

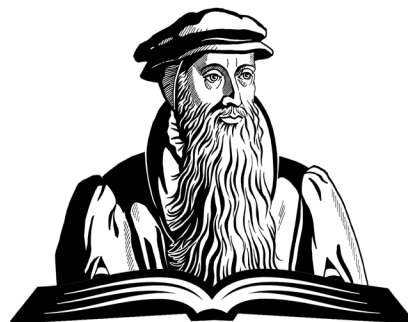
VIDEO SERMON SERIES

Sermons on the Heidelberg Catechism

by Rev. Bartel Elshout

Sermon #24, Lord's Day 19, part 1

Faith in the Exalted Christ



The John Knox Institute
of Higher Education

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Sermon #24, Lord's Day 19, part 1

**Faith in
the Exalted Christ**

Revelation chapter 20, and 2 Thessalonians chapter 2
Questions and Answers #50 thru #52

i. Introduction and Review

- 1. The Purpose of His Exaltation**
- 2. The Profit of His Exaltation**
- 3. The Final Step of His Exaltation**

Introduction and Review

Boys and girls, remember, we are dealing with what we call *The Steps of Christ's Humiliation and Exaltation*. I just want to briefly review that for you again before we focus on the third and fourth steps of Christ's exaltation.

And so, in the steps of his humiliation, Christ literally, step by step, descended into the depths of our fall, and all of its consequences. Or, to put it very simply, he was born under circumstances as if he were a sinner, he suffered as if he were a sinner, he died as if he were a sinner, he was buried as if he were a sinner, and on the cross he descended into hell itself and experienced the full reality of hell as if he were a sinner. And of course, we know that he was not a sinner. He was holy, he was harmless, he was sinless. But in order to be the Savior of fallen sinners, in order to be the Mediator of fallen sinners, he had to experience all of these steps. He had to experience the full reality of what it means to be a fallen sinner. Because that's the life of every son and daughter of Adam. We are born as sinners, we live as sinners, we suffer as sinners, we die as sinners, we are buried as sinners, and if God does not deal with us, we will forever perish as sinners. That's the story of fallen sinners. But thanks be to God, God gave his Son to be the second Adam, he gave his Son to be our Mediator, a Mediator who identified himself completely with every aspect of our

fallen state, in order to save us.

And once he accomplished that, once he completed that, then begins his exaltation. So first, he descended, he went down. And then, on the day of the resurrection, he burst forth from the grave, he's raised by his Father, and he comes as the conqueror of death. As we know, death is the wages of sin (Romans 6:23). He came forth from that grave as the victor over death. Oh, his resurrection was his Father's public approval of what his Son had accomplished on the cross of Calvary. And then, a few weeks ago, we considered, not only that he rose from the dead, but he ascended into heaven, returning into the very presence of God, where he now sits at the Father's right hand, until he will finally come in glory. And so, in his exaltation, as Mediator, we have to realize, not only what he did on the cross he did as Mediator, but in his exaltation, every single step he took on behalf of his children. So when he rose from the grave, we rose from the grave with him. When he ascended on high, he carried his entire church into the very presence of God. And now, he sits at the Father's right hand until that final day.

And so, as our Mediator, in his resurrection, he restores life. By his ascension, he restores us into the presence of God. By sitting at the Father's right hand as our interceding High Priest, he has restored communion and fellowship with God. And ultimately, in that final step of his exaltation, he will have fully restored his people in body and soul, to forever dwell in the presence of God. Such is the humiliation and the exaltation of Christ.

And so, this evening we will focus on the third and fourth step of his exaltation, as it is opened up for us in Lord's Day 19 of our Heidelberg Catechism. There, we read in,

Question #50: *Why is it added, "and sitteth at the right hand of God"?*

The Answer is: *Because Christ is ascended into heaven for this end, that He might appear as head of His church, by whom the Father governs all things.*

Question #51: *What profit is this glory of Christ, our Head, unto us?*

Again, always these personal questions that the Heidelberg Catechism; it doesn't just set before us the doctrines of Scripture, but it always asks the believer the question, How does this benefit us?

