



Philippians 2: 9-11

New International Version of the Holy Bible

CHRIST'S EXALTATION

“Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 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

While we deplore the lack of church attendance and the fact that most of our churches won't be filled to capacity, nevertheless it's safe to say that over 2,500,000 will be in church this morning. That's quite a large number of people that assembles to praise the Lord Jesus Sunday after Sunday. Why have you come here this morning to join others in prayer and praise to Christ? The answer is in our text: **“God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name . . .”**

Philippians 2:9

Today's text begins where last Sunday's ended. Last Sunday's text spoke of Christ's humiliation - today's declares his exaltation. **“God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name . . .”** **Philippians 2:9** God promoted him, elevated him to a high position or office as Pharaoh once elevated Joseph when he made him ruler over Egypt. **“ . . . and gave him the name that is above every name . . .”** **Philippians 2:9** What is that name? Jesus had many names - Priest, Prophet, King, Son of Man, Counselor, and Mighty God.

And yet the name given him especially, through an angel sent by God, was Jesus. The angel said to Joseph before our Savior was born: “ . . . **you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.**” **Matthew 1:21** Jesus, as you know, means Savior.

That’s why the text continues: “ . . . **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 2:10-11**

When Pharaoh made Joseph ruler of Egypt, he drove him through the streets in a golden chariot drawn by white horses exhorting his people: **“Make way!” Genesis 41:43** Similarly, God made Jesus Savior and Lord of heaven and earth that at his name everybody should bow their knees before him and accept him for what he is. God exhorts people, not just in Egypt, but people everywhere: **“Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear.” Isaiah 45:23**

Jesus didn’t acquire the position or title automatically to become Jesus Christ the Lord - he had to go through what our Catechism calls his humiliation and his exaltation. He earned that position. Last Sunday our sermon addressed itself to Christ’s humiliation: *“conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried.”* Today we shall address ourselves to Christ’s exaltation: *“He descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.”* Last Sunday he went down the ladder all the way from Heaven to his death and burial. Today he will go up the ladder all the way from the grave to be crowned Savior and Lord in heaven. Let’s follow our Savior as he goes up the ladder in his exaltation.

THE FIVE STEPS OF CHRIST'S EXALTATION

1. Step one: HE DESCENDED INTO HELL. At first reading, this doesn't sound like a step up. It sounds like a step down until we read the Bible which explains the purpose of his descent into hell. Christ didn't descend to hell to suffer on Easter morning. Christ fulfilled all of his suffering when he cried out on Good Friday: **"It is finished!" John 19:30** St. Peter informs us that as soon as Christ came to life on Easter morning he went to hell to preach to those who were there. **"For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built." I Peter 3:18-19** St. Paul tells us he went to hell in order to proclaim his victory over the devil.

When Christ died on Calvary the devil laughed, for he thought he had triumphed. He isn't laughing anymore. When Christ delivered us from the devil's power through his death – he went directly to hell (*after coming back to life*) to tell the devil: *"You're done for. Your reign of terror is over!"* Like a conqueror in a war, Christ went directly to the capital of the one who was conquered and demanded an unconditional surrender. Christ's war with the devil was over and Christ went to tell the devil and all of those with him that he had taken over. Thus we read in I Peter: **"He (Christ) was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison . . ."** I Peter 3:18-19 **"And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross."** Colossians 2:15

2. Step two: THE THIRD DAY HE ROSE AGAIN FROM THE DEAD.

Good Friday it looked as though death had won the victory for Christ was dead and buried. Gloom covered the city and his followers hid themselves behind locked doors. Even on Easter afternoon when Jesus, disguised as a stranger, met two of his disciples on the way to Emmaus they muttered sadly: “. . . **but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel.**” **Luke 24:21**

The disciples had forgotten their Old Testament prophecies which clearly foretold that Christ's body would not see corruption. They must have doubted Christ's own words in which he warned the Pharisees: **“Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.”** **John 2:19**

He's risen! That's the message of Easter. The angels said: **“He has risen, just as he said.”** **Matthew 28:6** Mary Magdalene saw him; the women saw him; the disciples saw him; over 500 saw him and rejoiced. Even before St. Paul wrote it, they knew that Christ by his resurrection had abolished death and had won for them an eternal life in heaven.

