

The Rock: 04-11-2021**Philippians: The letter of Joy**

First reading: Daniel 7:13-14

Title: For the sake of humanity

Scripture: Philippians 2:1-11 (Part 2)

Theme:

Because Jesus has been glorified, we have full acceptance in Him. There is nothing we need to do.

Introduction:

There are always those moments in history which define us, define nations, and sometimes they define a world.

July 4, 1776. (Independence). April 9, 1865 (Appomattox) December 7, 1941 (Pearl Harbor) July 20, 1969 (The moon) September 11, 2001 (Two towers)

I could go on, September 12, 1987, and on, but you understand. There are life-defining dates. I am sure that first Easter morning for every disciple, and Peter especially, marked the beginning of a brand-new world.

A world where sin was forgiven, freedom was had and after their trip to Galilee,

Jesus ate breakfast with them on the beach.

When we look at how God works in His Kingdom, we have to admit that it is as backwards as it could possibly get.

Batterson calls it flipping the script, I call it the upside down of His kingdom. In our world today, and even in Jesus' day, the glorification of self -the deification of humanity seems to be the end all be all.

Sadly, we too often settle for such short-sighted things, not realizing that the Bible tells us, because of what happened that Easter morning that as followers of Jesus you will judge angels.

You are kings and queens of the cosmos because He served, as Paul says here to the point of death, even death on a cross. Talk about flipping the script and turning things upside down.

Do you know that you will judge angels? That because of the victory of Jesus, you are in that type of position before God the father as an adopted child of the King.

The Story:

Don't go getting too fat headed about that though, we all had a great deal of

help in getting there. In fact, we are only there because someone else earned the right for us to be there.

That is the story we are going to look at today. The ascension of Jesus Christ, one that we would normally talk about on Pentecost Sunday, but here we are.

Jesus told the disciples that it was better that he goes to the Father, that way the Holy Spirit will come. He will fill you and empower you for the work I am giving you.

Jesus now, is always bringing us before the Father, interceding on our behalf:

“For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.”

-Hebrews 9:24 ESV

We are never alone, because he has gone and has given. Given His Spirit so that we are reminded of all He did and to equip us to live in this world the way we are supposed to.

As I look at these three verses, I asked myself how do I apply the glorification of Jesus? What does that mean to us and for us in our day to day lives.

Well, for sinful humanity, this is the single most important thing for us to know. He is King not only of this world, but of the universe.

What Paul tells us here in these verses:

"Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so 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, to the glory of God the Father."

-Philippians 2:9-11 ESV

The Old Testament prophet Daniel saw as did the disciples -just from different angles. What the disciples saw on that morning when Jesus was taken up in the clouds:

"And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight."

-Acts 1:9 ESV

Daniel, some 500 years before, in a vision saw it from the heavenly perspective:

"I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the

Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.”

-Daniel 7:13-14 ESV

I leave that chapter for you to read as homework, but I would say to do so with Jesus in the front of your mind.

Because you will find that the results of what Jesus did on the cross some 500 years in the future is seen there in Daniel's vision.

This is Jesus on the other side of the clouds. He sees what the disciples could not. I share that because it is important for us to see and know that the Bible tells a story, and one that is cohesive and clear.

Not one that we can read, superimpose things onto and try to make it say things we want or take away things that may unsettle us.

No, the truth of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, is here on the pages of Scripture, and when we see the Old Testament, we find that all of it points

to Him, and sometimes, like here in Daniel, it is crystal clear.

What happened when Jesus was glorified? Paul tells us that it was a coronation, and one that was planned from eternity. Because Jesus was obedient to death, he is now King of the New Creation and we are too. Frightening, isn't it?

Us, we group of people who can't get along a lot of the time because we are still fighting the "it's all about me" game.

We must remind ourselves every day that what Jesus did for us gives us the ability to live with the hope that we are now reconciled back to God.

Peter, our friend, reminds us of this:

"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."

-1 Peter 2:9-10 ESV

What He has done, makes us a peculiar people, not to over-emphasize and belabor

this point, but as a chosen race, a royal priesthood, not only do we live with and in that promise, but we should never settle for worldly kingdoms and ways when we have been made for and called to so much more.

What we ought to be doing in relation to that is declaring to those in authority here and now is that there is a right way to be human. There is a right way to run a society, a country which guarantees human flourishing and strong families, and healthy cultures.

You see, Jesus gives us a better way, and that's the whole point here. He is exalted for that very reason. Knees bow on both sides of heaven because He is LORD. He showed us how to live and as importantly, how to die!

The entire letter to the Hebrews is the dissertation of Jesus being the greater sacrifice and example for us:

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the

cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”

-Hebrews 12:1-2 ESV

This is only possible because of Good Friday and Easter Sunday. He has done everything to make us right before God. All we must do is receive it.

Learning to get away from performance-based acceptance, being law bound and thinking that we have to do one more thing to make God happy and balance the scales of justice to our accounts.

