

**CHRIST REIGNS!
EPHESIANS 1:19-23
SERMON**

Last week I preached from Ephesians 1:15-19 about the importance of praying for others. By “others” I don’t mean people close to us such as spouses, kids, best friends, etc. Paul prayed for the Ephesian Christians, some of whom he didn’t know at all! So, praying for “others” means praying for neighbors, acquaintances, people on our sports teams, someone we know casually at the gym, etc. God wants us to pray for the people He puts on our hearts! If you feel an internal nudge to pray for someone, do it! I concluded the sermon last Sunday by talking about God’s immeasurable power from vs.19. Look in **vs.19 “and what is the immeasurable power toward us who believe according to the working of his great might”**. We cannot measure the power of God!! No human standard exists which can possibly measure the awesome power of God!!

Pastor and author Tim Keller said that in 1970 a Sunday school teacher changed his life with a simple illustration of God’s power. The teacher said, “Let’s assume the distance between the earth and the sun (92 million miles) was reduced to the thickness of this sheet of paper. If that is the case, then the distance between the earth and the nearest star would be a stack of papers 70 feet high. And, the diameter of the galaxy would be a stack of papers 310 *miles* high. The teacher added, “The galaxy is just a speck of dust in the universe, yet Jesus holds the universe together by the word of his power.” The awesome, immense power of God!

I challenged you last Sunday to pray for God’s power to be manifest, to be experienced in people’s lives. If you’re praying for someone battling an addiction, pray for God’s *power* to overcome it. If you’re praying for someone struggling with the tyranny of bad memories of childhood abuse, pray for God’s *power* to heal those memories! If God puts someone on your heart that has not yet confessed faith in Jesus Christ, pray for God’s *power* to break down the obstacles, the excuses, whatever’s keeping them from faith in Christ!

This brings us to today’s text and message. Paul finally finished his sentence in vs.23 which he began in vs.15! Paul seemed to be so excited, so passionate about his message that he couldn’t stop writing! In these last verses of chapter one, Paul highlights the reign of Christ! He teaches us that **Christ reigns!** Jesus Christ reigns or rules over everyone and everything! Look in the middle section of your bulletin and you will see the point of the message: **Christ reigns!** Jesus reigns, He rules over all! He reigns over **“all rule and authority and power and dominion and above every name that is named”**. This means Jesus is and functions as Lord over all of His creation. Turn over a couple of pages in your Bible to **Philippians 2:10-11 “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”**.

Do you remember the time Jesus got into a boat with his disciples and he fell asleep? A windstorm came down on the Sea of Galilee and the disciples feared for their lives. Jesus woke up, rebuked the wind and raging waves. The text states this about the disciples: **“and they were**

afraid and they marveled saying to one another”, “Who then is this, that he commands even winds and water and they obey him?” (Luke 8:25b)

Jesus rules over His creation! He exerts power over creation and the hearts and lives of people! Join me as we consider the ABC’s of Christ’s reign: “A” stands for:

1. The *activity* of Christ’s reign Look in your text in vs.19-20 “**and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places**”. Notice the word “working” and “worked” which refer to Jesus’ divine activity. The word for “worked” in the original means, “operating, working, action”. Look at the second use of the word in vs.20, “**that he worked in Christ**”. This use of this verb, “to work” appears in the perfect tense. This means it refers to action that occurred in the past but it has continuous effect! Christ’s victory over sin and death occurred in the past: 2,000 years ago when he died and rose again but it has a *continuing effect*. This historic act in history opened the gates of heaven for all who believe Jesus died for them and place their trust and faith in him.

