

Title: For God, For You

Text: Ephesians 2.1-10

Theme: The resurrection, ascension and high priestly ministry of Christ

Series/Occasion: Easter Sunday AM, 2007

Prop Stmt. Christ is at the right hand of the Father, ministering on my behalf.

Read Ephesians 2.1-10

For several years our choir and orchestra performed Easter concerts. One year, a member of the choir was inviting a friend to come to one of the concerts and the acquaintance asked if that was the story of the guy who died and was resurrected. When the choir member affirmed that yes, that indeed was the story line, the friend said that he had already seen that and wondered if there was another story that the choir could sing about. This is Easter Sunday, and while there is no law that says that I have to preach on the resurrection of Jesus Christ, brothers and sisters, there is no greater message. In fact, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15 that this message is of first importance.

That becomes obvious from the book of Acts. When Peter preaches his first sermon on the birth day of the church, he preaches in Acts 2 on the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. In Acts 3 Peter preaches again on the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. In Acts 4 he does it again, and in Acts 5 guess what he preaches on? Yep! The death burial and resurrection of Christ is there again. The next time Peter's sermon is recorded is in chapter 10 and he preaches on the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. And in Acts 13, we have the first sermon of Paul's recorded where he preaches on the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. Do you see a trend? But today, I want to address an aspect of the Easter/resurrection event that is often neglected. It is the point that Paul makes in the text that we read in Ephesians 2. But, let me help you understand what I mean.

1. **Christ Lived for God and for you.**

You cannot understand the meaning and significance of the death of Christ if you do not understand the life of Christ. Apart from the life of Christ, the death of Christ would be meaningless. When Christ came to this earth, he came in the form of a man. He came as our representative. Our first representative was Adam. And when Adam, sinned, he was responsible for plunging the entire human race into sin. Christ came to do what Adam failed to do. Christ came as the 2nd Adam. What that means is that everything that Christ did, he did for God and for us. He lived in our place. He lived a substitutionary life and He lived it perfectly before God and for God, even as He did it for us. Everything that Christ thought, said, and did was perfect. He did everything that He was supposed to do, and He did not do anything that He was not supposed to do.

Let's say that your parents are going to the store for a couple of hours and they leave you with explicit instructions. You are not permitted to watch TV and you must get your homework done. But, instead of being gone for the full two hours, they are back in an hour and a half and there you are, watching TV, and you don't have any homework done. Now, you have two problems. There is the problem that you did what you should not

have done and there is the problem that you did not do what you were supposed to do. You have a compound problem. Christ never did anything that he should not have done. There were no marks against him, he had no spiritual debt to pay. On the other hand, he did everything that he was supposed to do. He had spiritual capital. What he did, he did for God and for you. What he didn't do, he didn't do because he was living for God and for you. When I say he lived for God and for you, I mean that Christ lived to carry out God's purposes for Him even as he lived as the 2nd Adam in your place. He lived to fulfill God's will and He lived for your benefit. He lived to fulfill the law that God had established – He lived to carry out God's intended purpose for us even as He lived in our place.

2. **Christ died for God and for you.**

It was the perfectly righteous life of Christ that enabled Him to die such an infinitely significant death. His life was for God and for you, and his death was for God and for you. His death for you was in one sense, the greatest injustice that ever occurred. In 1977 Randall Dale Adams was convicted and sentenced to death for the murder of a Texas policeman. His story was told in the documentary titled, *The Thin Blue Line* which raised some serious questions about his guilt. Just hours before his scheduled execution, Randall was granted a new trial, and a year later was released when the prosecutor's office acknowledged there was no real evidence against him. For 12 years he was imprisoned for a crime he did not commit.

A. **Christ died for you.**

Our justice system is not perfect. But, the greatest injustice that has ever been committed was the sentencing and execution of the perfectly sinless and perfectly righteous Son of God. On a human level, his death was the greatest travesty of justice, because it was for you. On a human level, Christ died because of us. Speaking to his audience, Peter said in Acts 3.15, "You killed the author of life." Acts 4.10 "It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified..." But there is more to it than just that.

