

Sermon: Ascension Day

Text: 1 Peter 3:21,22: “The Baptism saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand – with angels, authorities and power in submission to him”.

Theme: Jesus sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty

Goal: The ascended Jesus is active taking care of His Holy Church.

Dear Friends,

Introduction: When we confess the second article of the Apostles’ Creed, we say: (I believe) *in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and **sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty**. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.* Have you ever realized that this brief summary of Jesus humiliation and exaltation has eight affirmations about the past, one about the future, and only one about the present? *He sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty*. This is our comfort for our present days. Our faith is not only based on what happened in the past; not only in what will happen in the future; but our faith is also based on the living and ascended Christ *seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty!*

From there He sent the Holy Spirit on Pentecost Day to always be with us! From there He has His eyes open upon His church and looks after His believers, taking care of each of us! From there He

will once come back, so that where He is, we shall be as well! (John 14:3).

## I – Jesus, the Prophet

Jesus is not just resting from all His labour *seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty*. He is active in His Office as a Prophet, blessing the preaching of His Word through His messengers. He is accomplishing His promise to spread the Gospel all around the world, and each missionary effort to reach the unreached has His blessing. Missionaries and supporters of missionaries must rely on that assurance and on that vision of Christ, *seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty*, to go forward in their mission, never giving up. When we are baptized into Christ's death and resurrection, we are baptized into His Kingdom, and this is present tense! "I am with you always!" (Matthew 28:20).

## II – Jesus, the Priest

Jesus is active in His Office as a Priest, *seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty* and interceding for us before God. The Apostle Paul assures us: "Jesus Christ, who died - more than that, who was raised to life – is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us" (Romans 8:34). And the Apostle John wrote: "If anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defence – Jesus Christ, the Righteous One" (1 John 2:1). The sacrifice on the cross was done for my and for your sins. He pleads before God: "I do not pray for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word" (John 17:20). This is me! This is you! Jesus is begging for me, and for you. Someone portrayed this scene: *Jesus seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; God becomes*

*angry with me because of my sins and wants to punish me; Jesus reclines His head on the Father's lap and says: Daddy (Abba Father), he is my friend; remember, I already paid for his sins; he trusts in me; forgive him...* This is the missionary task of the church: to proclaim to all that we have a gracious Saviour *seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty!*

### III – Jesus, the King

Jesus is active in His Office as a King, *seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty* and ruling over the world and specifically over His church – The Kingdom of Grace. The Psalm for today says: “Clap your hands, all you nations; shout to God with cries of joy. How awesome is the Lord Most High, the great King over all the earth!” (Psalm 47:1,2). And the Epistle assures: “God raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms... And God places all things under his feet and appointed him to be the head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way (Ephesians 1:20-23). The Book of Revelation has excellent portrayals of Jesus the King being adored by angels and archangels, and by all the saints, *seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty*. His Kingdom will never come to an end. And we are citizens of His Kingdom, living under His protection and care. His Kingdom doesn't have boundaries and there is no limit to accept the refugees who flee from the slavery of the mighty (but not Almighty) foe. Jesus invites them through the missionary efforts of the Holy Christian Church to come to His Kingdom and to take refuge under His shelter. He has living water and living bread to give to all. This is present tense!

Conclusion: We are living in the Millennium, - the time of grace between Jesus ascension and His second coming, while He is *seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty*. And this time of grace is summarised and this simple sentence of the Apostles' Creed that says: *(Jesus)sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty!*

How many times have we said these words only with our lips and not with our hearts? Make a break and think a little bit what this means for your life and for the life of people living around you as you are a living witness of Jesus in this world.

As we are celebrating Ascension and shortly also Pentecost, remember why Jesus ascended into heaven and what He is doing there *seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty*.

Remember also that the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed speaks about the work the Holy Spirit is doing just now with the blessing of the One who is *seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty*: He gathers the Holy Christian Church into the fellowship of the believers, and in this church He forgives our sins through the Word and the Sacraments, sharing the benefits Jesus conquered by His death and resurrection with all. We have this opportunity today again, to enter into fellowship with our Prophet, Priest and King when we come to His Holy Table. This is present tense! He is among us and gives Himself to us.

Jesus is still at mission, *seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty*. Believe it and live in this assurance. Amen.

Pastor Carlos Walter Winterle, Cape Town, 25 May 2017 (Adapted from an article written by CWW to Missionsblatt, LKM).