

Title: Omnipotent
Text: Matthew 28.16-20
Theme: The power of Christ
Series: Matthew #130
Prop Stmt: Christ used and uses his authority for the glory of the Father and the good of his children.

Read Text:

Why do we like superheroes so much? They have power. They are usually kind. They try to destroy bad people. But superheroes care too much about people, right? Every superhero's enemy knows that you can exploit that weakness and get the superhero to sacrifice his own life for the sake of others. The main reason why we like superheroes is because they remind us of Jesus, though most people don't realize that. It is tempting to dream about being a superhero and imagine what you could do to help others if you had all of that power. However, the reason why most of the superheroes are cartoon characters is because here in the real world people who get into positions of power usually use it for self instead of helping others. In fact, over time they tend to become consumed with presenting this image of infallibility, indestructibility and, of course, youth. The more vulnerable a person feels, the more paranoid they become.

This month an anonymous letter appeared on the Internet calling for the president of China, Xi Jinping, to resign. The letter would have probably faded into on-line oblivion without as much as a peep except that someone alerted President Xi's security forces who have responded with an all out inquisition. In fact the response has been so severe that the New York Times is wondering if he is losing his grip on power. Is there some unrest inside the inner circle? Is someone trying to lead a coup? People who feel insecure in their positions of authority typically try to use their position to destroy anyone they fear as some sort of a threat. These people, like King Saul, Herod, Hitler, Stalin, Kim Jung-on will try to kill anyone who gets too close to the power. They are paranoid.

The truth is, they have reason to be paranoid. No human holds on to power indefinitely. These guys are vulnerable to death, to disease and to a coup. If they were overthrown in a coup, they would be executed, and they know it. Since they do not have real power, they resort to the image of power. Christ, on the other hand, has real power. He is not put into power by the vote of the people and kept in power by the loyalty of army leaders. He is power. If anyone else said, "All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me" we would rightly consider that person an idiot. But when Christ says it, in his resurrected body, we have to acknowledge that it is true. So, what is this authority?

I. **Christ has inherent authority as the Son of God.**

A. **Only God could claim this.**

To us this seems like a bold statement. But, it really isn't bold or braggadocios, it is a matter of fact. Christ is God. That is a matter of fact. If he denied that, he would be lying.

Granted, he veiled his glory while he was living here on the earth, but he was still God and as God, he had all of the divine prerogatives that come from being God.

B. It is consistent with his other claims.

Earlier Christ said that he had the authority to reveal the Father to whomever he wanted.

“All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.” Matthew 11.27

Jesus also said that he gives life to whomever he chooses.

“For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will.” John 5.21

A few verses later Christ claimed to have the power to be able to raise people from the dead by the very power of his voice. (v.28) And of course, in chapter 11 he proved that to be true. Jesus claimed to have the authority to judge all men and he claimed to have the authority to lay down his life when he wanted and to take his life back up when he wanted. (John 10.18) He also said in Matthew 24 that he would return to the earth in power and great glory. So, when you add all of these up, it is very obvious that Christ is laying claim to being none other than the absolute sovereign ruler of the universe. He is the King of Glory.

But, there is something else that I want you to think about. This authority of Christ was given to Christ and it is obvious that it is given to him by the Father. But when? When was Christ given this authority? Ephesians 1.15-23 seems to place the putting of all things under the feet of Christ in relation to Christ being exalted after his resurrection. (read) Then Philippians 2.5-11 connects the exaltation of Christ to his perfect completion of his humiliation (life and death). So, what I am saying is that Christ has a type of authority now, after his resurrection that he did not possess before. He not only has inherent authority as the Son of God, but now he exercises a level of authority as the Son of Man that he did not have before.

II. Christ has derived authority as the Son of Man.

Go to Luke 4.5-8. Satan promises to give Christ, the kingdoms of this world if Jesus would simply bow down and worship him. Satan said, *“...it (the kingdoms of the world) has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will.”* Now, either Satan is lying, which we know that we cannot trust a thing he says, or he is telling a partial truth in order to get his own desired result. What makes me think that he may be actually telling the truth is that Christ does not argue with him on that point. Christ responds by saying that worship is to be given only to God.