Christ's resurrection was a big step on the ladder of his exaltation. St. Paul writes: **“And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost.”** **I Corinthians 15:14-18**

Praise the Lord for his resurrection! By his death Christ delivered us from sin. By Christ's descent into hell he crushed the devil's head. By Christ's resurrection, he conquered death and gave us the guarantee of a new and eternal life in heaven. Our Savior marches on!

3. Step Three: HE ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN. Jesus appeared to his disciples after Easter in order to comfort, teach, and exhort them for a period of 40 days. The 40th day after Easter was special. He led his disciples out of Jerusalem and up to the Mount of Olives in order to give his final message. He commissioned them to go and preach the Gospel to everyone and assured them of his presence and blessing: **“And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age.” Matthew 28:20** Then he lifted his hands in blessing, probably using the blessing which the church has used every since the days of Aaron: **“The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.” Numbers 6:24-27** While Jesus was speaking these words of blessing, he was gradually taken up into heaven. The disciples kept looking up, hoping for one more glimpse of their blessed Savior until a cloud came between them and they could see him no more.

Maybe the disciples didn't understand the full significance of the event at that moment but Jesus knew he was going home. His earthly career was over. He came from the Father, he returned to his Father. He came from heaven, he went back to heaven. The cycle was complete. Jesus was at home again. He that descended is the same who ascended.

What a glorious day for Christ! Have you ever gone down to the airport or the bus station when a victorious basketball or football team came home? When Christ came home, the Father and the Spirit were there to receive him with approving arms. When Christ came home the saints in heaven were waving their eternal banners while all the angels fluttered all around him singing hallelujahs and blowing their trumpets! If the angels sang: **“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rest.” Luke 2:14** when Savior was born to begin the battle for our redemption, who then can imagine how they sang when the

victory was won and he came back home? What a step in Christ's exaltation!

4. Step four: HE SITS AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD THE FATHER. Similar to when Joseph became the right-hand man for Pharaoh of Egypt, so Christ is now at the right hand of God and ruling over all. Even though Christ ascended into heaven he is still at work here on earth - working with us and for us. As Christ, God's Anointed, he still functions as our Prophet, Priest, and King.

As a Prophet, Christ is still preaching. Christ is not preaching in person as he did in Palestine, but through the Holy Bible and parents, relatives, teachers, and pastors who preach and teach the Bible.

Jesus as Priest is still praying for his people. St. John writes: **"But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense - Jesus Christ, the Righteous One."** **1 John 2:1** How comforting to know that whenever we sin Christ is right at the Father's side pleading: **"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."** **Luke 23:34**

Jesus is a King that rules the whole world. He is governing and protecting his church with special care. Christ promised his disciples that the gates of hell would never win against the church. The leaders among the Jews and Gentiles tried to destroy him, but they could not destroy him. The same is true of the Christian church.

Since our church is loyal to Christ and his Bible, we are bound to have our enemies. Christ said: **"If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first."** **John 15:18** In our country the danger to the church is not so much from kings and those in authority for we have the guarantee of religious liberty. Our enemies today are within the church. Clergy in high places boldly deny some of the basic teachings of the Christian faith,

including the inspiration and inerrancy of the Scripture itself. Even though St. Paul says the Scriptures are the foundation of our faith. All of scripture (*the Bible*) is given by the inspiration of God. Even though many passages say the same thing about the scriptures, some church leaders act as though the Holy Scriptures have become unholy and are of minor importance. Downgrading the Holy Scriptures and what they teach us about God, Christ, and the Christian way of life is the real enemy of the church today.

