

What on Earth is Jesus Doing in Heaven?

sermonaudio.com

A Year With Jesus

By Jimmy Davis

Bible Text: Psalm 110
Preached on: Sunday, May 16, 2010

Metrocrest Presbyterian Church
1265 E. Hebron Parkway
Carrollton, TX 75010

Website: www.metrocrestchurch.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/metrocrestchurch

I wonder have you ever been accused of being so heavenly minded that you're no earthly good? Today's sermon is liable to have you apply that charge to me, that I'm going to suggest that you be heavenly minded and, therefore, that will lead you to be of no earthly good. My hope, though, is that you'll leave here with a desire to be so heavenly minded that you are earthly good, because the truth is, if you're not being earthly good as a believer, then you're probably biblically not heavenly minded. Today is Ascension Sunday. Ascension Sunday is the Sunday following Ascension Day. The Christian calendar celebrates Ascension Day every year, this year it was this past Thursday, the 40th day following Easter, the 40th day following the resurrection of Christ, and that is the day that Jesus was lifted up into the clouds and the disciples were told, "As you've seen him go, he will come again."

We're going to talk a little bit about what is Jesus doing in heaven now that he has ascended there, seated at the right hand of the Father. A couple of weeks ago, John Brown preached in his series through Colossians verses 1 and 2 that were read earlier, but I'll read them again, "If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth." Paul is encouraging us to be heavenly minded but you may protest, "Wait a minute, have you not seen all the brokenness that's going on down here in our world? I mean, there is so much earthly bad that's going on. Should we not be concerned about doing earthly good? Do we have time to be really heavenly minded?" And it's true, I've had several conversations lately, people seem to be burdened with the brokenness that's going on. Think about just a few examples of the natural brokenness that we're experiencing in our world: earthquakes in Haiti and Chile; tornadoes in Oklahoma; a volcano in Iceland that spreads a cloud of ash all over Europe. Odd. Floods in Nashville. The Gulf is polluted by a faulty oil rig, and then of course, there is the brokenness of mankind as a bunch of polluted people are doing their best to make money off of that. Cultural brokenness. The moral failure of leaders in all areas of life: government, sports, education, religious institutions. The unraveling of the moral fabric of our society as we watch generation after generation seemingly become less and less interested in upholding certain moral standards and, of course, these are the things that we complain about at the coffee shop and around the water cooler, how everything just seems to be unraveling, but then it hits home, it gets personal. There is family

brokenness. Marriages that are either strained or separated. Financial turmoil. Young people, our young people being picked off one by one by drug abuse, alcohol, sexual immorality, depression, materialism, you name it. Then, you know, do you have any relational conflict with members of your extended family? If not, write a book.

Now, that's all in personal brokenness and I'm only describing Christian families, and then there is brokenness in the church. Not just this church with what I'm about to say, I'm not thinking of this church, I'm thinking about the church at large, that we are spending more money and making fewer disciples. A study just came out recently that said globally it costs the global church \$588,000 for one baptism, one conversion. In 1900, it cost \$17,500. It's not just inflation. More money is being spent and fewer disciples are being made. We have access to more Christian information than ever before and yet perhaps we're seeing less Christian transformation. We have more and more Bibles but we're becoming less and less biblically literate and much less people who live the Bible.

So with all these problems going on down here in the real world, why are we going to talk about some other worldly topic about Jesus in heaven? Well, because the Bible says that unless we are setting our minds on the unseen world, then we're not even talking about the real world. The Bible teaches us that the real world is not just what we see. If that's all the real world is, then you are a naturalist, not a Christian. The Bible teaches that there is an unseen realm that together with this seen reality, is reality. Paul in 2 Corinthians 4 says that in order to keep from losing heart in a broken world and in these broken bodies, we must look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen, for the things that are seen are transient but the things that are unseen are eternal. Just a few verses later in chapter 5, Paul says that we can be of good courage because we walk not by sight but by faith.

I have a mentor and a friend named T. M. Moore who loves to study the lives of the Celtic Christians who lived 1,300 years ago, folks like Patrick and Columbanus and Brendan and Brigid. The revival that God started by using these Celtic saints to spark his Spirit's renewal had lasting effects for centuries afterwards. God turned the pagan nation of Ireland upside down with the kingdom of God through these people. This is what T. M. wrote about St. Brigid. In one episode from the life of Brigid, the sixth century Irish saint, her biographer relates how she rode in her chariot on a mission of mercy. He reports that as she traveled to her destination, Brigid was deep in meditation, fixing her thoughts on the unseen world, gathering strength and perspective for the task ahead. He describes her as "practicing the life of heaven on earth through the disciplines of prayer and meditation." She appears to have been fortifying herself to live the then-and-there of eternal glory in the here-and-now of her daily demands. She was practicing the life of heaven on earth by fixing her mind, as Paul said, on things that are above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. She was purposely being heavenly minded so that she could be earthly good.