If Jesus had not accomplished this atoning work for us on the cross we would be living lives without hope, substance or meaning. Our lives would be like two dimensional stick figures on a piece of paper! Those figures have height and width but no depth! Let’s do an exercise to see this for ourselves. Take a moment and draw a stick figure of a human being on your outline. Go ahead! It just takes a moment. This exercise pushes the limits of my artistic abilities! We have some wonderful artists in our church but you don’t need to be a great artist to draw a stick figure, do you? Look at your stick figure. It doesn’t have any depth or substance to it, does it? Just a line drawing with a little bit of height and width to it. This stick figure represents a life without Christ. It lacks depth and substance! Imagine comparing your stick figure to a portrait drawn by a great portrait artist such as Rembrandt, Da Vinci, John Singer Sargent or Velazquez. Jesus died for you, God raised him from the dead for you and “**seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places**”. (vs.20) What activity does Jesus do now as He reigns at God the Father’s right hand? Turn over to **Romans 8:34** where Paul speaks about Christ, “**Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died-more than that, who was raised- who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us**”. Just think: Jesus prays for you! He’s praying for you right now! He’s exercising His reign or rule by praying for us!

Jesus prayed for his disciples when he walked the face of this earth. He taught them to pray and that’s how we got the Lord’s Prayer. Jesus prayed for those of us who would come later in his High Priestly prayer, recorded in John chapter 17. Jesus prayed for unity for his followers. So, Jesus exercises His reign by praying for us!

To summarize, the *activity* of Christ’s reign consists of His death and resurrection 2,000 years ago and his intercession for us now at God the Father’s right hand. What does Jesus pray? Turn to **Luke 22:31-34** where Jesus speaks to Simon Peter at the Last Supper: “**Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you that he might sift you like wheat but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again strengthen your brothers**. Jesus then told Peter he would deny him three times. We often focus on the last verse or two of that section in the Bible which describes Peter’s denial. But notice what Jesus

says to Simon Peter in the opening verse about praying for him. Jesus prayed that Peter's faith would not fail. Peter did deny Christ three times but he returned and strengthened his brothers as Jesus requested! Peter became one of the greatest leaders of the early church. Peter was martyred for his faith.

This narrative provides some insight into Jesus' prayers for us. Jesus prays that our faith would remain steadfast, that it would not fail! Jesus supports your efforts to continue in your discipleship! He's given you and me the Holy Spirit to be our Helper and Counselor and Jesus prays that we would remain steadfast! This brings us to the "B" of Christ's reign:

2. The *breath* of Christ's reign. When I use the word, "breath" I'm not referring to our physical breathing. Rather, I'm referring to the incredible scope or extent of Christ's reign. Turn back to Ephesians. In **1:21 "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 one to come"**. Let's consider this verse for a moment. First, Paul writes Christ's reign is "far above". This refers to rank. Jesus reigns on high; He's on top, preeminent, far above all other rule! Paul uses the preposition "all" to describe the complete and total scope or extent of Christ's reign. Notice, **"all rule, authority, power and dominion"**. Jesus rules over all of it! Look at the word, "dominion". In the original text, the word "dominion" has "Lord" as its root. Isn't that interesting?

Jesus rules over every authority, power, rule and dominion!! Who's the most powerful human king or queen to ever live? Alexander the Great? Augustus Caesar? Queen Victoria? An Egyptian Pharaoh or Chinese ruler, a Sultan from the Middle East? Imagine being able to somehow combine all of these powerful, human rulers including their armies, navies, weapons, authority, status, etc. After you combine all of them, they would still pale in comparison to the rule, power and authority of Jesus Christ!!

Turn over to Ephesians 6:10-13 where Paul describes the spiritual battle we face: **"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day and having done all, to stand firm"**. Paul makes it clear that Jesus has much greater power than the devil! When we put on the whole armor of God we have the tools to withstand and defend against the devil's schemes. Christ rules over the devil, his demonic forces, over everything, absolutely everything in heaven and earth!

The breath or scope of Christ's reign is all-encompassing! He rules over everyone and everything! Think about how this applies to your life. Does Jesus reign over every decision, every thought, every relationship, and every activity in which you engage? He should!!