So, here is what I think is going on. And I say this with a level of hesitancy because I am still chewing on it. I believe that God is infinitely more amazing and complex than we can ever imagine. I therefore believe that his creation and universe is infinitely more amazing and complex than we imagine as well. For example, advances in technology have enabled us to learn things about our earth and about the human body that are astounding. As we explore more and more about the chemicals in our body and the neurons that connect everything and the brain that controls it all, we are fascinated because we discover some physiological processes that help explain things that we experience. But there is more to us than what can be seen even at the subatomic particle level. When God made Adam, he made his body. There in the garden was the first human being fully developed with all of the neurons, chemicals, circulatory, skeletal, excretory, muscular, endocrine, digestive, immune and nervous systems set, and ready to go. But, one thing was missing. Life! Adam did not become alive until God breathed life into him and when God breathed life into him, Adam became. He became a living soul. While our lives are linked with our bodies, our lives are not fully defined NOR FULLY EXPLAINED by our bodies. You are more than neurons and chemicals, which is why pills can affect your chemicals, but they cannot save you nor really change you. You are more than that. There is more to you than what you see. There is more to this world than what you can just see. Just as the unseen soul animates and affects the seen body, the unseen cosmic powers affect the seen world. There are things that happen on a cosmic level in terms of angels, demons and Satan himself that are there, but we cannot see them. Revelation 12.7-12 is a great example of this truth. (read)

Now whether that is speaking of Satan's fall from heaven, or it is speaking of a subsequent victory that Michael, the archangel had over Satan in view of the cross, I am not sure, but this much is clear. What happens in the cosmic sphere impacts what happens on the earth. What happens in heaven impacts what happens on earth. You are more than neurons and chemicals. This earth is more, way more than armies, empires, philosophies and movements. There is so much more going on than that. The world does not have eyes to see it. Therefore, I believe that this statement about the new level of authority of Christ is a peak into that reality and that it has wonderful and yet serious implications for this earth. Here is how I have put it together, so far.

Our triune God created this world to be an expression of his glory. The human race was the chief act of his creation because we were made in his image with the capacity to reflect him in a way that no other aspect of his creation could. Adam was given the role of ruler or king. He was a ruler under God, but he was a ruler. He was given dominion (Genesis 1.26) and the authority to subdue (1.28). He had the right to use the creation for his good (1.29). He had the rights to name because he possessed authority. Adam ruled under God's rule. Adam had a derived authority, not an inherent one. As the ruler, what he did affected the entire human race. The way God set it up was for this earth to be a kingdom and God would rule through a king. That king was to be the mediator between God and man. In order to carry out that function he had to be a man. But, Adam sinned. Adam rebelled against God. In rebelling against God, he surrendered his authority to Satan. Satan was given power. It was a limited power, but it was power nonetheless.

Satan could never be the rightful ruler because he was neither man, nor was he right, but he functioned under the absolute authority of God as one who was temporarily on a leash.

So, while the triune God has always been and will always be God and has always had final authority as God, there was a time when Satan had a limited amount of authority on this earth because no man could rightfully rule yet. A new king was needed. He had to be man in order to rule as a man over men, but every man was a sinner and every sinner was disqualified from being the king. So, the Son of God now also becomes the Son of Man. The cosmic has invaded the terrestrial. Heaven has impacted earth and this sends shock waves through the angelic world, both the demonic angels and the good ones. Satan knew something was up, but did not know exactly what. He tried to kill Christ as a baby through the free and wicked devices of Herod. It did not work. He tried to thwart Christ himself by tempting Christ in the desert. But, please do not miss this. Every device that Satan uses against God, God overturns and uses it against Satan. The temptation of Christ in the desert was the victory of the Son of Man the 2nd Adam that stood in stark contrast to the failure of the 1st Adam in the garden. Christ did what we could not do. Satan was unwittingly helping to carry out the plan of God for our rescue. And he would continue to do that by entering Judas Iscariot and others in order to execute Christ, only to discover that the death of Christ was the breaking of his own hold on power.