So the teachings of the Apostle Paul and the life of Brigid and others would seem to suggest that unless you are heavenly minded, you will be no earthly good. So we need to

find out what's going on in the unseen world, what's going on there so that we can encourage and equip ourselves to be some earthly good down here. Jesus is in heaven, what earthly good is he up to? We know he's up there, what's he up to?

Psalm 110 is a Psalm that is a tough one, it's a tough nut to crack, but man, once you crack it, it's really good, and I've really enjoyed studying this. Jesus said that Psalm 110 was about him. He told the Pharisees that he is the Lord that David is talking about when he says, "The LORD says to my Lord." They were so stunned by that that they decided, "I'm not going to talk to him any more about these things." And I wonder if during that 40 days when Luke says between the resurrection and the ascension, that Luke says Jesus was teaching his disciples about the kingdom of God, I'm really beginning to think that Psalm 110 was probably one of his major texts because Psalm 110 is one of the most often quoted Psalms and one of the most often quoted Old Testament passages in all of the New Testament. Almost every apostle or writer in the New Testament refers back to, either quotes or alludes to this Psalm. So I can imagine that Jesus must have just unpacked it for them because this is a messianic Psalm. It's all about him.

So as we read it, we're looking for the answer: what on earth is Jesus doing in heaven? Psalm 110.

1 The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool." 2 The LORD sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter. Rule in the midst of your enemies! 3 Your people will offer themselves freely on the day of your power, in holy garments; from the womb of the morning, the dew of your youth will be yours. 4 The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, "You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." 5 The Lord is at your right hand; he will shatter kings on the day of his wrath. 6 He will execute judgment among the nations, filling them with corpses; he will shatter chiefs over the wide earth. 7 He will drink from the brook by the way; therefore he will lift up his head.

Five things from this Psalm that Jesus is doing in heaven that have a great impact on us in the earth, and the first is, he is sitting at the right hand of God, he is sitting exalted. He is sitting exalted. What does it look like for Jesus to be sitting at the right hand of God? I mean, if we're supposed to set our minds on things that are above where Jesus is seated at the right hand of God, I've got to have something for my mind to be set on. So where would you go to find out what that looks like? Revelation 4 and 5. I commend that to you this afternoon to read it and picture that scene.

John is shown an open door into heaven, into the throne room of God, and when he goes in, he sees a throne in the center and one sitting on that throne who John can only describe using the names and descriptions of precious jewels and stones. The beauty is unimaginable. He has nothing to compare it to. Around this throne is a rainbow of emeralds. Out in front of this throne is a sea of glass that was like crystal. There are peals of thunder and flashes of lightning coming out from this throne. Also around the throne

are 24 other thrones where the 24 elders are seated and they are wearing white robes and gold crowns. Flying all around this scene are four living creatures, one that looks a little like a lion, one a little like an ox, one a little like a man, and one who looked like an eagle, and these guys have six wings and they are full of eyes and they are flying around and all of the time there is this worship chorus going on. Day and night they never cease to say, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty who was and is and is to come." And whenever those living creatures would sing that song, the 24 elders would bow before the throne and cast their golden crowns down.

So that's the scene but that's not Jesus yet. In the hand of the one sitting on the throne is a scroll that's rolled up and written on both sides with seven seals on it, and there is concern amongst the crowd as they begin to look for who is worthy to open this scroll and its seals. They looked. They looked in heaven. They looked under the earth. They looked through the earth. They can find no one and John recognizing the significance of this scroll, begins to weep that there is no one worthy to open it, and one of the elders says to him, "Don't worry. Don't worry." He says, "Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals." So if you're John, you're thinking, "Okay, here is this magnificent scene, where is the Lion? Where's the King? Where is he?" So as he turns to look for a lion, instead he sees between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders, a Lamb standing as though it had been slain. He looked for a lion and he saw a Lamb and the Lamb went and had taken the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne, and when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the 24 elders fell down before the Lamb, and they sang a new song saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."

Now, get the scene here. This is unbelievable. Jesus is there in eternal exaltation. The atmosphere is charged with worship. Charged with worship. What's going on at the center of all reality is worship. Jesus is eternally enthroned. He is eternally enthroned. He is on his throne. He is in control and Jesus is eternally executing his plan. Here's what the scroll was about: the scroll represents God's plan. The scroll is the story of what God is doing from creation and before all the way through eternity, and Jesus is the one whose blood bought the plan, sealed the deal, made it possible for God's plan to take effect in time and space.

