

“A Prayer for us”
By Rev. Frances Savill
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Readings:

Ephesians 1:15-23

Acts 1:1-11

Video – <https://youtu.be/Tw-bBfBDpE0>

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

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.

But part of what Luke is trying to convey is that Jesus is very close.

We often think of earth and the heavens as being far apart, but in the Biblical understanding they overlap.

And now, Jesus is ruler over all, bringing the heavens – God’s rule to us, and bringing us and all the concerns of earth, up to God through Jesus.

We are lifted up, as Jesus was lifted up, not meaning floating in the sky, but meaning exalted, and reigning.

And the assurance and promise is that this is better.

Jesus is our ascended Lord, but still with us, still helping us, still lifting us up to God.

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 this named, not only is 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, through us, in us, in our streets and in our neighborhoods, in our history, in this day.

Jesus' throne is in the midst of us, His kingdom is here, and he is inviting us to reign and rule alongside of him.

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.

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.

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 us, who are still “clay pots”, we are not much to look at.

God’s incomparable power is at work in us who are battered with troubles, who know we still need to look to God day by day for help in every situation.

God’s power is revealed in hospital rooms – right here in North Bay, where our friends and family find abundant life even in the midst of sickness and death. Where God shows up and whether on earth or in heaven, we know healing is given, and the love of Jesus comes close.

God's power is revealed in the lives of the addicted who find God's strength one day at a time, by attending meetings and finding healing and help here at Calvin. And finding healing for themselves, they share the love of God with others.

God's power is revealed as we help people in our community find work, find a place to live, as we help with household items, or with a move, or with financial assistance.

God knows we can't do it all, but I am amazed at the power of God at work in this congregation, at the help that has been given, by the prayers answered, and the love of God shown through all of you.

God's power is 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, as **we** are learning together.

In the Bible, we have a record of the words Jesus spoke.

"Jesus spoke his words personally to us. He performed God's works of healing and compassion, forgiveness and salvation, love and sacrifice among us, men and women with personal names, with personal histories.

The story of Jesus gives us access to scores of these incidents and words, specific with places and times and names.

We don't have generic truths, we have Jesus at work in one life, and speaking words to another person.

“Jesus keeps our feet on the ground, attentive to children, in conversation with ordinary people, sharing meals with friends and strangers, listening to the wind, observing the wildflowers, touching the sick and wounded, praying simply and unselfconsciously. Jesus insists that we deal with God right here and now, in the place we find ourselves and with the people we are with. Jesus is God here and now.” (Peterson Christ plays in ten thousand places p. 46)

And the Holy Spirit continues to work here, right now, in us, in our church, personally, in community.

And so we care for one person, and pray for another person.

We help out one family, and collect Toilet Paper that will remind people all over North Bay that other people care, and God cares.

We see the impossible become possible in our midst; friends find jobs, loads are shared, food is given and received.

Every day we bless and support, and encourage, because Jesus empowers us, because God is at work in us, the kingdom of God is amongst us, and we are priests all of us.

When I see you, the work of Calvin church, I see the kingdom of God amongst us.

When I see you, your prayers, your help, your faith, your lives, I see the reign of Jesus our Lord, being established in this place.

And so I continue to pray the words that the Apostle Paul prayed for us:

Prayer: Father of glory, I pray you will give 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, so that we might continue to grow as priests together serving Jesus our Lord. Amen.