

Raised With Him

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[0 : 00] Good morning. My name is Matthew Capone, and I'm the pastor here at Giant Mountain Presbyterian Church, and it's my joy to bring God's Word to you today. A special welcome if you're new or visiting with us.

We're glad that you're here, and we're glad that you're here not because we are trying to fill seats, although it seems that we've done that this morning, but because we are following Jesus together as one community.

And as we follow Jesus together, we become convinced that there's no one so good that they don't need God's grace and no one so bad that they can't have it, which is why we come back week after week to hear what God has to say to us in His Word.

We're taking a break this morning from our series in the book of Daniel as part of our celebration for Easter, and instead we're turning to Ephesians chapter 2. Now, if you've been with us over the last several years, you know the last couple years on Easter we've been in the chapter, the book of 1 Corinthians chapter 15.

And we have been looking in that chapter primarily about what we gain from the resurrection in the future. So, for example, last year we talked about our future hope of the resurrection bodies that we will one day have.

[1 : 08] As we looked at the crisis of the coronavirus around us, we had hope knowing that God would remake and restore us one day. This morning, though, I want us to think primarily not about our future hope, but what it is that the resurrection gives us here right now, the present power that we have access to because Jesus has risen from the dead.

Hope changes our perspective. It does not always change our circumstances. Power, however, does. Power changes us right now. It changes things here and now.

And so it's with that question, what's the power that we have? How does it affect us here today, April 4th, 2021? As Christians living in this world, I'm going to invite you to turn with me to Ephesians chapter 2.

You can turn there in your worship guide. You can turn there on your phone, or you can turn there in your Bible. And as we come to this, we're going to be taking a special focus.

By the way, I'm not going to cover everything in verses 1 through 8. Our special focus is going to be on verses 5 and 6. And so as you turn there, remember that this is God's word. And God tells us that his word is more precious than gold, even the finest gold, and that it is sweeter than honey, even honey that comes straight from the honeycomb.

[2 : 30] And so it's for that reason that we read now Ephesians chapter 2, starting in verse 1. Verse 4.

Verse 5.

You have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing. It is the gift of God. I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's word.

Our Father in heaven, we thank you that your Son and our Savior, Jesus Christ, has risen from the dead. And we thank you that we can gather together this morning to celebrate that. We ask that you would use your word to speak to us this morning, that we would be able to see clearly Jesus Christ and his beauty and his glory and the power that he gives us, those who believe in him even now, from his resurrection as we live life in this world.

We thank you that we don't need to earn or deserve what we've asked you for, but instead we ask it in the mighty name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen. Amen. Those of you who know my story know that I was raised by two economists.

[4 : 31] My parents met and married in graduate school for economics, which means there were lots of lessons in my family growing up about money, lots of conversations about money.

And there was one time as I was growing up that we showed up. We were probably, I think, in elementary school at the time. My brothers and I, there's three of us, were very close in age. We showed up to the dinner table, and at each of our seats, there was a \$20 bill sitting next to the plate.

Now, we didn't know what this was about. I think my mom asked my dad, why are there \$20 bills next to our children's plates? My dad explained, this was one of his lessons about money, that he, in his work, had received a bonus.

And so he had decided each of his sons, each of his children, were also going to receive a bonus. He was going to give us a portion of what he had been given. He had gone out, he'd earned this for the family.

He was going to give each of his children 1% to teach us a lesson about life, about the world. One of the main lessons, of course, is that there's blessings for the whole family.

[5 : 38] As members of the family, we as sons took part in it. We received some of the blessing. Now, it should go without saying that my brothers and I had contributed in no way.

My father's an economist. We were not, in our elementary school years, econometricians, nor are we now. We did not measure or manage risk. We did not lead teams of mathematicians. We did not write journal articles about the housing market.

We had nothing to do with my dad's bonus. In fact, had he not had us, perhaps he would have had more time and he'd be able to do a better job. And so, receiving that was not based on anything we had done, but only and solely by virtue of our relationship with him.

