

**“Where In the World is Jesus?”**     **First Presbyterian Church**  
**Pastor Dave Carlson**  
**May 28, 2017**

**Old Testament lesson:** Psalm 93

**New Testament lesson:** John 16:33-17:5

Do you ever want to just stop the world and get off? Of course we can't do that. But people do leave the country for good in favor of what they hope will be a better country, maybe Canada or someplace in Europe. The number of people giving up US citizenship toward the end of last year was nearly double compared to any other time in the past seven years.<sup>1</sup>

While some people may want to credit this to the election of Donald Trump, few if any actually give up their citizenship over politics. The more likely reason is taxes. Americans living and working in foreign countries have to pay taxes where they live and pay taxes to the IRS, based on their worldwide income. Fair or not fair, it all comes down to money. While money may make the world go round for many people, there's more to life than money.

Today is Ascension of the Lord Sunday, when Jesus left this world and went up to heaven 40 days after his resurrection. In today's Gospel reading, Jesus is preparing his disciples for his departure. He tells them they will face hard times in this world – persecution – but take courage, he says, “I have conquered the world!” Jesus has conquered the world, but where in the world is he? Jesus goes up to heaven to be with God, and where does that leave us? What are we to do? That's exactly what people in John's time were asking.

The Gospel According to John was written at a time when the followers of Jesus had expected his return, and when that didn't happen in their lifetime, they were at a loss of what to do, what it meant. And so John reminds them of what Jesus said while he was still here. While Jesus was preparing to go into heaven, to be with God, he prayed to God, saying, “I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do.” Jesus was sent into the world that we would know God, and in knowing God, that we would make God known to others through Jesus Christ.

Where in the world is Jesus? He's here, among us, in us, working through us. Knowing you is the closest thing anyone has to knowing Jesus, when you're living in the Spirit of Christ, when we're living in the Spirit of Christ. To live in the Spirit of Christ is to point to Jesus – to make Jesus known in this world – so that Jesus shines through us and in us. What are some ways that we make Jesus known in this world? Anyone?

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<sup>1</sup> Forbes, *More Americans Give Up Citizenship In Reverse Trump Bump*, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/robertwood/2017/02/10/more-americans-give-up-citizenship-in-reverse-trump-bump/#1f59d63f503d>

*Is there any evidence that Jesus is still active? Examples? Mission outreach – Partnering with Procter, Habitat, Drumm Farm. Christian Education – VBS and Sunday school and our Summer Forum, LOGOS. Congregational Care – Visits, Phone Calls, Home Communion, Meals, Worship – making God’s presence felt; feeling the joy of God speaking to us.*

This is how we make Jesus known in this world, and particularly here at the corner of Lexington and Pleasant. The work that Jesus did for God here on earth – by making God known to us – that’s like what we do for others when we become the hands and feet and heart of Jesus to them. Jesus shines through us just like God shined through Jesus.

“Glorify your Son,” says Jesus, “so that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.” I get the part about Jesus glorifying God by making him known to people. But what does Jesus mean about giving us eternal life. What is eternal life? And what does that have to do with our calling to make him known to others? The answer may surprise you.

Jesus says, “... This is eternal life, that (we) may know (God), the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom (God has) sent.” Jesus calls us to not only be the hands and feet and heart of Christ, but the face of Christ, the mirror through which others see Jesus reflected, active, working in this world, for the glory of God.

Where in the world is Jesus?!? Jesus lives eternally with God in heaven. But eternity is not about time and heaven is not about place, not the way we understand them. Eternity is about relationship – that you may know God. Heaven is about relationship, being in the presence of God and being Christlike to one another.

D. Moody Smith put it this way, in his commentary on John, saying, “God glorifies the Son in revealing himself through (Jesus), while the Son glorifies the Father in word, deed, and ... by becoming transparent to his will,” by being the will of God enfleshed.<sup>2</sup> When we seek to do God’s will, Jesus is reflected in who we are, and in that, others come to know Jesus through us.

This is as close to heaven as we get this side of the cross. Knowing God and serving Christ is what it’s like to enjoy life eternal, now, not in some far off place after we’ve died and entered into the fullness of heaven. It’s all about relationships, now. Are your relationships heavenly, eternal – lived out in the Spirit of Christ?

Father John Fetterman of Grace Episcopal Church in Madison, Wisconsin, tells of a woman in her 90s who in her death, showed the true meaning of eternal life. She had never been married. So for her funeral, she insisted there be no male pallbearers.

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<sup>2</sup> Smith, Moody D. John, Abingdon New Testament Commentaries, Abingdon Press, 1999, 310.

She explained this in her written instructions, saying, “They wouldn’t take me out when I was alive. I don’t want them to take me out when I’m dead.”<sup>3</sup> It’s all about relationships.

Jesus was *with* God at creation, he was sent *to us* on earth, and he is *with* God now in heaven. None of this has to do with time or place. It’s all about our relationship with God through Christ and our relationship to each other because of Christ – that’s heaven on earth, that’s life eternal. Jesus glorified God by bringing us into relationship with God, and we are called to glorify Jesus by bringing others into relationship with him.

We may not know what heaven looks like, but we know what it feels like – a loving closeness with God and one another. You and I have the privilege as followers of Christ to help others know what heaven is like, by helping them feel and embrace a loving relationship with Jesus.

We do this through our loving kindness, through our prayerful guidance and companionship, through our self-giving service, through our quiet faithfulness. By entering into relationship with Jesus and being faithful to God, we not only come to know heaven on earth, but we enter into life eternal, with God and with all who belong to God. Amen.

### **Pastoral Prayer**

Thank you for your words of comfort and encouragement and provision. Words best expressed through the prayer that you taught us, saying:

**Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name;  
Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread; And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors;  
And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil,  
For thine is the Kingdom, and the Power, and the Glory, forever. Amen.**

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<sup>3</sup> Paul Kittlaus, (9 May 1995). ECULAUGH, AOOOOOOS.MSG.