And the Answer is: *First, that by His Holy Spirit He pours out heavenly graces upon us His members; and then that by His power He defends and preserves us against all enemies.*

Question #52: *What comfort—there you have it again—What comfort—that's how the Catechism begins—What comfort is it to thee—very personal—that "Christ shall come again to judge the quick"—or the living—"and the dead"?*

The Answer is: *That in all my sorrows and persecutions, with uplifted head I look for the very same person who before offered Himself for my sake to the tribunal of God, and has removed all curse from me, to come as judge from heaven; who shall cast all His and my enemies into everlasting condemnation, but shall translate me with all His chosen ones to Himself, into heavenly joys and glory.*

And so, it focuses on those articles of our Apostolic Confession, that focus now on Christ, faith in Christ, as the exalted Savior of his church. First of all, The Purpose of His Exaltation. That is unpacked for us in Question and Answer #50—he appears as our Head, *by whom*, it says, the Father governs all things. Secondly, The Profit of His Exaltation—Question and Answer #51. And there we read that *He pours out his heavenly graces*, and preserves and defends us against our enemies. And finally, The Final Step of His Exaltation, when he returns to judge the living and the dead, a moment of unspeakable joy for the godly, but also, a moment of unspeakable terror for the enemies of Christ, who will be cast into everlasting condemnation. So, *The Purpose of His Exaltation; The Profit of His Exaltation; and The Final Step of His Exaltation.*

1. The Purpose of His Exaltation

Why is it added, “and sitteth at the right hand of God”? Of course, boys and girls, I realize, and you realize, that God does not have a right hand. God is a Spirit, and yet, the Bible very often uses expressions like this to help us understand who God is. And so, what does it mean that Christ is now seated at the Father’s right hand? And we have to realize, of course, that he has ascended in his glorified humanity. In his glorified humanity, he left this earth, and he entered into the heavenly abode, into the very presence of God. So what does it mean that he is now seated at the Father’s right hand?

Well, in that culture, the culture of the Bible, the right hand was a very, very important place. And so, when we read about Bathsheba, when she comes to see her son, King Solomon, what does Solomon do? How does Solomon show his respect for his mother? How does he honor his mother? He tells her to sit at his right hand. That’s what a king would do if he wanted to honor somebody, if he wanted to show that he wished to communicate to that person his special favor. And so, it was a very special privilege if you were seated at the king’s right hand. And all of that is expressed here by this expression that he is now seated at his Father’s right hand. That means that upon his return into his Father’s presence, his Father bestowed upon his beloved Son, as the successful Mediator of his church, he bestowed upon his Son extreme honor, as a token of his complete approval of what his Son had done by means of his mediatorial work.

We find this expressed beautifully in Ephesians 1, so turn in your Bibles to Ephesians 1, verses 20 and 21, and there, we read God’s Word as follows: “He”—that is, the Father—“raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,”—there’s the expression that we just find here in the Catechism—“far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.” And so, the Apostle Paul here, inspired by the Holy Spirit, emphasizes that the Father gave his Son, as victorious Mediator, a position of extreme glory, of extreme majesty, as an expression of his favor upon the work that he had accomplished.

Philippians 2, verses 8 and 9, let’s turn there as well. Again, and there, this verse beautifully connects the humiliation and the exaltation of Christ. And we read there: “He”—that is, Christ—“humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name.” And so, congregation, the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ is now at the Father’s right hand, is to communicate to us how extremely well pleased the Father is with his well-beloved Son.

Oh, the Lord declared that, did he not, at his baptism, when Christ fully accepted the assignment as the High Priest of his people. Oh, the Father could not refrain himself, when he saw his Son willingly accepting what he had eternally agreed to do. And he said, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17). What must it have been for Christ to return into the very presence of his Father? What a moment of unspeakable joy that must have been, to receive his Son returning now as our Emmanuel. And he’s seated, and he placed him at his right hand, thereby communicating his approval of his work, thereby supremely honoring his only beloved Son, and giving to him all power in heaven and on earth.

And so, Paul writes in Colossians 1, verses 16 through 19, this marvelous passage, that, “It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell” (verse 19). But the fact that he’s seated at the Father’s right hand is also so very precious to the believer, those who Christ represents. In Ephesians 2, verse 6, Paul writes, “And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” Oh, by using that word “together,” the Apostle Paul emphasizes