If you look on that handout I gave you, there is a little graphic called "The Bookends of Biblical Theology," and all I'm trying to represent here is if you look at the story of God, if you were to look at what we might call the first page of the story and the last page of the story, you get the whole big picture.

In Genesis 1 and 2, we have creation. There is heaven and there is earth. There is day in there is night. The seventh day is holy. There is God and people in relationship with each other. There is a kingdom but in Genesis we learn that Adam and Eve were co-rulers, vice-regents with God when he set them to rule and subdue and take dominion over

creation, but we also learn that they are priests because the words that God uses when he says in Genesis 2:15, "guard and keep this garden," are the same words that are used later in Numbers to describe what the priests were to do in the temple, guard and keep the temple. In other words, what God is up to is he's created this giant temple called the universe and he has invited us to rule in it and to cultivate its potential to house the glory of God. The third chapter of Genesis tells us the bad news, the fall. Satan comes and deceives. Sin begins to deform. Suffering and death begin to destroy. But if you go to the end of the story, in the last chapter of Revelation, we learn about judgment in which Satan is doomed, sin is damned, and suffering and death are defeated forever. And the final two chapters of the Bible bring us back to what the first two chapters were trying to picture what God was doing. There is a new heaven and earth. There is no more darkness because Jesus is the light. All is holy, not just the seventh day. God and people are together again, "I will be your God and you will be my people." And we are a kingdom and priests and the whole universe becomes a place of worship where God's glory shines brightly.

Now, in between those two bookends is the whole rest of the Bible, the whole story, but centrally in the core if you were to write down right along where those two arrows cross, here's the story of Jesus in these words: Incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension. That scroll is that story and we are in the ascension part of the unfolding story of God.

Now, why does knowing all that help? What earthly good does that do? Do you ever get the sense that things are out of control? Do you ever get the sense that there is no plan? No rhyme or reason for all the brokenness and suffering that you and the rest of the world are experiencing? Do you ever just feel like saying, "Thanks but no thanks. I'm just going to live for my own pleasure even if it looks like Christian kind of stuff." We've got to remember Jesus is in eternal exaltation and is being worshiped as he is enthroned in heaven, working out his plan. There is a plan. He is in control no matter what it looks like, and to nurture that vision in our minds, that's what it means to set your mind on things above where Jesus is sitting at the right hand of God, because if you don't, you're going to go nuts or you're just going to live for yourself.

Secondly, what is Jesus subduing? His enemies. The second half of verse 1 says, God says, "I will make your enemies your footstool." Quickly, his enemies are Satan and sin. Satan and sin and both of those enemies have already been disarmed and defeated and Jesus is working out the final assault, the final crackdown of both of those enemies. We know that Satan is disarmed because Colossians 2:15 tells us that Jesus disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame by triumphing over them in the cross. We know that Satan is defeated because 1 John 3:8 says the reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil, and Hebrews 2 adds through death Jesus might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil. He is defeated. It's like when you chop off the head of a snake and it's still wiggling around. It can still do some damage but it's done. In a minute, we'll talk about when he's going to come and finish the job, but the real concern is the other enemy is sin.

Now, the sin of unbelievers Jesus is subduing, because Romans 1 says that the wrath of God is being revealed against all unrighteousness and wickedness, and the way he's doing that, Romans 1 says, is he's giving them over to it; letting it do its destroying work. So what we see is the unraveling of culture around us is, frankly, a lot of that is God just subduing sin by letting it destroy itself; let it run its course; giving people what they want. But for believers, sin is disarmed and defeated. Romans 6 says the sin is no longer your master, it no longer has dominion over you, it's been crucified with Christ, so consider yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. It's disarmed and it is being defeated by the power of the Spirit. Romans 8 he says by the Spirit put to death the misdeeds of the body. Put to death your sinful nature. The Spirit, Jesus is sending constantly his Spirit to us to enable us to continue to put to death the sin that still clings to us and wants to control us.

It's dead but it needs to be defeated and because of what Jesus has done on the cross and what he's doing in us by the power of the Spirit, he is subduing that enemy and the New Testament seems to think there's a lot more problem with the enemy within than the enemy without because the apostles seem to talk a whole lot more about us fighting sin by the power of the Spirit than fighting Satan. The enemy within is being subdued by Jesus and perhaps you've felt him doing that in you and in us, but he's doing it and he wants us to cooperate with his work.