As we come to this passage, it is important for us to understand spiritually the concept that my dad was teaching us in that moment. That we, Paul is telling us in this letter, are united to Christ, is what it's called.

We have union with Christ. We are connected with him, which means that if we're Christians, what's true of Jesus is true of us. Jesus Christ has earned something for us by his work in his death and resurrection.

[7 : 02] And so, because of and only because of our relationship with him, we also take part in that. That is the foundation here for everything that Paul is going to tell us.

By the way, it's important also to note that this was not an inheritance. My father was giving it to us there in that moment, right? He was still alive. We, as Christians, look forward to a great inheritance.

Remember, in 1 Peter 1, we talked about the fact that it can't be affected by anything in this world. And so, there is something in the future that we want and long for and look forward to. And there is also present power that God gives us now.

There is a present reality. There is a portion that we take part of that he has earned for us through his resurrection that we have access to now. We have an inheritance that we look forward to.

We also have a benefit that we experience now. What was true of my father was true for us. He did the work.

[8 : 07] We receive the benefit. What is true of Jesus is true of us. He does the work. We receive the benefit. And so, this morning, we are going to look specifically at two benefits that we receive from Christ because of his resurrection.

Things that we have access to right now that we do not have to look forward to. First of all, we're going to look at the benefit that we have of being raised with Christ. This is in verses 5 through 6.

And we're going to look at the benefit that we have with being seated with Christ. We have benefits because we've been raised with Christ. And we have benefits because we have been seated with Christ.

First, we've been raised with Christ. Paul begins to tell us about our condition before Jesus called us. Tells us in verses 1 through 3. By the way, the overarching theme of this entire passage that we've read is going from death to life.

The main verb here shows up in verse 5. He made us alive together with Christ. The point of this passage is that God made us alive.

[9 : 13] And so the introduction in verses 1 through 3 is explaining the type of death that we experienced before that. We were under the control of the world. We followed our appetites.

We were under the dominion of Satan. We were controlled by the world. We followed our appetites. We were ruled by Satan. In other words, we were dead.

This is often what people talk about as the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil. That's our condition. Unable, incapable of doing or wanting anything truly good.

And so it's with that background that we learn in verses 5 and 6 that we have been raised with Christ. We've been made alive with him. In other words, what happens to us is not simply a transaction.

Now, there is a transaction involved, right? Jesus pays the penalty for our sins. We receive the credit of his righteousness. So there is a transaction. It's just not only a transaction.

[10 : 16] It's also a transformation. It's not just a transaction. It's also a transformation. Being raised to life means we are actually and truly changed as people.

I want you to think about it in this way. You know that I was gone a couple weeks ago. I was in North Carolina at the beach with my parents and my grandmother. And we would have family dinner together every night.

We'd often have a salad. And there was one salad that we had that had a controversial ingredient in it. It had cilantro. And so we kept the cilantro in a separate container.

Why? Because there are two kinds of people in this world. There are people who love cilantro and people who hate cilantro.

And as fate would have it, my grandmother hates cilantro. And if you're someone who hates cilantro, you know that it has this soapy taste. Now, I can only describe, I actually love cilantro.

[11 : 12] I don't know. I mean, I can imagine what soap tastes like. And the problem, the great problem with people who don't love cilantro is this. You cannot learn to love cilantro.

It's genetic. People who don't love cilantro, there's something in their genes that causes it to taste soapy. And so they cannot stir up a love of cilantro within themselves.

They are constitutionally opposed to cilantro. They would have to modify their own genetic makeup to be able to change. Some tastes are developed, right?

You can develop a taste for coffee. You can develop a taste for certain kinds of beer. Kids, you can develop a taste for vegetables. Amen.

Some tastes are fixed. You cannot develop a taste for cilantro. Okay? You need a change in your constitution.

[12 : 13] You need a change at the genetic level. And so, my grandmother, I can welcome her and invite her to love cilantro as much as possible. I can encourage her and urge her.

And she is incapable. She is dead to cilantro. She needs a radical change from the outside.

