

“Up in the air”

A sermon by the Rev. Frances Savill

Sunday May 16, 2021

Ephesians 1:15-23

Acts 1:1-11

In the midst of the pandemic, in the midst of this time of chaos in our world, there are days I get discouraged.

Where do you put your hope and trust as you hear the news?

Where do you turn for the answers, and for help and hope?

Science has some answers – God has given us knowledge and a degree of wisdom.

We learn, and work to understand the world God has created.

Vaccines give us some hope, I’ve had my first shot and will have my second soon.

Today is ascension Sunday – and we hear the words about Jesus being raised up and taken up into heaven.

I have to confess that I would be happier if Jesus was walking around with us in bodily form.

I'd like him to drop in and appear to us as he did in those 40 days after the resurrection. I think if I had been one of those disciples who had seen Jesus lifted up into the sky, I would have stood there for a long time, hoping he was going to come back, staring up in the sky.

But the assurance and promise is that this is better.

Jesus is our ascended Lord, and Paul says of Jesus:

“God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, 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 age to come. And God has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church.”

God has put his power to work in Jesus when he raised him from the dead, and he has put all things under his feet.

Though I don't always see it, Jesus is on the throne and he is accomplishing his plan.

But this passage contains much more than just a promise that Jesus is above all watching us and watching over all things.

For the power that raised Jesus from the dead, that made him the name above every name, is the power that is at work in the church, and in us as believers.

The world sees the church on the periphery.

The world sees us on the sidelines of what is happening, or it doesn't see us at all.

But the truth we read from Scripture is that we are at the centre of what is happening. Because Jesus is at the centre of all things and is the one who is truly over all things, we as the church, are part of that centre.

What is truly important, what is truly lasting, what is at the centre of life, is what we're about as the church.

Do any of you find yourselves a little weary by Sunday morning?

Hear Paul's prayer for believers;

"I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe."

Paul's prayer for us is to have wisdom and discernment, it has to do with us knowing God's will and doing it.

God's power for us, "the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe" has to do with God's power to carry out God's will in and through us.

God's power is not to carry out our will, but that God's will would be done.

The power that raised Jesus from the dead is at work in us to accomplish God's will on earth as in heaven.

When I was living in BC a church up the road from me when on a mission trip to Svay Pak in Cambodia.

The church had bought a building that had been used as a brothel.

Sex trade slaves include children 5 & 6 years of age.

There was a room in this brothel designated as "the virgin room."

Countless lives were destroyed in that building.

The church bought the building, renovated it, painted it, and turned it into a daycare and worship centre to bring healing to families and young lives instead of destroying them.

Young women and men who were sold to the sex trade as children have been rescued.

Secular psychiatrists said there was no hope for a healed life for these teens.

The church and Ratanak didn't give up.

One young woman now owns her own business- a bakery and she caters to diplomats and politicians.

Healing is slow and difficult, but the power that raised Jesus from death to life is at work redeeming, blessing, bringing new life.

The mob in Cambodia controls much of the drug and sex trade.

They were building a large hotel so that sex tourists wouldn't have to leave the comfort of the building to destroy the lives of these children.

Part way through construction they sold their largest building to Ratanak at a loss.

A structure that was being built with the purpose of destroying lives, is now if is a centre for health, education, and ministry to save lives.

God's power is unlimited in saving lives that are otherwise beyond hope.

God's power is unlimited to change hearts, and transform lives, and accomplish God's work on earth, so that it may be as it is in heaven.

It can be easy sometimes to miss the power of God that is at work in us, in our world, in our community.

Paul said of himself;

"If you only look at us, you might well miss the brightness. We carry this precious Message around in the unadorned clay pots of our ordinary lives. That is to prevent anyone from confusing God's incomparable power with us. As it is, there's not much chance of that. You know for yourselves that we're not much to look at. We've been surrounded and battered by troubles, but we're not demoralized; we're not sure what to do, but we know that God knows what to do."

God's power is revealed in hospital rooms where patients find abundant life even in the midst of sickness and death, in the lives of the

addicted who find God's strength for them one day at a time, in the lives of disciples who have the courage to step out of the boat in faith, in the church that learns to be the body of Christ in the community and world.

The power is God's, given to his Son, Jesus our Lord, who is at the centre of all things, who is the power in charge of running the universe, everything from galaxies to governments, no name and power exempt from his rule. He has the final word on everything.

It is his power that is overall the earth, and at work in us and in the church to accomplish God's will. Thanks be to God.

Prayer: Father of glory, I pray you will us a spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that, with the eyes of our heart enlightened, we might know what is the hope to which you have called us, what is the riches of your glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of your power for us who believe. Amen.