the intimate union there is between Christ and his people. And so, the Apostle emphasizes here what I said before, that when Christ was raised, we were raised with him. Everything he did as Mediator, he did on behalf of his people. But he also has made us to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Congregation, what an overwhelming thought that is, an overwhelming thought to know that in Christ, we, his people, we are seated at the Father's right hand. That means that, in Christ, God fully approves of us; that God fully accepts us. His being seated at the Father's right hand is enormously comforting, because that means that because our Savior is there, that means that your salvation, dear believer, is absolutely guaranteed. That means that you, in Christ, in Christ, we have a place in the very presence of God. Oh, when God looks upon his Son, when the Father looks upon his Son, he sees in him his entire church. When the Father and the Son, when they engage in face to face fellowship with each other, in his face, in his face, dear child of God, he sees your countenance. When he sees him, he sees you. What a comfort that is. That's why, as I've said before, we need to focus more on the exaltation of Christ. There is so much comfort in his exaltation. His exaltation is the security of the believer; it's our warranty that our salvation is never in jeopardy for one moment, because we are there.

So the Catechism answers as follows; it says, *Because Christ is ascended into heaven for this end, that he might appear as the Head of His church*, and the one by whom the Father governs all things. Again, he appears there as our Head. And of course, that implies that there is a body. And so, God's people are the body; they are the body of the Mediator, and he is the Head. That means, first of all, of course, that he is the source of all of our spiritual life. Everything flows out of him. That's that intimate union that John 15 talks about, that intimate union between the vine and the branches. And what's also so comforting, congregation, is that where the head is, where the head is, ultimately, the body must be. And so, since the Head now appears there in the presence of God, therefore we know that the day is coming when ultimately the body will be where the Head is. Oh, how precious that is, that this ascended Christ is the Head of the church; that he appears there as the Head of the church; that he appears there on behalf of his church. In Colossians 1, verse 18, we read that "He is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence."

But not only, not only does he appear there as the Head of his church, from whom everything flows, by whom we are governed, by whom we are sustained, in whom we are represented in God's presence; but also, by him the Father governs all things. And so, Christ was exalted as the supreme ruler of the universe. That's why, before his ascension, as he spoke with his disciples, he said, "All power on heaven and earth has been given unto me." That's why the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ has rightfully been called "his coronation," the day of his coronation, when he was crowned to be the King of kings and to be the Lord of lords.

And of course, that was prophesied in Psalm 2, which we read together, that amazing Psalm that gives us such a powerful assessment of what really is going on in this world. In its first stanza, we see what goes on here below. And what goes on here below is a very troubling reality, a troubling reality with which we are confronted every day; a world in which the power brokers of this world are conspiring together against God's anointed, against the Lord Jesus Christ. But then, this marvelous comfort that we are told in the next stanza that yet, in spite of all that goes on here below, that yet God has exalted his King and placed him on Zion's holy hill; and that the Father has given to his Son all the nations for his inheritance. And so, that's what Christ is doing. From the moment of his ascension, he is the reigning King of the universe. And he is reigning, he is reigning

supremely in order that God's sovereign good pleasure can be accomplished in this world.

And so what the Catechism is really describing for us here is what Christ does between his first and his second coming. That's why it is our position that the millennium that we read about in Revelation 20, that millennium was inaugurated at the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. We know that the number 1,000 as it appears six times in the first seven verses of Revelation 20 cannot possibly refer to a literal 1,000 years. And why not? For the simple reason that all of the numbers in Revelation are symbolic. If we were to take every number literally, in the book of Revelation, we would have to teach that there were only 144,000 of God's redeemed people; that's obviously not what that meant. That word simply is symbolic for the entire church of God. And so what is the number 1,000?—it is ten to the third power. It is the number of completeness. And so, it is symbolic for that period that separates the first coming of Christ and the second coming of Christ. That's why we believe that when Christ ascended on high, and he led captivity captive, that from that moment, Satan, who had gone forth to deceive the nations, that Satan has been bound from that moment. And why? Because until that moment, until Christ ascended on high, Satan had free reign in the world of the Gentiles. There was only one nation on earth that knew about the Creator of heaven and earth, one nation to whom God had revealed himself, to whom he had given his Word. The rest of the world dwelt in utter darkness. But as of the ascension of Christ, as of the outpouring of his Spirit upon all flesh, Satan has not been able to prevent the coming of Christ's kingdom. Wherever, wherever the gospel goes, it triumphs. Wherever the gospel goes, wherever God's sends his servants, Satan has to yield. And that has been going on ever since the ascension of Christ and the outpouring of his Spirit. And this is not either the time or the place to deal with the other views regarding this millennium—the premillennial position, the postmillennial position. Our position is what we call—not amillennialism; that's a misnomer, because that means there's no millennium—but we call this inaugurated millennialism. The millennium is the period in which Christ reigns, the period in which God accomplishes his purpose, in which God accomplishes his purpose, in which Christ so orders all things that his kingdom will come. And that's why he will reign until God's purpose has been accomplished; he will reign until the spiritual temple that he's building, until that temple has been completed. And when that work is done, when that work is finished, he will come for the second time, he will come for glory. Then he will come to judge the living and the dead, as we will see in a moment. Then he will establish his kingdom forever. And then there will be a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness will dwell.