What we find out here when we're told that God has raised us with Christ means that he has not just paid the penalty for our sins. He has changed us at a constitutional level.

He has radically changed our tastes. Things that we were incapable of tasting as sweet before are sweet to us now.

We have new and real life. God has changed our hearts. Something that we could not change ourselves. God makes us able to love what is good.

[13 : 12] He makes us able to love and choose what is right for the right reasons. That is what it means to be raised with Christ. We are given life.

We have that power because of Jesus' resurrection, not just in the future, but now. That is part of the benefit that we receive from Christ.

God has transformed you and he is transforming you into the image of his son. That is the power of resurrection at work.

Paul tells us in the previous chapter, in Ephesians chapter 1, that the power that raised Christ from the dead is the same power that is at work in us. We have resurrection power now.

You might think to yourself, cilantro is gross, right? Why would anyone eat that? The same is true for many of us before we became Christians. What those people do sounds terrible.

[14 : 14] Why would you do that? Why would you live in that way? Why would you embrace those things? And some of you have had the experience of becoming Christians and you realize, oh, now what used to be bitter for me now tastes sweet.

God has not just saved me, he has changed me. He has raised me with Christ. And so as Christians, we have new tastes.

If you're not a Christian, maybe you're still confused. Maybe you still wonder why it is that Christians do the things that they do and love the things that they love. And the simple answer is this.

We've been raised with Christ. There is a new power at work in our lives. We have been changed constitutionally at our very core. We have a new heart.

And so what it means for us is this. That special power is at work for us who believe even now. As you are hurt by friends and family and coworkers, you have the ability to reconcile rather than choosing bitterness and resentment.

[15 : 20] Why? Because you have a new taste and a new power. Some of us in this room have trouble getting along. We have very different personalities.

And we have chosen to walk together in this community, bearing with one another in love. Why? Because we have new tastes and a new power. Some of us are willing to lose money rather than to lose our integrity.

Why? Because we have new tastes and a new power. We have been raised with Christ. Some of us are willing to admit we were wrong as painful as it is because we have a new taste and a new ability.

Some of us are willing to choose to overlook an offense rather than to keep a tally list of wrongs and hurts because we have a new taste and a new ability. Some of us are willing to spend money on others and for the community, not just our own pleasures as spenders or on our security as savers because we have a new taste and a new power.

We have been raised with Christ. Some of us, this one's a big one today, some of us are willing to keep the commitments we make. We keep the promises we make.

[16 : 36] The psalmist says this in Psalm 15 verse 4, The righteous man swears to his own hurt and does not change. He keeps his promise because he has new tastes and a new ability. We're willing to enter into the power of community and confess our need as we journey away from all sorts of addictions because we have new tastes and a new ability.

Today, we have that power right now. As we gather together this morning and this afternoon, as families and communities, we celebrate freedom from bondage.

Christian, you have been raised with Christ. And you experience that right now.

Now, it's not just that we have a new power.

There's also a special presence at work. We're told that we've not just been raised with Christ, but we're also seated with him. And so now we get to talk about a very confusing verse. Verse 5, we're told that he seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

[17 : 57] Now, this strikes us as strange because you're not seated right now in the heavenly places. You're actually seated on a church chair in Colorado Springs. And so what does it mean that we're seated with Christ in the heavenly places?

Well, first we have to understand what the heavenly places are. And one man explains it this way. The heavenly places is the place where God especially manifests his presence and his glory.

The place in which the Lord Jesus Christ in his glorified body now dwells. In other words, Jesus is still a man. He still has a body. Where Jesus in his physical body is, wherever that is, that's the heavenly places.

And in that place, there's a special presence and power of God. Can we talk about heaven? And that's part of the concept that we're talking about. The same man says this, the place in which the glory and presence of God are manifested in this marvelous and wonderful manner.

So we know what the heavenlies are. The heavenlies, the heavenly places where we're seated, that's wherever Jesus is seated. Do you know where Jesus' physical body is right now? Well, then you know where the heavenly places are.

