

## Far Above All Powers

Ephesians 1:15-23; Revelation 19:11-16

May 5, 2020 The Sixth Sunday of Easter at The First Congregational Church of Marshalltown, Iowa

- Ephesians 1:20-21 "...which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come."
- Introduction: It seems to be a plot device in literature that the hero of the story goes through apparent defeat or endures a true low point in life before overcoming at the end. Take Charles Dickens's great novel David Copperfield. There are several characters that flounder and fail until they immigrate to Australia and then find great success. There have been real life examples of this: People who become successful business owners after flunking out of high school or find a new purpose in life after a tragic setback. The greatest comeback is that of the Lord Jesus, who appeared to fail tragically only for people to find that it was part of the Father's plan all along. No one saw it coming.

- Set the Stage

To set the stage for our main verse for today and look at the context, the Apostle Paul begins with verse fifteen with one of the great prayers for the church. Verses fifteen through nineteen make a terrific outline for prayer for the church and for each other as individuals. Here we are to pray for the spirit of wisdom and enlightenment, noting that James 1 tells us that God is willing to give this to us freely. He is not stingy. The beginning of Chapter 2 of Ephesians speaks of the great heights given by the follower of Christ, taken from actual spiritual death in our trespasses and sins, we were children of wrath, or people destined to be the recipients of wrath. That is, until we were made alive together in Christ and made to sit together with Him in the heavenly places, or literally "the heavenlies." There are at least two ways you can read this. One, that this has not yet happened as we are not literally in heaven but it is so certain that it is considered to have already happened (consider one of my favorite passages in Hebrews 12:22-24). Or the second option, that I prefer, is that while we live here on earth, our spirits, because of the Holy Spirit, are in touch with heaven and are together with our Savior even while we carry on with life here on earth. Think of it, while we are sitting around drinking out coffee, or trying to figure out our computer, or running errands, we are in touch with heaven and the presence of Christ. I don't think I can really wrap my mind around it, but that is the context for our main verse today.

- Main Point  
the authority of Jesus

Our main point for today is about the authority of the Lord Jesus. Take a look at 1:20-21: "...which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come." The idea that Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father (note the symbolism on the Communion Table) implies not only authority but a permanent place of authority, and verse twenty one makes it clear that the name of Jesus rises above and position of rank and power among human, demonic or

angelic entities. There is no higher authority and the breath of the task of raising Christ is astonishing. Jesus' broken body was in a borrowed tomb and His Spirit had descended in to hell and from there He was raised to power and authority at the right hand of God. Nothing could stop the Father from raising Jesus. I have a small one-volume commentary in my office that said of this verse, "When men had done their worst and Christ's broken body was in the tomb, still the Father raised Him up and placed Him in the position of ultimate world authority. Such is the power with which we come in contact when we pray." God raised Him from the lowest possible place to the highest and nothing or nobody could stop Him. This adds some weight to verses like Romans 6:4, which says, "Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Consider also Romans 8:39, which asserts that nothing, not even death, can separate us from the love of God. Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father. Nothing is impossible.

- Application

where are you seated? (take the lowest place Cf. James and John, who wanted to be at the right and left hand of Jesus)

I can see in this passage a couple of applications. First of all, if you are seated with Christ in the heavenlies, why would any earthly honor or authority be of great importance to you? Jesus Himself told us to avoid seats of honor at parties or gatherings but rather take the humblest place instead. James and John wanted to be at the right and left hand of Jesus in the Kingdom, but He could not promise it to them and they suffered for it. When in contact with heavenly glory earthly honor seems rather pale in comparison.

what Jesus do you envision when you pray?

Second, what Jesus do you envision when you pray? Is it the humble Jesus who spent most of His life working the family business and taking care of His mom and His siblings? Or do you envision the humble traveling rabbi and his followers? Or the broken Jesus on the cross? All of them Biblical and legitimate. But now we pray in great name of the King of kings and Lord of Lords depicted in might and power and with all authority in Revelation. It is His Name we invoke when we pray today.

- Conclusion

In conclusion, Jesus is the greatest of all comeback stories, made all the more potently that it is not the product of a gifted imagination like Dickens, but one that actually happened. His resurrection offers to us the riches of God's wisdom and grace. Nowhere else or with no one else can we be taken from being dead in our trespasses and sins to being seated, one way or another, with Christ in the heavenlies. Such is His power and authority.