The plan of God was for Christ, as the second person of the Trinity to become man and by virtue of his perfect life fulfill the role that the true King was supposed to do. He would live in our place, which Christ did. And it was the plan of God for him to die in our place as the perfect sacrifice and pay for our sins. Christ did that. And because of that, the Father not only raised the Son from the dead, but now he exalted him and honored him in a way that he was not honored before. Before the Son of God was the perfect 2nd person of the Trinity and was honored and glorified as that. Now, the Son of God is also the Son of man. He is now exalted and honored not only as the Son of God, but now as the Son of man. As the perfect Son of man, the Father has now entrusted to him the Kingly authority of the earth.

Ok, that's the "what" part of the sermon. Let's get to the "so what" part.

III. How does Christ use his authority?

Here is where a couple of tributaries of thought come together to form a powerful river. Christ used his authority in a way that is so unlike what we are used to and so unlike how we assume people use authority. We assume that people with power will become corrupted by that power because that is what we think we see happen over and over. In fact, we say that power corrupts and that absolute power corrupts absolutely. That is not true. It appears to be true, but it is not true. Power does not corrupt. Corruption is already present and when a corrupt person is given power, they now have the opportunity to act out what was already there. The problem is not power; it is the corruption of the human heart. Christ, on the other hand is sinless. He used his power for the glory of his Father and for our good. Those two purposes were pursued simultaneously because they go

together. It is the Father's pleasure to pursue our good and our true good will bring the Father glory.

A. For the glory of the Father.

Christ exercised his authority for the purpose of demonstrating to us what his Father is like and in so doing we have seen in Christ multiple reasons why we can and must trust the Father. Every person that Jesus healed he did so for the pleasure of the Father. Every person he forgave he did so for the pleasure of the Father. Every demon that he cast out, every miracle that he performed, every truth that he taught, he did so for the pleasure of the Father. Christ is power and he expressed his awesome, glorious, infinite power in ways that helped the most broken and helpless of people. And when he did that, the Father was thrilled. The ultimate act of power was the surrendering of his life to those who hated him so that our sins could be forgiven. He did that because it pleased the Father SO much for us to be forgiven. The Father loves to forgive and provided in Christ a means by which his grace and mercy could be unleashed upon us. The justice of God held back the grace of God until the death of Christ satisfied the justice of God. And when the justice of God was satisfied, the dam of justice was broken and the river of grace was set free to flood our sinful souls and drown them in forgiveness. The Father's grace was set on display for all to see in Christ who used his authority to lay down his life, because if Christ did not chose to lay down his life, he would never have died. No one could have taken his life from him, if he did not first give it up.

B. For our good.

The reason why Jesus was/is the most satisfied, contented, happy, man who ever lived is because he used his authority to advance the good and the pleasure of others. Have you ever noticed that the most miserable people on the planet are those who demand to be respected? Miserable people are not Christ-like! If you want people to disrespect you, then demand that they respect you. It works every single time. If you demand it, you won't get it. But you can earn it, by not caring about it.

A man came up to me after the service one day and said, "What do you think about a woman who does not respect her husband?" Well, she's probably married to a jerk, why do you ask? I honestly did not say that, because it was the first time I met this person, but I certainly wanted to. People who use authority for themselves are miserable and they usually end up losing that authority, while those who use it for the good of others, like Christ, end up getting more. But there is another related point about how Christ uses his authority. He shares it.

C. He shares as much as he can.

This is what is happening in this text. Jesus is sharing this authority with his disciples and is sending them with this authority. We saw a preview of this back in chapter 10 when Christ sent the disciples out to preach about the kingdom to Israel. Now they are being sent out to all of the nations. These disciples are told to teach them to "observe all that I

have commanded you.” Therefore, every follower of Christ should look to advance the joy of others around him/her as much as possible by wisely, strategically, intentionally and humbly sharing authority. If you hoard authority, you always be threatened by others around you. If you give it away, you will glory in the growth of others. That is what the church is called to do. Why do so many people distrust “religion” or distrust “the church?” Isn’t it because this aspect of Christ’s command has been ignored? Leaders are not to hoard the power, but to give it away. Christ gives his authority to the church. The congregation vests authority to the elders who exercise that by serving, training and investing it back into the congregation. As we do that we give glory and joy, honor and authority back to Christ. It is a beautiful picture of God.

