

**“I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.”**

This week a Christian told me how when he eats out at a restaurant there are times at the end of the meal when he will ask the person waiting on his table “Who is in charge here? Could you please go and get the manager”. And when the manager arrives at the table with beads of sweat beginning to form on his brow and the person waiting on the table looking most uncomfortable he would say: “Thankyou for a wonderful meal. And I just wanted you to know that the person who served me has done an excellent job!” I asked him if he had ever tried that at McDonalds and he said “As a matter of fact I have.... This one particular burger was excellent and the girl was so friendly so I called out the manager and thanked him and honoured his staff. They were so grateful. A burger is a burger and everyone expects theirs instantly and noone ever thanked them like that. The manager was so happy he gave me a free McHappy meal!” The man said he only does it when he means it and every time the manager and waiter are speechless – and relieved. Usually noone asks to see the manager unless they have a complaint about the meal or the service. This man called on the manager to thank him and to honour and praise the one who served him.

Who is in charge here? Where is the manager... in the world...in the church?

Sometimes we want to know and demand to speak to him too. And often when we call out for him it is because we are not happy with what has been served up to us in life. We think things could be done better. Life is not what we desire it to be or expect it to be and sometimes it looks like noone is in charge of what is happening in the world and in the church and in our own personal lives.

Ascension Day says otherwise. It says someone is in charge, and that someone is doing their very best for us. That someone is Jesus Christ. Jesus who was asked by his Father in Heaven to come down to earth and put on the apron of our humanity, coming down from heaven to earth in order to serve us, serve us to death on the cross, serve us in order to forgive and save us.

On the day of his Ascension back to heaven God recognizes that his son Jesus has done his job, completed his task, and served us well. He honours his son and exalts him. And God wants us to recognize him too. On Ascension Day we call on God to thank him for what he has done for us and we honour the one who has served us, served us to death on the cross.

In Ephesians 1:18-23 the Bible says that this servant, Jesus Christ who died for us, has not only been raised up from the dead but is now in charge of everything in heaven and on earth. The servant has become the manager, the one who orders all things. St Paul says God **“seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church”**

The first thing he says is that Jesus is in the place of highest honour. God **“seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms.”** If you have ever watched parliament, (who does?) you may have noticed the Deputy PM sits at the right of the Prime Minister. She is next in line. If

you look at a team photo the coach sits in the middle and the captain at his right. The right hand is the most important position of high honour, power and responsibility.

Jesus who served us to death on the cross now sits at the right hand of God in the heavenly realms! The place of highest honour and power and responsibility you could imagine. The right hand man is the person who gets things done. Jesus is in the place through which God himself exercises God's power for the good of the world. Every Sunday we say the servant Jesus has "ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of God."

That also puts him in the place of greatest power. Paul says that he is "**far above all rule and authority, power and dominion.**" Whatever power you can imagine or are afraid of – human or spiritual, Jesus has power over them. He is "far above" them. They can't harm you because he has defeated them on the cross for you and is raised and exalted above them now.

Jesus has been given a title that is "**far above... every title that can be given.**"

Titles say something about a person. The longer the title, the more impressive the person or the position they hold. Prime minister, Queen, Rear Admiral, her excellency the governor, his holiness the Pope, your honour the Chief Magistrate...we say to human beings with titles, but Jesus' importance is "**far above every title that can be given**", both on earth and in heaven. Jesus Christ is Lord, Lord of heaven and earth.

And finally Jesus has been given the greatest authority. "**God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church**". To put your feet on an enemy was to completely humiliate them and pronounce your ownership and domination of them. Christ has power and authority over anything and anyone harmful and evil, including the devil himself. Christ has everything under his feet, "all things". He uses his authority over the powers for the good of the church. He uses his position to serve, to serve his church.

So if you asked to see the manager here on earth it would be Jesus.

If you want to speak with the one in charge in heaven it would be Jesus.

If you want to speak to the head of the church it would be Jesus.

The most amazing thing about this passage is that it claims the same power that raised Jesus from the dead and seated him at God's right hand, giving him power and authority and honour is now at work in you and in me as Christians. Paul uses 4 words - dynamite, strength, energy and power, he says this power is incomparably great and it is at work in you and for you and for every Christian! Like all people in charge Jesus does it his way. Jesus' way of using power is not ours. Jesus uses power sometimes in hidden ways but ways that change lives and save lives. His power is at work hidden in the water of baptism, he waits on us and serves us with his body and blood in the bread and wine of communion, he speaks through his word the Bible and he loves through us his very human church, but resurrection and ascension power is at work, that's what this word about the Ascension promises.

Sometimes our lives and the church seem shrouded in weakness, and the world seems out of control. By all means to day ask to see the manager today. Tell him your troubles and complaints. He will graciously hear them. The manager who is in charge of heaven and earth is always in and always available to you to speak to. But before you lodge your complaint remember the manager is the one who has died for you and loved you to death and has forgiven all your sins and made your reservation in heaven. As he continues to serve you with loving kindness remember he still bears the nail marks in his hands and side from Good Friday.

Don't forget to honour and thank and praise him as the one who has served you so well, and don't stop believing that the power that raised him from the dead and seated him at God's right hand in heaven is at work in you and for you and for us as his church today.