Thirdly, Jesus is sending emissaries. An emissary is an "e" word that I had to find that means missionary. It means the same thing as missionary. It's a sent one but it's someone who's sent with the authority of the one sending them.

Look at verses 2 and 3, "The LORD sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter." From Zion. When you read the Psalms, Zion, of course, is the city of God, Jerusalem, but when we read it from our perspective, Revelation tells us that the city of God is the church, the bride of Christ. So when you read the Psalms, praying through the Psalms and it talks about Zion, think the church. "The LORD sends forth from his church his mighty scepter." Psalm 45:6 describes that scepter, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness." The way Jesus rules is by righteousness and he's sending forth his people, his emissaries of righteousness into the world to advance his kingdom, to spread his kingdom and his glory across the face of the earth as the Scripture says, like the waters cover the seas.

So here's what's happening when he's sending these emissaries, us. And he's doing it, by the way, in the midst of his enemies. Interesting, there's no line drawn. Enemies over there, emissaries over here. The emissaries are in the midst of the enemy. We are in the world but not of the world.

Jesus is advancing his kingdom and that is a kingdom of righteousness. In fact, Paul says in Romans 14:17 that kingdom is a kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. Jesus is advancing his righteousness, joy and peace through his people, the church, who are filled with the Spirit and clothed with Christ.

Look at verse 3, he says, "Your people," that's us, "will offer themselves freely on the day of your power, in holy garments; from the womb of the morning, the dew of your youth will be yours." What is this describing? It's describing God putting together an army who will offer themselves freely for the King, filled with his power, clothed with his armor and his righteousness, who will spread throughout all the earth like a refreshing dew, and they will come with the vigor of youth. These are resurrection people like Ezekiel 37 talked about in the valley of dry bones. This is a resurrection people who move into the world to give refreshment to people. This is describing what happened at Pentecost in Acts 2, the day of his power. That's Pentecost. We'll celebrate that in a few weeks. Jesus is saying, "I'm building my church. I'm sending out my church filled with my Holy Spirit to be refreshing dew in the earth because they are clothed with Christ." As Romans 13 tells us, "Put on Christ and make no provision for the flesh." John will be back in Colossians 3 next week and he'll be probably coming across the passage that says, "Put off the old self, put on the new self."

So we are God's people filled with the Spirit, putting on Christ, offering ourselves freely as his emissaries in the places he's put us so that we, the church, could be a refreshment of reconciliation and his revelation already says we are a kingdom of priests, and that brings us to verse 4, "The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, 'You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.'" Now, who is this dude? And I know you've always heard Mel-CHI-zedek, so have I, but I've got a friend who says Melchi-ZEDEK so much that I can't get it out of my head so I'm just going to say it that way.

Who is this dude? Read Hebrews 7 and it will tell you a little bit about him. He was the king of Salem, what's probably Jerusalem. Abraham came to him after a battle and Abraham offered tithes to Melchizedek. Melchizedek was the king of righteousness, that's what his name means. He was a king who was also a priest and none of the other kings of Israel, they did some priestly things but they were never both a king and a priest. So Jesus is this Melchizedek, in fact, all throughout Jewish history, this guy, Melchizedek, became his kind of type of the Messiah. So he is the Lion, the King, and the Lamb, the Priest. He is the Ruler and the Reconciler. He is the Redeemer and the ransom that redeems. He is the Savior and the sacrifice that saves. And we are to be like him. We are to both rule and reconcile wherever he puts us. So Jesus is busy building his church and sending us out to spread his righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit wherever we go.

Fourth. We move into what Jesus is doing but also has a little future conclusion to it: he's shattering evil. "The Lord is at your right hand; he will shatter kings on the day of his wrath. He will execute judgment among the nations, filling them with corpses; he will shatter chiefs over the wide earth." Psalm 2 is a great picture of this. God has set on Zion in the church, his King, his anointed One. The rulers and the kings of the earth mock him, push against him. No one wants to be ruled by Jesus and what does God do? He sits in the heavens and he laughs and he says, "You have a choice, you either bow and kiss the Son or I will shatter you. I will dash you to pieces like broken pottery." So you either let him subdue you as an enemy of his by his grace and the Gospel and you repent of your

sins and kiss the Son, embrace him as he is offered at the cross, or one day you will bow. It will not be a happy day.

Now, this part of the Psalm, as I was thinking about it, I really believe there's a little Jack Bower in all of us. We love, I know as hard as it is to watch his method, there is something in us that goes, "Yes!" Oh, we love to see evil vanquished. We love to see truth reign and justice rule. We love that and it's because we're made in the image of God. Our problem, like Jack, is that our sin nature likes to take that job upon ourselves when God says in Romans 12, "Vengeance is mine. I will repay. So don't you take vengeance on each other, I'll take care of that."

