

Ephesians 1:19-23

Jesus is supreme and the church is meant to show the world.

This last week we saw the completion of a major, long-awaited, project at our house. And along with it, providential, a number of other projects got done at the same time. The honey-do list is super short now!

All this completion had me reminiscing about the massive renovation we did a couple of years ago. (My dad is here and will need trauma counseling since I am bringing up these memories! I am gracious as a pastor, a taskmaster when it comes to home projects!)

Old house, with 50-year-old electric wiring. It was also really hot so we plugged in an air conditioning unit, which needed a lot of electricity. But we plugged it into an old outlet and as it pulled power, it didn't just trip a breaker or blow a fuse... it blew out the whole wire. blowing not a breaker but the line! It couldn't handle the power needed.

So we updated the connections, put in some new wires, and are all set now.

But as I was getting nostalgic, I couldn't help but see a connection to the church in our day. Many have a power problem, and we are prone to it... trying to pull power from old lines, or more often, missing the power we are meant for and seeking other kinds. Our idolatry convincing us our way is better than God's.

Closing out Ephesians 1 we have a remedy, the way things are supposed to be. The church seeing, having a vision for the gloriousness of Christ and what that means for those that claim to be his.

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Paul is praying that we would have knowledge of God given by the Spirit, along with a vision for the riches of his grace, for how he sees us, and to recognize his power toward us.

“He that hath learned what God is, will have no misgiving about His promises, and disbelief about what hath been already brought to pass.” John Chrysostom

All according to the working of his great might.

Two movements from the text for us this morning. Christ is supreme, and the Church shows the world.

Christ is Supreme

The greatness of God’s power worked in Christ in two ways, resurrection power and ascension power.

“The stupendous power Paul is describing can be glimpsed in the nuances of the synonyms he used: 1) “[P]ower.” Dunamis is the word we get dynamite from and is used over 100 times in the New Testament. It indicates raw power or strength. 2) “Working.” Energeia, from which we derive our word energy, means “inworking” and suggests the inward propulsion of power. 3) “Great” (kratos) means “ability to conquer,” as when Caesar conquered Cleopatra. Autocrat comes from this word. 4) “Might” (ischus) refers to physical force.² These graphic synonyms in the Pauline bouquet depict the awesome extent of God’s power.”

We need the Spirit to enliven our hearts to see this creative power of God - no one else can bring life from death.

Resurrection power that delivers us, gives us faith.

“that through His power we have believed that He hath raised Christ. For to persuade souls, is a thing far more miraculous than to raise a dead body.” John Chrysostom,

Power that also sets Jesus above everything.

This language sent me mentally to the temptation of Christ.

Luke 4:5–8 “And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, [6] and said to him, “To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I

will. [7] If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.” [8] And Jesus answered him, “It is written,

“You shall worship the Lord your God,
and him only shall you serve.” (ESV)

Ha! Jesus knows where real authority resides... it will all be his. Same temptation the devil rolls out today.

Instead, Jesus is now seated at the Father’s right hand. Far above all rule, authority, power, dominion. Our strongest government, movement, dear leaders, are nothing compared to him.

Ascension establishes this.

1 Timothy 3:16 “Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness:

He was manifested in the flesh,
vindicated by the Spirit,
seen by angels,
proclaimed among the nations,
believed on in the world,
taken up in glory.” (ESV)

“The Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ does at least five things:

1) It completes the Resurrection. The body that Christ took on in Bethlehem, and died in, and was resurrected in was removed gloriously to Heaven in the Ascension. This has wonderful implications for us, because his body was like ours. A body like ours is in Heaven!

2) He became the firstfruits of his people, for as the first in the harvest he guarantees the final redemption and exaltation of those in union with him (1 Corinthians 15:15, 20, 23; Colossians 1:15, 18).

3) Jesus ascended to begin his ministry of intercession for his people. Thus the worship and prayer of his people is offered through him, the High Priest, to God the Father (see Hebrews generally, especially 4:15; also Romans 8:34).