I struggle with Jesus' rule over my thought life. It's interesting that Paul tells the Corinthians in his first letter that we have "the mind of Christ". He doesn't say "seek the mind of Christ" or "pray for the mind of Christ", **"but we have the mind of Christ". (1 Cor 2:16)** At first glance it

sounds like we think exactly like Jesus. So, here's the question I struggle with, "if I have the mind of Christ why does my mind think such sinful and evil thoughts?" When Paul states that we have the "mind of Christ" he doesn't mean that our thought lives become completely pure and sinless. If we read the context of that passage, Paul means that Jesus has given us His Spirit to help us discern spiritual matters. Being able to discern spiritual matters means that we have the mind of Christ but it doesn't mean that the Spirit's presence in our lives makes us sinless.

So, I struggle with my thought life. What area or areas of your life need to be brought under the breath of Christ's reign? Are you involved in a sinful relationship that's not biblical? Do you engage in sinful activities that dishonor Jesus? Perhaps it's your language or speech. Do you have a habit of taking the Lord's name in vain? Ask the Lord to help you place *every* activity, *every* relationship, *every* thought, *every* word, everything under the umbrella of His reign, His Lordship in your life!! This brings us to the "C" of Christ's reign:

3. The church of Christ's reign. Let's turn back in our Bibles to **Ephesians 1:22-23** "And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all". What comes to mind when you hear the word, "church"? Do you think of a lovely old stately building like our historic church? Perhaps you think of a massive European cathedral with dramatic and breath taking architecture?

The word for church in the original text means, "called out ones". It refers to people not buildings! The "called out ones" are believers in Jesus who have been called out of the world's priorities and values to worship and serve the living Lord Jesus Christ. In vs.23 Paul calls the church "his body" meaning the body of Christ. Those of us who believe in Jesus make up the church and we serve as Christ's arms, legs, feet and the mouthpieces for the world. The church witnesses to Christ's reign on earth! That's our primary function!

The church of Jesus Christ has existed for 2,000 years. When our church applied for a loan twelve years ago to help finish building this facility, the loan application asked how long our business had been operating. Jerry Mathern and I joked that we should write, "2,000 years" but we thought that might cause some confusion so we simply wrote, "148 years". But, think about that for a moment. How many businesses in the Rogue valley have even been in existence for 148 years? Not very many! As a matter of fact, we might be the oldest business in the Rogue valley still in operation! Someone want to research that point? We have a lot of history!! This past week we celebrated the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. Martin Luther, a Catholic priest and Professor of Theology at the University of Wittenburg posted a document that contained 95 theses on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenburg. These 95 theses protested some evil practices that then existed in the Roman Catholic church. A few years later the Roman Catholic church ex-communicated Luther and this ex-communication launched the Protestant Reformation.

You can see that the church has a long history! ***It has existed and continues to exist today because of Christ's reign.*** The longer I serve Christ and his church the more convinced I am that without Christ and without His Holy Spirit the church would have ceased to exist a long, long time ago!

Last Tuesday night our church hosted a Harvest Festival in this building. It's amazing how this space can be transformed! I'll never forget the first year we moved into this building in 2006. We set the place up for our Harvest Festival and even put a giant bounce house in the back. Community people and neighbors came and they were shocked! They couldn't believe that we would do this to our new building! Anyway, every year when we host the Harvest Festival we give witness to our faith in Jesus. This past Tuesday night the gospel message was shared and people of all ages were exposed to the saving message of Jesus Christ.

Christ reigns! His action consists of dying on the cross, rising from the grave and praying for us. The breath or scope of Christ's reign is extensive; over all rule, authority, power and dominion! The church of His reign refers to us, the community of faith, the "called out ones". Next week we'll tackle the first ten verses of chapter two and the gospel message will be presented. I hope you'll join us and be praying for pre-Christians to attend and come to faith in Christ. Let us pray.