B. **Christ died for God.**

Christ died because this was the plan that God had established. Speaking of the conspiracy against Christ that resulted in his death, Peter said in Acts 4.28 "They (Herod, Pilate, Jews) did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen." Acts 2.23 says, "This man (Christ) was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross." Christ died because of the plan of God, which was for Christ to die for you. So, while on a human level, Christ's death was a travesty of justice, on a divine level his death was an awesome demonstration of justice because it was done to appease the righteous wrath of God against sin. Our sin is so infinitely serious, and the just and righteous response of true holiness to our sin is the awesome and terrifying wrath of God. Something had to be done in order to appease that wrath by becoming the recipient of that wrath. The wrath of the Father was not just perceived, it was real. Christ did not

appease Him by calming Him down with gifts, the wrath of the Father against our sin was poured out fully upon His own Son and it was completely absorbed by Christ. God exhausted his storehouse of wrath against our sin by using it up completely upon Christ. God wore out His wrath upon His Son, instead of upon us. Christ took that cup of wrath, that cup of suffering, so we could share in the cup of fellowship.

That is what Christ did. He died for God by taking the cup of wrath, which satisfied the justice of God and enabled God to turn loose His grace. He died for you by taking your punishment so that the debt of your sin could be paid and by offering in your place His perfectly righteous life, He provided the infinite righteousness that enables you to be credited with a righteousness that is not your own. That offering that He made for you, must be personally believed, embraced, loved and trusted by you. You cannot hold on to and love your sin and love Christ at the same time. It is one or the other. I think that by now you can probably begin to guess where this message is heading. He lived for God and for you. He died for God and for you. He rose again, for God and for you. Romans 4.25 He (Christ) was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.”

3. **Christ Rose Again for God and for you.**

In what way was the resurrection of Christ for God? Remember that when I am saying that it was FOR God, I mean on behalf of, or for the benefit of in the sense that what Christ did accomplished the plan of God.

A. Christ Rose Again for God.

The life and death of Christ were all part of God's plan to rescue His people from their sin. Christ accomplished what He set out to do. Christ came to redeem His people. Christ did that! That is why He said, "It is finished!" Mission Accomplished! The resurrection of Christ from the dead was for God in the sense that God was putting the world on notice that His Son had done all that the Father had asked Him to do. The payment for sin was not only made, the payment for sin was accepted. God raised His Son for our justification. The resurrection of Christ was God telling the world that He was perfectly satisfied with His Son and that the purchase of our salvation was signed, sealed and delivered. The resurrection of Christ from the dead was for God in the sense that God was telling Satan and the demons, that a new day has come. The new creation has begun, a new order is taking over, and new sheriff is in town, and he cannot be defeated, destroyed, denied or defied, because even though you killed Him, the grave could not hold him. He will be reckoned with and He will reign! The resurrection of Christ was also God's answer to the prayer of Christ in the garden to be saved from the cup of wrath. Christ was rescued through His suffering, not from suffering.

B. Christ Rose Again for you.

The life, death and resurrection of Christ are all done for God and for us. In a literal sense Christ did all of this in our place and for our benefit. When you come to faith in Christ, you are credited with his life and death, AND at the same time you are guaranteed your resurrection because He accomplished that for you as well. “For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.” (1 Cor. 15.22) “And if the Spirit of him who raised Christ from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.” Romans 8.11

Now, all of that was preliminary to the main objective of this message. Look again at Ephesians 2.6 “And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.” What I think is the forgotten part of the story is this. Following his resurrection, Christ stayed on the earth for an additional 40 days, and then ascended back into heaven in order to go back to the Father because Christ had finished his earthly ministry. His earthly ministry for us was over, but His heavenly ministry goes on.

4. **Christ Ascended to the Father for God and for you.**

Christ ascended to the Father to be back with the Father. Do you remember John 13.1? “It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father.” He couldn’t wait to go back home and the Father couldn’t wait for him to get home. But, when he went back, he brought with Him and new ministry.