[19 : 08] Okay, we don't know exactly where that is. We know physically we're not seated with Jesus. Jesus in his physical body is not right here sitting next to you.

Unfinished. So we experience in part what we will one day experience in full. And as you think about what it means to be seated with Christ, I want you to just think of one simple principle, and it's this.

Location matters. Location matters. This is what any real estate agent would tell you. So a couple summers ago, before COVID, summer of 2019, I had a zoo membership.

And so that meant I had access to evenings at the zoo, which, you know, during the summer, you're able to go after hours, only if you're a member, and experience the zoo at night. And so when I was there at night, I was there with a friend, and we were there at the right time for the lion feeding.

If you're familiar with the lion feeding, you know they have these big hunks of meat that they wrap up in some kind of parchment paper or butcher paper, and they have these zookeepers who throw these huge bags of meat where the lions are.

[20 : 42] You watch the lions run in, and they devour it, you know, and, like, they don't even chew. You just kind of watch the meat go in their mouth and, like, through their necks. And you think, or at least I would think, well, I wonder what would happen to me if I fell into the lions area.

It probably would not go well. However, here's the good news. The lions, if you're familiar with the zoo, are down in the African Rift Valley. Where was I? I was hanging out with the elephants and the meerkats.

Which means I was up high. One might even say I was in the heavenly places. Okay? I was looking down on the lions from, not the African Rift Valley, I was in Encounter Africa.

That's what that section of the zoo is called. Are the lions dangerous? Yes, the lions are dangerous. They're very dangerous.

Do I need to fear them? Why do I not need to fear them? Because location matters. Location matters a lot.

[21 : 52] Okay, I was up high in Encounter Africa. Now, even if I was down below, there would be glass between me and the lions. I would be safe, right? Am I in the zoo? Yes. Yes. Yes. And I'm in a different domain and sphere.

The lions are present there with me now, but I belong to a different world. There is a limit to who and what can touch me. These lions cannot separate me from my life.

They're there. We're both in the zoo together. And I belong to a different sphere. My location is different than the location of the lions.

Brothers and sisters, what's true physically in that illustration is true of us spiritually right now. Location matters. Ephesians chapter 1 talks about Jesus being seated. And when it says he's seated, it talks about the fact that he has authority over all dominion and powers.

Are you in this world? Yes. Is this world a dangerous place filled with evil and its powers? Yes. Do you need to be afraid? No.

[23 : 01] Why? Because location matters. You have been seated with Christ. In other words, there are incredible, powerful, evil forces in this world, and they are restrained.

There is a limit to who and what can touch you. Those forces cannot separate you from your life in Christ because you have been seated with him in the heavenly places.

You are seated right now. And so there's a limit and a control on how much evil can touch you.

Now, when I'm at the zoo, I trust not in myself, right, even if I'm down in the African Rift Valley. I trust in the power of the glass. We trust not in our own power as we look out at the forces of evil in this world.

We trust in the power of our mighty God. And we know that he is in a safe place. So it is with you, Christian.

[24 : 15] You have safety now. There are many evil and terrible things in this world. They cannot separate you from God. And they cannot do it because you've been raised with him and you've been seated with him.

James chapter 4, verse 7 says this, Submit yourselves, therefore, to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Now, that's a pretty amazing statement, right? If I got thrown into the lion's den, do you think that if I resisted them, they would flee from me?

No. But that's true of the devil. If I resist him, if you resist him, he'll flee from you. Because you are seated in the heavenly places.

One pastor says this, speaking of the devil in this verse, Christian, Satan can shout at you and he can entice you.

He cannot touch you. And he cannot touch you because you've been raised with Christ and you're seated with him in the heavenly places. And that is true because of Jesus' resurrection. There are real evil spiritual forces in this world.

[25 : 39] They cannot conquer you and you do not need to fear for your life. You are not removed from this world. But there are limits and boundaries to the scope of evil. Because Jesus has risen from the dead.

We know whatever forces we see, they cannot destroy our souls. We are safe. And we're safe because we're seated with Christ.

