Jesus is still in control. Do you wonder what's coming around the corner? Don't worry; Jesus has that under control. Does it feel like death and darkness are getting the upper hand? Don't worry; Jesus has them under control, too. Do you ever wonder if you'll make it? Don't worry; Jesus is working his power for you.

So take some time to think about Jesus in heaven; think about the power that God worked to put him there, raising him from the dead, seating him in heaven - God is using that same power for you. Yes, take some time to think about Jesus in heaven; think about Jesus sitting at the right hand of God with the saints and angels praising him - you get to join them. I'll say it again - take some time to think about Jesus in heaven, God gave him his best seat; do that same thing for Jesus, do that same thing for yourself - give Jesus the best seat in your life - he's looking out for you. Amen.