Here is what I said on Friday. In the book of Hebrews, the author is showing that Christ is the ultimate story of Scripture. He is the fulfillment of the OT pictures. He is the perfect priest, all of the responsibilities of representing people before God is fulfilled in Christ. He is also the perfect prophet. All of the responsibilities of representing God to His people are fulfilled in Christ. In addition to that, Christ is the perfect sacrifice. And he is so perfect, that he is complete and eliminates the need for any other sacrifice to be made. Christ is also the perfect tabernacle. You no longer have any restrictions upon you when seeking to come before God. There are no more curtains, no more cherubim blocking the way, Christ opened the way for us and for all who come to God through Christ because Christ Himself is the very way. He is the perfect priest who offered the perfect sacrifice when he offered himself. No one took his life from Him, nails cannot keep deity on a cross, only grace and love could do that. And when Christ died, the curtain that divided the holy place from the holy of holies was ripped in two to prove this very point. The old tabernacle is gone, but the new one is here! And with the new tabernacle comes a new High Priest.

Christ ascended back to the Father to represent us before the Father. He is our perfect High Priest, who perfectly understands our weaknesses for He lived on this earth and experienced our sorrow. He is our perfect High Priest who understands our sin, because He bore every bit of it and was considered guilty because He was credited with our sin and He experienced the wrath of God in our place. He knows. As our defense attorney He understands. As our legal representative before the Judge of the Universe, He is moved with the feelings of our infirmities. What that means is that you and I have a high

priest who has fully entered in to our humanity. We have no basis to ever, ever, ever accuse God of not knowing or not caring about what we are going through in life. He knows more than we will ever know about being under the crushing weight of sin. But while He empathizes and sympathizes, he does so much more. He stands next to the Father as our advocate and presents on our behalf His hands, His wounds, His sacrifice which forever stand as our security.

Oh brothers and sisters, it gets even better and this is the point of Ephesians 2.6. When you come to faith in Christ, you are united with Christ. You are credited with his life and death and resurrection. All that Christ does is for God and for you. And because of this union that you have with Christ, when he stands before the Father, you are standing too because you are in Christ. “God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms IN Christ Jesus.” This is your present position. This is your present standing. This is your identity. This is your confidence, your security, your hope and your joy. This is your inheritance, your reward, your song, and your life. And all of this is yours by grace alone, through faith alone in Christ alone, for the glory of God alone. (read verses 7-10) And if that is not good enough, there is even more...

5. **Christ is Coming back for God and for you.**

Conclusion:

For those of you who are hoping that God will look kindly upon you at the end because you were semi-religious, not as bad as the other guy, or felt like you had some measure of spirituality to you; I'm shooting straight with you. If that is what your hope is in, you are toast. You have a wish, but it is no hope at all. You need a real Savior and since you are a sinner, you cannot rescue yourself. You need to stop trusting in yourself and trust only in Christ. That is what it means to become a follower of Christ. We are here to help you do that. Every five weeks, we offer a five week class that deals with that very issue. It is called Discovering God's People. If you are interested in learning more about what it means to become a genuine part of God's people, then, this class would be very beneficial for you. I will be out in the Gathering Space at the conclusion of the service. Come see me, I will make certain you get the information that you need.

For those of you are followers of Christ but your affections for Christ are like a roller coaster, you need to ponder this fourth point. Start at Hebrews 5 and study your high priest – Christ who never surrendered what He knew was true about the Father to the intense suffering he endured. Your circumstances do not determine your faith or obedience. Your hope is secure in the finished work of Christ on the earth, and in His ongoing ministry on your behalf before the Father. Your security is not in your keeping the rules better than others. And even when your own heart condemns you, look back at the cross and trust Christ, look at the empty tomb and acknowledge His death was sufficient, look upward to your place in Him right now, and look ahead to the day when your position in Christ is completely fulfilled in your perfected existence with Christ.