4) From his position at the Father's right hand, he is dispenser of the Holy Spirit. With the Spirit we are given spiritual gifts for the enrichment and mission of the Church (John 14–16; Acts 2). With Jesus' ascension the real "new age" began, the age of the Spirit, experienced by those who are in Christ.

5) But most of all, the Ascension of our Lord speaks of his superexaltation above everything!"

Name above every name. Supreme.

"To speak of "supremacy" is to speak of that which is "above" or "over" others. It reaches the level of the "super." In our language it refers to that which (or who) is greatest in power, authority, or rank. It is also used to describe that which (or who) is greatest in importance, significance, character, or achievement—the "ultimate." In all these areas of consideration, Jesus ranks as the ultimate or supreme—supreme in power, rank, glory, authority, importance, etc." Sproul

This is who pursues us, lives among us, gives himself for us to create a new family, a kingdom of grace, a garden invading all of the world.

Colossians 1:15–20 "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. [16] For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. [17] And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. [18] And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. [19] For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, [20] and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross." (ESV)

Where we are prone to diminish Christ... make Jesus less than Lord, than the creator of the cosmos... just a moral teacher... or co-op him to serve our cause... Scripture and the history of the church declares that he is above all things, reigning...

“If you don’t embrace a Christ that is big enough and clear enough, you will be a sitting duck for Christ-diminishing, Christ-distorting philosophy, empty deceit, and human tradition... If you don’t embrace a Christ that is big enough and clear enough, you easily mistake shadows for reality....If you don’t embrace a Christ that is big enough and clear enough, you will stop holding fast to Christ as the great, all-supplying Head of the body, and take up sectarian strategies of self-improvement.” Piper

We need the Spirit’s help but still endeavor to see the supremacy of Christ.

- Jesus Christ is our God.
- Jesus Christ is before all things.
- Jesus Christ created all that is not God.
- Jesus Christ holds everything together.
- Jesus Christ created everything to display the supremacy and the glory of Jesus Christ.

[This is not egomania. It is love. Because the apex of that glory is the glory of grace. It’s the glory of Christ’s supplying everything his church needs to be holy and happy forever. It’s the glory of triumphing over death in bringing millions of believing sinners to everlasting life. And it’s the glory of establishing a new heaven and new earth of peace and reconciliation by the blood of his cross.]

Power exercised and realized in giving up his life, pouring out his blood...

“Thus is he glorious in his throne, which is at “the right hand of the Majesty on high,” glorious in his commission, which is “all power in heaven and earth;” glorious in his name, a name above every name,—“Lord of lords, and King of kings;”; glorious in his subjects,—all creatures in heaven and in earth, nothing is left that is not put in subjection to him; glorious in his way of rule, and the administration of his kingdom—full of sweetness, efficacy, power, serenity, holiness, righteousness, and grace, in and towards his elect,—of terror, vengeance, and certain destruction towards the rebellious angels and men; glorious in the issue of his kingdom, when every knee shall bow before him, and all shall stand before his judgment-seat. And what a little portion of his glory is it that we have pointed to! This is the Beloved of the church—its head, its husband; this is he with whom we have communion. . . .” John Owen

The One with which we have communion has determined to expose this power/his supremacy through the church.

Fullness of Christ

Ephesians 1:22–23 “And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, [23] which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.” (ESV)

The Father did this. It’s his plan.

You can not separate a body from its head. That is death.

We are his body.

Where modern folk are inclined to reject the church - cast it off as useless at best, harmful at worst. Where churches have severed themselves for the head, from the Lordship of Christ, from his supremacy... Where myriad “believers” take the devil’s temptation of worldly nations...

We can’t lose heart. We’ve experienced his power in salvation, in sealing, empowering us, giving us purpose for his glory and our good.

We were dead, and now in our new life we stay connected to the head and reveal his power to the world.

Jesus lives obedient to the law in our place, proclaiming the kingdom, healing, restoring, delivering... all to show the church what God is like.

And he does all of his ministry, only what the Father tells him to do, in the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus sets aside divinity so he could reveal what the church is to look like.

What the power of Christ looks like in us... humility, compassion, sacrifice, grace. Laboring for the blessing of the least, the scandalized, the unwanted.