As we relate as the people of God, as these kingly priests, we're not to relate to unbelievers and take vengeance out on them. We're to leave that to God on the day when he will shatter people forever and, hopefully, they will submit to him before that. But for those who have submitted to Christ, we don't take vengeance out on them either because it's been taken out on Jesus. So that's why Paul says, "Give up the bitterness and the clamoring and the fighting and devouring because that vengeance is not yours." He will shatter evil either in Jesus or on the evil that has not submitted to Jesus.

Finally, what's he up to? He's securing eternity for us. He will, you know after all the battle is over, Jesus will drink from the brook by the way. He will refresh himself and rest and he will lift up his head. That's an Old Testament way of saying he's victorious. He can lift up his head above his enemies. He is securing his and our victorious rest for eternity. Part of that in John 14 is Jesus saying, "I'm going to prepare a place for you. I will come back and take you to my Father's house where we will enjoy victorious rest forever."

Then you've got to read Revelation 21 and 22 and see that brook is really the river of life flowing from under the throne of God, giving life to everything around it, and we will spend eternity in the new heaven and the new earth resting in the victory of Jesus with Jesus. That's what he's up to. That's what he's up to and he asks us to set our minds on that or else we'll be no earthly good and here's how I wrap my mind around that and we'll be done. You know the question WWJD, what would Jesus do? Not a bad question but it's not the first question to answer. There are three others. What did Jesus do? What is Jesus doing? That's what we talked about today, and we talked a little bit about the third question, what will Jesus do? Because those are the things that the Bible tells us clearly the answers to. Those are the truths upon which we are supposed to rest our lives. What did Jesus do? Incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection. That's the Gospel. What is Jesus doing? All that we've talked about this morning. Those are the things in which we place our faith and the New Testament says that faith engenders love, Galatians 5:6, the only thing that counts as faith expressing itself for love, but hope also engenders love and that's the third question, what will Jesus do? And when you place your faith in what Jesus will do in the future, that's called hope and hope also produces love in us. Love is the answer to the question what would Jesus do? He would love God and love others and, therefore, the church who are the physical embodiment of Jesus on the earth now, the head is in heaven, the body is on earth, what would Jesus do? He would love because

love is the fulfillment of the law. Those only come, love and being a church, a community of people who love God and love others, only happens when that community has rested in what Jesus did, is doing, and will do.

I want to urge you and encourage you, focus on the Gospel. Focus on these five things and to help you do that in the coming days, I've done two things, three. One, I put the Apostles' Creed in here because I wanted you to see, I don't know if I mentioned that, that the present tense verb in the Apostles' Creed is he is seated at the right hand of the Father. That's where we live right now. Then he goes on to talk about the church. But another resource I've given you on the very back is just a Bible study, a light Bible study where I've collected verses that have to do with each of the platforms I've just talked about. I want to urge you, take some time this week, read those verses, chew on them, think about them, memorize them, help yourselves, set your mind on the things that are above. And the last thing is it helps me to sing some of these things because it helps get it in my head. So above the Apostles' Creed I've given you a psalter, a singable version of Psalm 110. Psalm 110, the musical, okay?

So let's do this, we're going to sing this together, then we're going to take the offering, then we're going to sing again and we're out of here, alright? But you've got to, we've got to if we're going to be any earthly good as a church, as individuals, we've got to set our minds on these things above. Psalm 110 to the tune is "The church's one foundation." You have to sing loud because I've got no voice. Here we go.

"Sit by me at my right hand, the Lord says to my Lord,
Until I make your foot step on all who hate your word.
From in his church, the Savior rules all his enemies,
While those who know his favor, show forth the Lord to please.

Filled with the serious power in holy roads of love,
From early morning's hour, they serve their Lord above.
Christ, raise a priest forever, the King of righteousness,
And King of Peace, whoever his chosen one's will bless.

The Lord at your right hand, Lord, in wrath shall shatter kings,
When judgment by his strong word, he to the nations brings.
Then all his foes defeated, he takes his hard won rest,
In glorious triumph's edict, with us redeemed and blessed."

Oh, Lord Jesus, please help us. Please help us to keep our minds set on unseen things and what you're doing from your throne, what you're doing in heaven that makes a difference on earth for eternity. We need your help to do that. Help us, Lord God, to offer ourselves freely by the power of your Spirit, to be your kingdom emissaries and the offerings we bring now, that's just a symbolic token of the fact that we bring you our lives and offer them freely for the advancement of your kingdom to the glory of your name. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.