And so as you celebrate Easter today, now and later today, as you eat and drink and have conversation with those you love, as you do those things, you are at the same time seated with Christ in the heavenly places.

That is true of you, not just in the future, but now. As you live in an evil world, you can sleep tonight because you know that Jesus is seated on his throne and you are seated with him.

You've been raised with him. You're seated with him in the heavenly places. Jesus gives that to you now through his resurrection power.

[26 : 47] You have that access now as we wait for many things to be full in the future. Now you may have noticed earlier in my story about my father giving us each \$20, that there were only \$20 at three plates because my father only had three sons.

When it came to my father's bonus, there were only two kinds of people in the world. There were the true sons of Charles A. Capone Jr. and those who were not the true sons.

The same is true of this passage. There are only two statuses, only two kinds of people that we're told about. There are, verse 3, the children of wrath, and then what Paul refers to as us, those who have been raised.

There are either those who are dead. Remember, those who are dead are controlled by the world. They follow their appetites and they're ruled by the devil. Or there are those who are alive, those who've been raised by Christ and are seated with him.

There is no third option. As we discussed in our confession of faith, there is a coming day of judgment. God is going to come and he's going to make clear who fits into which category.

[28 : 10] Who are the sons of wrath and who are the true sons and daughters. Hell is a real place. People are going there. That is where the sons of wrath are going.

Heaven is a real place. People are going there. That is where the people who have been raised with Christ and seated with him will be one day. And so the question is simple for us.

Are you dead or are you alive? Are you dead or are you alive? If you have not been raised with Christ and seated with him, you are dead.

You are dead now. You are incapable of doing what's right and loving what's right. In the same way that my grandmother is incapable of loving cilantro, you'll be dead in the future as well.

You will face God's eternal wrath and his judgment unending in fire. And so the call is for everyone to determine whether they are people of life or death.

[29 : 07] The call is for you. If you are not someone who has faith and trust in Jesus Christ, who believes that you have been raised with him because you have repented of your sins and you have accepted his offer of salvation, then the time to make that decision is now.

The time to repent and turn from your sins is now. You are either dead or alive. There's no sort of dead. There's no sort of alive in the Christian life.

And so if that is not you, if you are not alive, but you know that you are dead, the challenge to repent is now. You can talk to me about this afterwards. You can talk to our elders. You can talk to people who are sitting next to you.

There are many people around here. Watch who takes communion. Those who take communion are saying, I was dead and now I'm alive. I have no hope except being raised with Christ and seated in the heavenly places.

And so resurrection matters for you now, Christian, and it matters for all of us in the future. These things that Paul tells us about are actually answers to something that Jesus himself, our Lord, prayed for before he died.

[30 : 20] And he prayed for them in John chapter 17, verses 14 through 19. Jesus says this. He's praying to his father. I have given them your word and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. Remember, we are in this world, but we belong to a different domain, a different realm, a different sphere.

We're not removed from the world. We're protected from the evil one because we're seated with him in the heavenly places. Verse 16, they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

Verse 17, sanctify them in the truth. Your word is truth. In other words, we're being raised. We're changed. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.

And for their sake, I consecrate myself that they also may be sanctified in truth. Brothers and sisters, we have present tense benefits that we experience now because Jesus has risen from the dead.

[31 : 29] We have been raised with Christ. We have a new power. And so he has broken the power of evil inside of us. We have also been seated with Christ.

And so we are safe from the evil outside of us. And we have both of these things now because we belong to Christ and he belongs to us.

By virtue of our union, what he has earned, he gives to us as our blessings. And he does it because of his son and our savior, our Lord Jesus Christ, who is risen from the dead.

Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, we thank you that we enjoy the benefits of being your sons and daughters now. And we ask that you would encourage us with that today, that we would be able to celebrate the new power that you've given us.

And we would take courage and confidence from the protection that you have for us. We ask these things, not having earned them or deserved them, but we ask them in the mighty name of your son, who has risen from the dead, Jesus Christ.

[32 : 34] Amen.