None of that is necessary in the Kingdom and economy of God. Why? Jesus -that's why. He did it all, and all to Him we owe -sin had left a crimson stain, He washed it white as snow.

This world demands blank-check obedience with an unknown debt quantity to be paid. Hopeless! Every day, it's a bit more performance, a different way of doing things and seeing things.

Do and do -today you will be accepted - maybe. But then again, maybe not. It all depends on who is making the rules at that moment.

It is one of the hardest and most dangerous things (traps) that we get stuck in, is that performance loop. Most

especially in a world that every day, changes the story and moves the target.

It affects our Christian walk before God too. How much more do I have to do for God to accept me? We see Him the same way we see this world. It's how we are taught, because it's how humans' function.

The Bible tells us that by way of acceptance, there is nothing we can do or need to do, except respond to the call of God through the Holy Spirit.

That is made possible, not because of us, but because of Jesus. God doesn't weight the scale of justice for you saying: "You've got a few more good things than bad, you're good to go."

That is why He sent Jesus, because of Him, we need nothing. Which is a really good thing, because we have nothing! This is the amazing thing about grace.

He pours it out upon us and we don't deserve it, but because of Jesus' Resurrection and ascension (His glorification), we are made to deserve it. Again, He is always bringing us up to the Father:

"Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God

through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.”

-Hebrews 7:25 ESV

So, we do have responsibility here. He lives to intercede for us and our benefit. What then should we be doing because of that? Thank Him and then go about life until we are in a pinch and need to ask for help?

Or, live our lives in such a way that shows we understand this grace given to us. To pay that grace forward, to work and to bear fruit for Him in this world. Why? Because He gave all for you, you ought to strive for excellence in all you do in His world.

Jesus is glorified -I am sanctified -I ought to be showing that and working that out in what I do, and how I live that out by faith.

Faith is what saves us. Working that salvation out by faith is what shows the world that we actually believe what Jesus did for us. Our works, our behavior, especially toward others, are evidence of that saving faith.

James, the brother of Jesus says as much in his letter:

"What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!"

-James 2:14-19 ESV

Faith saves -YES: Jesus did all the work, that's what Paul tells us. Work justifies. You see, that is God's faith in me, to do what He has actually called me to do.

It justifies me, proves my salvation, that is saving faith. This is why when someone simply says a prayer and then goes about life with no noticeable change or focus, I get concerned.

Just because we said some words doesn't mean a thing. We can believe every word

of this book and still be missing the mark by 18 inches. Head to heart.

That is why, I am convinced, James tells us that even demons believe and shudder. You see, we are not saved by what we do. But what we do sure is a reflection that God has saved us and it shows everyone around us that we have been transformed at the heart level.

That we understand what Jesus did for us, and what Paul is so beautifully telling us here in this poem.

One of my best friends growing up in Foxboro MA, a few in fact over the years, have seen my sermons on line.

Obviously, they picked up on the fact that I am a pastor. That alone, set them back a couple steps, but Steve said to me once: "Wow, that's NOT the Mike I remember. You are not the same guy."

No, no I'm not. The same human being, but not the same person (guy). I am glad of it. That means God is working out of me what He has worked in, because of Jesus.

I was (key word) unkind, unhelpful, hateful, hurtful to those whom I professed to love most, arrogant (still working on that one) mean, a manipulator, user.

I could go on and on and on. But, much like Paul, "before Jesus, it is sufficient to say, I was the worst of sinners." But now, in Christ I am, you are, saved, redeemed, restored.

Not because of anything you have done. It is all because Jesus left His throne, having considered equality with God a thing not to be held onto.

He emptied Himself, humbled Himself, died on the cross on that Good Friday in perfect obedience to the one who called Him. He did it for you and me.

He rose again on the third day, and is now glorified! Highly exalted as Paul puts it. His name is above all names, and at His name every knee bows, every tongue confesses that He is King, He is LORD.

Because of Him, you need to understand that not one more sacrifice on your part is necessary for you to be accepted by God.

You are accepted in the beloved as Ephesians tells you:

"...to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved."

-Ephesians 1:6 ESV

I close with this. A preacher told this story of the thief on the cross who at some point realized that this Jesus was who he said he was.

He had spent his life doing everything wrong, in fact that is why he hung there next to Jesus, rightly tried and punished for his crimes.

My good friend Dan Bruekner said in his Maundy Thursday message that this fellow didn't have time to do any good works, get baptized or even partake of the Lord's supper. Nothing.

He just asked Jesus to remember him. Jesus said, I'll do better than that, today you will be with me in paradise.

Well, he died finally on that Good Friday just like Jesus and walked to the gates of glory, where the one standing there looked at this ragged beaten thief, and asked if he was in the right place.

"Well, I don't know if I am or even if I deserve to be here, but the man on the middle cross told me I could come."

He says the same thing today to you, to me and most especially you who may not have had that conversation with this risen Jesus.

Come to the cross, be redeemed, restored,
saved.