I know that some of you Christians have worried over this situation and I admit that I have had my moments, too. Really we need not fear for the church. Since Christ shed his blood for the church, now that he rules over all from heaven, isn't he also going to take care of the church according to his promise? If the gates of hell can't prevail against the church, surely a few false teachers can't destroy it. Our task is to keep on teaching and preaching the truth which makes men free and we must leave the rest to our Lord. Christ sits at the right hand of the Father and all is well.

5. Step five: HE SHALL COME TO JUDGE THE QUICK AND THE DEAD. The "*quick*" doesn't mean those who have fast life-styles. It means those who are alive. Today, you and I are the "*quick*," the living. When Christ returns for the final judgment, he will judge both the living and those who have already died. The apostle says: **"For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet a call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words."** I Thessalonians 4: 16-18

What a triumphant day this will be for our Savior as he takes the final step up the ladder of his exaltation. When he comes for the judgment he will not come as in Bethlehem – weak, poor, and lowly – but as the Mighty One in all his power and glory. While on earth Christ told us: **“They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.” Matthew 24:30-31** While here on earth people belied him, beat him, and despised him. Some still do – for two thirds of the people living in the world today still reject Christ. Through their lives and attitudes they say: *“He isn’t what he claimed to be. We don’t need him. He can’t help us. We don’t want his advice or his salvation.”* If Christ were living on earth today, the world would no doubt crucify him again. As then, so now, many people are offended at the patience, humility, and the meekness with which Christ operates. To many his mercy and forgiving spirit are obnoxious. They want a king with might and power, a show and pomp with earthy conquests.

Maybe they won’t have to wait much longer for the day might come sooner than they think. Christ will come like lightning to this earth and all the elements therein, including all automobiles, television sets, and houses will melt with fervent heat. There will be no more nations, bosses, presidents, or kings. There will be only one kingdom and one throne and Christ the Crucified and Ascended will sit upon it. Our text says: **“ . . . 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 2:10-11** Note that everybody – those in heaven, on earth, and under the earth – and every tongue will confess: *“Jesus is Lord.”* Yes, even the devil and those who rejected Christ while here on earth will, to their regret, have to confess

“Jesus is Lord.” The vanquished as well as the victors will confess: **“God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen”** 1 Timothy 6:15-16

The day of Christ’s return will be a great day for Christ. No more suffering, pleading, and waiting. From that day Christ will just rule and all in heaven will serve him without making any trouble or even wanting to make trouble. It will truly be heaven for Christ himself.

It can also be a great day for you. The entire purpose of Christ’s humiliation and exaltation was accomplished so that people might live in his kingdom in joy and blessedness forever. If you want to be in his kingdom, the doors are wide open. No, you don’t have to fill out a long application form. You don’t have to go and *“try out”* to see if you can make the team. There are no works to perform, no activities to get you in shape. You can come to Christ *“just as you are”*. The weak, the ugly, the strong; the big sinners, the little sinners – all are welcome.

Christ asks only that you put on the right uniform or the right dress. And what is the right dress? Jesus himself told the story: A man had made a large wedding feast and invited many. In his generosity he also provided a special garment for each of his guests. The banquet hall was filled with guests and the host of the banquet came to enjoy it with them. But to his amazement one of the guests didn’t put on the garment supplied him. He wore his own and we are not told why. Maybe he felt his own looked better or maybe he just didn’t want to bother. At any rate the host asked the servants to take that proud, self-righteous man and throw him out. All those who had put on the garment supplied by the host remained to enjoy the wedding.

So all who put on the wedding garment supplied by Christ will celebrate the eternal wedding which Christ prepared thorough his humiliation and exaltation. Christ's wedding garment consists of his holy life and the precious blood which he shed. Don't be too proud to put away the garment of your own righteousness for it is not good enough. When we stand next to Christ and compare it with his garment we will see how dirty it really is. The wedding garment is free for we can't earn it or buy it. Trusting in him who supplies it, we just put it on by believing in Christ and accepting him as our personal Savior and Lord. We who have put on his garment will praise the Lord. For the Lord descended into hell; he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven and sits on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; he also shall come to judge the living and the dead.