Taking up our cross and following him because we have tasted and seen that the Lord is good.

And this church is the “fullness of him who fills all in all.”

“The complement,” he says, i. e., the head is, as it were, filled up by the body, because the body is composed and made up of all its several parts, and he introduces Him as having need of each single one and not only of all in common and together; for unless we be many, and one be the hand, and another the foot, and another some other member, the whole body is not filled up. It is by all then that His body is filled up. Then is the head filled up, then is the body rendered perfect, when we are all knit together and united.” John Chrysostom

The necessary thing, his inheritance in the saints realized.

“This is the highest honor of the church that, unless He is united to us, the Son of God reckons Himself in some measure imperfect. What an encouragement it is for us to hear, that not until He has us as one with Himself is He complete in all His parts, or does He wish to be regarded as whole!” John Calvin

The anatomy of God’s “for-us” power is remarkable. First, we are told that the One who is for us is at the right hand of God, the position of highest privilege given to Christ for all ages after his resurrection and ascension (vv. 20–21). Next, as Jesus is in that honored position, God places all things under his feet and gives him authority over all (vv. 21–22). Finally, we are told the purpose of Christ’s dominion is for the church (v. 22), his body, which not only reflects him but ultimately “fills all in all” (v. 23).

Together as the body, holding each other up, serving our neighbors, dare I say washing feet, loving enemies. Because he first loved us.

We hold fast, we continue in the faith by looking to Jesus. And we show him to the world until they see.

Colossians 1:21–23 “you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, [22] he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, [23] if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.” (ESV)

Sustained by all Christ does for the church.

- He is the head.
- He is the cornerstone (2:20)
- He is the savior and sanctifier. (5:23, 26-27)
- He gives the church workers (4:11-16)
- He loved and sacrificed himself for the church (5:25)
- He nourishes and cherishes the church (5:29)
- He manifests his manifold wisdom through the church (3:10)

It's in him that we dwell and grow.

This is the church the gates of hell won't prevail against.

“JUST BEFORE WORLD WAR II in the town of Itasca, Texas, a school fire took the lives of 263 children. There was scarcely a family in town that was not touched by this horrifying tragedy. During the war Itasca remained without school facilities. But when the war ended, the town, like many others, began to expand and in fact built a new school that featured what was called “the finest sprinkler system in the world.” Civic pride ran high. Honor students were selected to guide citizens and visitors on tours of the new facility to show them the finest, most advanced sprinkler system technology could supply and money could buy. Never again would Itasca be visited by such a tragedy. With the postwar boom the town continued to grow, and seven years later it was necessary to enlarge the school—and in adding the new wing it was discovered that the sprinkler system had never been connected.¹

What an incredible story! Its folly strains our belief. Yet, alas, it is a parable of what has happened in so many churches. There is untold power available but so many never hook up, and their lives are thus impotent and shamefully useless.”

May we stay connected. May we by the Spirit have knowledge of him, vision of his grace, his love, and his power toward us.

“As we run our eyes back up this text, we begin to understand why Paul prayed that the eyes of our hearts would be enlightened so that we might glimpse “the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe”—the power that

brought about Jesus' resurrection, ascension, and exaltation, displaying his Lordship. Seeing this, we must understand that because we are his Body, because he loves us so much that he considers himself incomplete without us, that power is operable on our behalf right now!

There is only one thing necessary, and that is belief. Are we hooked up? If not, we can be by saying with our heart, "I see the power for us who believe. It is resurrection and ascension and sovereign power. And I believe it is for me because I am in 'his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.'" Hughes

Jesus is supreme and the church is meant to show the world.

See the supremacy of Christ - at every turn, don't surrender to lesser names. Believe in Jesus.

See the church as vital - The rest of this letter indicates how the church is to live. We are meant for each other, and meant to give the world a glimpse of the power of Christ.

He says we can handle the fullness of his power... may it light up the night.

Colossians 1:9–14 "And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, [10] so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; [11] being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; [12] giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. [13] He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, [14] in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." (ESV)