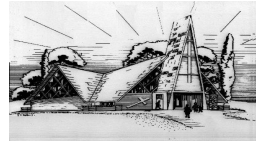




Free Evangelical Lutheran
Synod in South Africa

Sermon- Ascension Day

“The ascended Jesus fills all in all.”



St. John's Lutheran Parish Shelly Beach

• The Word of God for this Sermon is written in Eph 1,15-23:

- 15 For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints,
- 16 I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers,
- 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him,
- 18 having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,
- 19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might
- 20 that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places,
- 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.
- 22 And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church,
- 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

• Let us pray: *Come Holy Spirit, open our ears and our minds so that in these dark times our hearts will be enlightened to see the immeasurable greatness of Christ's power toward us who believe! Amen.*

• **Dear beloved saints of the Father, in Christ!**

• There is one thing post-modernists and a post-modern community cannot stand, and that is a so-called meta-narrative. A meta-narrative is an over-arching story which holds together the whole of history. Why are they so anti meta-narrative, anti overall story? They say that religions who claim these will always try and dominate over all others, because their story is above all others. They reckon if nobody has an overarching story wars will stop, because religions would not compete for supremacy. This maybe a bit over-simplified, but basically the direction they are steering.

• Well, Paul's letter to the Ephesians must be a thorn in the flesh to them, because what we have here in front of us, spelled out to us, is nothing else than THE Meta-narrative of all times. In this passage, in this book Paul highlights the overarching story and significance of one person, Christ, for all times and for all people, for the whole cosmos!

- Paul's letter to the Ephesians and post-modernism don't match at all. Nothing is left to chance. Christ fills all in all! Now, you cannot top that. That is the mega meta-narrative, if you want! God has put all things under Jesus' feet! It has already happened! Christ is far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, far above every name that is named, far above all presidents, far above the united nations, far above our government, far above all demons and satanic forces too! They are no match against Christ and will never be a match. They are all destined to be under Christ's feet.
- To be under Christ's feet is, to be under God's wrath! That is, they all have something to do with Christ! No person can say, I have nothing to do with Christ. Christ fills all in all! Hell is also in the presence of Christ. Nothing is removed from the presence of Christ. However, Christ has revealed to us that there is a presence of Wrath and a presence of Grace. In chapter two Paul confesses clearly that all people are by nature children of wrath! [2,3]. We are born under the wrath of God. That is, children, newly born children are under the wrath of God! That is our default stance before God.
- Now, we can try and deny this fact, as many try to do, but Christ does not go away. And the payment of sin remains too, namely death. It will catch up sooner or later with all of our old Adams! It is like with the force of gravitation. You can deny it as much as you want, but it still works! All old Adams of all people are under the feet of Christ- they face the wrath of God. God is present with His ministry of the Law and condemns them to be eternally removed from His reign of Grace!
- And by the way, this wrath of God is quite evident! That is what the old Adam experiences in this world when he/she gets sick or experiences many of the traumas. This often leads to despair, it leads to many suicides, also amongst famous people. Where is hope? If people cannot see the overarching story, what is the purpose of it all? If my life is just a little isolated story for itself, who will notice if I am gone?
- So, what is Paul saying, what is Christ proclaiming with his proclamation of the wrath of God? He wants to make sure that we get the seriousness of the situation, that nobody underestimates the terrible influence sin has in our lives and in the world. Sin literally wrecks havoc by deceiving the world into believing that my life is all about me. It tries to destroy and cover up the fact that I have a responsibility towards God and towards my neighbour by letting me focus on my rights only.
- Yet, I am tied to other people, whether I like it or not. What I say and do has an effect on

others, either good or bad. And above all, I am tied to God. Now, if I rebel against this fact, I am destroying relationships, I am burning bridges, I am fostering war. And there is no escape via power, might or any influence in the political world from the wrath of God against this rebellion. You cannot escape the wrath of God by seeking refuge under the dominion of others who share in your rebellion against God and against your neighbours.

- There is no escape, because the whole lot is put under the feet of Christ! There is nowhere to run with your rebellion. You will always, ultimately and finally, run into the presence of God in His wrath! Post-modernism is the blatant denial of all absolutes except for one: me! This makes it one of the greatest lies in the history of humankind with devastating consequences. You may never have heard about it, but we are all affected. That is why there is a lack of commitment in all layers of society. If I don't recognise my responsibility towards my neighbour and my superiors, to those in authority, why should I be committed? I do as I feel, and soon organisation after organisation collapses!

- But, nothing is further from the truth that all in my life is about me! I am not even holding myself together. I didn't produce myself. I didn't feed myself when I was in my mother's womb or even as a baby. A whole community of parents and siblings looked after me, and still do. We depend on others, on a community more than we realise. When I am sick, a whole hospital and industry is needed to keep me alive and well! And behind all of these stands none other than Christ. Family is His idea, His design. Community is His idea and design. Helping others is His Spirit. We were designed to face others, not ourselves. There were no mirrors in paradise, and definitely no selfies!

- Even our bodies follow this design of Christ. The members of our body work together, when all is going well. They all follow what the head tells them to do. The body needs the one head over all its members. If all the members of your body would become like post-modernists, your body would look like the world, a chaotic mess.

- We know, as baptised believers in Christ, that God is not only a God of wrath, but also and mainly a God of mercy! That is what Christ came to reveal to us and to make certain on earth for us. God's intention with humankind is to bring the whole of humankind into the Body of Grace, the reign of mercy and forgiveness and true healthy responsibility and committedness towards one another! Let me emphasise this, it is not a place where it is all about my personal relationship with Christ, isolated from others. That would be a post-modern version of Christ, not the real Christ! No.

- The real Christ is a Body of members with a Head. A community where human beings live from the Head, Christ, and share everything they have received with their fellow members! It is a community of service which lives from the service of the Divine, of God. A Body where all members are willingly tied closely to one another and together they work to reach out to others outside of the Body, to incorporate them also. It is never self-serving. It never says, that is now us, now we can stop reaching out, now we can stop serving others, let us remain in this small group. No. Every member is doing its share, according to its giftedness, so that the whole Body is built up in love. Everyone looks where he or she can accept the responsibility of helping the other person!
- And Christ, the crucified, resurrected and ascended Christ is central, is supplying and sharing the gifts that make the growth happen. He is supplying us with His forgiveness, with His mercy, with His patience so that we will continue to serve in this unity.
- For this reason Jesus had to ascend to the right hand of God, to fill all things, to make His presence of Grace available to all the members of His Body, at all times!
- Isn't this wonderful, that we may participate in this Body, whereto we belong, that we are never alone. Whilst the world is decaying and becoming more and more self-centred, focussed on its rights, in the Body of Christ, the opposite happens. We are drawn together more and more. As we learn and grasp more and more of the wisdom of Christ, we become more and more Church oriented, because the Church is tied to its Head Christ. Here we don't practice modernism or post-modernism nor traditionalism, but in Christ we are served by Him to serve others.
- We participate in the only Body that has overcome death forever! The future belongs to the Head of this Body and therefore also to this Body. It is a Body where true Love, the truest form of responsibility is practised from the Head to the last toe.
- This is no wishful thinking, no dream, but this Head reaches out onto earth through His Body, His Church, into our lives and draws us towards Himself, the person of absolute Love, of absolute mercy and peace. He keeps and holds us together! He still is the LORD who serves us. **Amen.**
- *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.” Amen.* *[Eph 1,3].*