IV. **What do we do with this?**

We need to recognize with awe and faith the wonderful implications of this and at the same time recognize that this reality takes the intensity of spiritual warfare to another level.

A. **The wonderful implications.**

When Christ completed his life by dying on the cross, the Father could no longer contain himself! His Son was the Man! His Son did it! His Son accomplished our salvation and earned back what was rightfully his by breaking Satan’s claim over man due to Adam’s sin. Therefore, the Father gave Christ a name above every name. The name of Jesus is now the name above every name, it wasn’t that way in the OT, but it is now. We can live now with a level of power and authority that was not available to OT believers. We can pray, witness, preach, talk, bless and live in the name of Jesus.

We are trusted by Christ! Isn’t that incredible? We are also empowered by Christ! We are looking forward to the Kingdom of Christ in its fullness and we get ready for it by learning to rule now by sharing authority with others and learning to live for their joy.

I am hopeful that you will tease this out a little more in your life, but let me point you in that direction. Our world tells you that you are nothing more than a collection of neurons and chemicals that evolved. Our world does not think deep enough and is afraid to. You are more than that. But, that is all that they see you are, so when you are in bondage to alcohol or meth or crack or weed or porn or food or shopping or video games or whatever, our world, in an effort to help you calls it a sickness. And what do you do for a sickness? You treat it. You take meds for it. And in some cases, you try to learn to cope (live with it). But you are more than that. And your sin is way more serious than a sickness. You were made in the image of God and were given a soul. Your soul, the eternal part of you is what animates the physical part of you. Your soul was made to be rightly related to God. You will only discover your true humanness when you as a complete person live in relationship with the rightful King, the Son of Man. This rightful King has power and he offers to share that power with you. There is power in the name of Jesus to deal with your life-dominating sins. There is power and authority in Jesus for every single person all over this world to find forgiveness and wholeness.

The gospel of Jesus is powerful. Isn't that what Paul said in Romans 1? The gospel of Jesus is the power of God unto salvation for every single person (Gentile or Jew – doesn't matter) who trusts in Christ. That means that you can (more on this next week) share and must share the gospel of Jesus indiscriminately and liberally. Jesus is taking back that which rightly belongs to him and he is doing it by means of spreading his kingdom and authority one person at a time who believes in him. This kingdom is not spread by fear or threat, but by the unstoppable power of his love and grace. Do not be intimidated by this world. They are the ones who are actually afraid because what they have will not last. That brings me to the serious implications.

B. The serious implications.

Totalitarian regimes are ruled by oppressive dictators who are little images of Satan. The more their fragile hold on power, the more violent and intimidating they become. I believe that this explains some of what is going on in China, N. Korea and in the Middle East. Christianity is growing in China and the leadership is panicking. Why is Christianity seen as a threat? Because it is a threat to Satan, and whatever happens in the cosmic realm is going to be felt here on earth. We are a threat and we are in a war. That war is in heaven and therefore, it is on the earth. Whatever happens in heaven has direct impact on the earth.

In the Middle East it is a similar story. The countries of Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Syria have for centuries been countries where Islam was the dominant religion, but Christianity was basically tolerated, winked out and in some cases, accepted. But the gospel has been growing and while some Muslims were ok with that, others have reacted with extreme fear, which has contributed to movements like Al Qaeda and ISIS. If they do not stomp this out, then their "power" will be threatened. So, like Satan, who knows that his time is short, they are intent on destroying everything they can.

The good news is that Christ has already won the battle. The head of the serpent has been crushed. But all over this world are sleeper cells of gospel-rejecting, Christ-haters. They are angry and are reacting violently to the threat of the gospel. What do we do? What did Christ do? We love them. We pray for them. We share Christ with them. They have no hold on us. We are His. And when the day comes when we are told that we cannot speak up in the name of Jesus anymore, we appeal to a higher authority. We appeal to the name above every name and say that they have no right to order that. For the one who has all authority has all authority over all nations and commands us to teach and observe all that he has commanded. And like our king, it may cost us our lives, but that is okay. Like our King, we will rise again and with our king enjoy a kingdom that will never end.