

THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST - May 16 & 17, 2007
St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church – Watertown, WI

HE HAS BEEN EXALTED Philippians 2:9-11

Whenever the leadership of a nation changes we expect that things will happen. When a new Congress was elected last fall and a shift in rule and leadership took over, the American public expected that there would be some changes in the way things were going. When a new president takes over a country, people are looking for changes, they are looking for their new leader to initiate some of the programs and fulfill some of the promises that he made during his campaign.

Today we are celebrating a very important event in the life of Jesus Christ. We are celebrating his coronation, his inauguration as the exalted ruler and leader of the universe. This is an event that is overlooked by the world and sad to say even many Christians no longer take note of the coronation of our Savior as King and Lord of all. The world has taken the birth of our Savior and made it into a frenzy of buying and giving. They have taken his resurrection from the dead and turned that into a right of spring and new life. But they have not been able to do much with his exaltation into glory. When new kings or queens are crowned as rulers of a nation or a new president is inaugurated there are news reports and then the media follows the rule of the new leader marking special events and programs that are initiated. But Jesus' coronation took place one thousand nine hundred and seventy four years ago and there has been no change in ruler since then. Our Savior still rules and guides the affairs of our world and our lives. Just as the world does not note this fact so we as Christians are often prone to forget this truth also. That is why it is good to celebrate the anniversary of our Savior's crowning as the Lord and King of all. As we consider the words penned by the Apostle Paul we will consider **HE HAS BEEN EXALTED**. Paul reminds us that **I) Jesus Has a Name Above All Names** and **II) Every One Will Acknowledge and Confess Him as Lord**.

JESUS HAS A NAME ABOVE ALL NAMES

What's in a name? How many of you know the name of the 15th president of the United States of America? How many of you know who was ruling Great Britain in 1773? Most of us are not great when it comes to names especially names of past rulers and leaders of nations. But now when you mention the name Jesus is that a name which is unknown to you? Most likely not. Almost everyone has heard the name of Jesus. As Paul wrote, "Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name," (v. 9) Jesus' name is known. His name has not been forgotten. We may have forgotten the names of past leaders, king, queens and presidents of our own nation and other world powers. But Jesus' name still lives on. Why? Because he has been exalted. He has been crowned with all power and authority. He came to this earth originally to be our Prophet, High Priest and King. He fulfilled the duties of those offices while he was on the earth and he is still carrying out those offices as our exalted Lord to this very day in 2007.

In the Old Testament a prophet had the responsibility and duty to proclaim the Word of God to God's people. When Jesus came that is what he did. He proclaimed the truth to the people of his day. As the writer to the Hebrews notes, "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, who he has appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe." (Hebrews 1:1-2) When Jesus ascended into heaven and was crowned with all power and authority, he did not stop proclaiming the Word of God. Listen to what he told his disciples and us on the day of his ascension, "All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:18b-20a) We are his witnesses. God has given us pastors and teachers to publicly proclaim and speak his Word to us. He has also told each and every one of us to spread that word in the entire world. As our Savior and Lord has said, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation." (Mark 16:15) Our exalted prophet is still seeing to it that God's

Word is being preached, proclaimed and taught to this very day one thousand nine hundred and seventy five years after his being crowned as Lord of all.

Another office that Jesus was appointed to was High Priest. In the Old Testament the High Priests would offer sacrifices for the sins of the people and also intercede for their people before the throne of God. As our High Priest while on this earth Jesus gave the best and last sacrifice. He offered himself on the altar of the cross as a payment for the sins of all people. No longer do sacrifices need to be offered to God for any sins. It was over and done with when our Savior died. However as our exalted High Priest Jesus is still functioning. He is still interceding for each of us daily before God's throne. As the Apostle John wrote, "But if anybody does sin, we have someone who speaks to the Father in our defense – Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world." (1 John 2:1-2) Isn't it comforting to know that our High Priest is daily pleading our case before the Father and daily he is winning for us the verdict, "not guilty"?

Jesus had been anointed to one other office. He was appointed as King. As our King on this earth he fought our battles for us. He defeated our enemies of sin, death and Satan. Those enemies have lost their power and control over us. As our exalted King Jesus is now controlling all the events of this world and he is causing them to work for the good of his Christian Church. He is causing all things that happen in your life and mine personally to work for our eternal good.

Not only is Jesus in control of the world and guiding the events and happenings as he prepares the world for his final return for judgment, Jesus is also ruling in heaven. He rules over the saints and angels in glory. Our King Jesus also rules in your heart and mine. He rules through his Word in the hearts of all who confess him as their Savior and Lord.

What has been said about Jesus, can it be said about any other ruler or leader who has ever ruled on this earth? Absolutely not. That is why the name of Jesus is above all names.

EVERY ONE WILL ACKNOWLEDGE AND CONFESS HIM AS LORD

Since Jesus has been exalted Paul now says, "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." (Vv. 10-11)

Even though Jesus is the exalted ruler of the universe, is every knee bowing and every tongue confessing Jesus as Lord? Not right now. There are many who reject Jesus. There are many who throw Jesus' name around in cursing and swearing. There are many who live as if Jesus is powerless and doesn't even exist. But in spite of how people may treat the name of Jesus and react to his Word that does not negate the fact that Jesus really is ruling and controlling all things. It also does not nullify what Paul says will happen.

There is a day when every knee in heaven, on earth and under the earth will bow and every tongue will acknowledge that Jesus is the Lord and Ruler of all. That is the Last Day. On Judgment Day even the damned and the demons will finally acknowledge that Jesus is the King. But this will be to their own eternal judgment because they rejected him as their Savior and Lord. All believers will also bow and confess him as their Savior and Lord and experience the joy and peace of the eternal kingdom which he has prepared for us in heaven.

At times when it appears to us that evil seems to be winning and the world is becoming more wicked and corrupt remember the promises and words of Jesus. "Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved." (Matthew 24:12-13). Our King Jesus is enthroned in glory with all power and authority. He is in control and he knows what he is doing. We may not always know nor understand. But we believe and trust his promises. We rest securely in his loving hands and in the end every one will finally acknowledge that he is the exalted ruler of all. Amen.