So I want to recommend some books to you if you really want to study this issue in more detail. I think of the book by Anthony Hoekema,¹ called *The Bible and the Future*, a former professor of Calvin's Seminary many decades ago. Then there is the book called *The Promise of the Future*, by Cornelis Venema,² who is the president of Mid-America Reformed Seminary, MARS. And of course, there is Dr. Beeke's³ excellent commentary on the book of Revelation. And I remember years ago reading the book by Anthony Hoekema, which was an assignment in seminary, and I benefited immensely from his very, very thorough treatment of the whole subject of eschatology, and where he examines the three millennial views, and clearly makes the case for what we call

1 Anthony Andrew Hoekema (1913–1988) was a Dutch-American Calvinist minister and theologian who served as professor of Systematic Theology at Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids.

2 Cornelis Paul Venema (born 1954), is an American Reformed theologian, who serves as president and professor of Doctrinal Studies at Mid-America Reformed Seminary.

3 Joel Robert Beeke (born 1952) is an American Reformed theologian, pastor in the Heritage Reformed Congregations, and chancellor of Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary.

inaugurate millennialism, which is the position, the classic position of the (Dutch) Reformed church.

And so, let me say it again, that Christ is reigning. He is governing all things. He is reigning. And that reign is a present reality. He is reigning. It's not something in the future. And that reign separates the first and the second coming. And so, his reigning, his overruling of what we read in Psalm 2, his overruling of all that goes on here below, has one ultimate objective, and that is to pave the way for his second coming. In 1 Peter 3, verses 21 and 22, the Apostle clearly emphasizes that Christ is presently reigning. And what do we read in 1 Peter 3? "Jesus Christ: who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him." It doesn't say, "will be made subject unto him." They are "being made subject unto him." What an immensely comforting truth that is, especially also in our present time, is to know that Christ is in absolute control. Christ is accomplishing his purpose. Authorities and powers are being made subject unto him, until, until that work is complete. And that's why, in God's Word, the judgment of Christ, the white throne judgment that we read about in Revelation 20 as well, and his return, are not two separate events. But all through Scripture, those events are always together. And when he returns, he will come to judge the living and the dead, as we will see in just a moment.

And so, secondly, the Catechism talks about,

2. The Profit of His Exaltation

How do we, the people of God, how do we profit from his reign at the Father's right hand, from his intercession at the Father's right hand? The Catechism says it so beautifully. It says, *First, that by His Holy Spirit He pours out heavenly graces upon us His members*. What a beautiful statement that is. *By His Holy Spirit*—that Spirit which unites us to Christ, and by that Spirit, he pours out heavenly graces upon us, his members. What a beautiful statement about the character of Christ. What a beautiful statement about the ministry of Christ. Christ is the one who said, in John 10, "I have come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (verse 10). That's what Christ has done, dear people of God. Christ has merited for you an overwhelming, and an overflowing fountain of mercy.

And so, as your exalted Savior at the Father's right hand, his work and his delight is to pour out upon you all the graces that you stand in need of. And so, this dispenses with this wretched idea that God's children receive but the bare minimum in this life—a crumb here and there. No, that's not the character of Christ. That's not who our exalted Christ is. Oh, it is the delight of your Savior that you would prosper spiritually. He wants you to benefit fully for what he has accomplished on your behalf.

And so, his work at the Father's right hand is not only to intercede for you day and night, and without ceasing, but to pour out upon you, to pour out upon you his graces—"Grace for grace," we read in John 1 (verse 16). Out of his fulness, we receive grace upon grace. And in the Greek it actually means that it's one grace that tumbles over another, grace, upon grace, upon grace, proceeds from the Lord Jesus Christ. His desire is that you would flourish spiritually. His desire is to grant you every grace you need. Oh, how we should seek that, how we should delight in that, how that should encourage us every day to seek, and to call upon your exalted and your interceding Christ at the Father's right hand. How that should encourage you to cry out to him, "Oh Lord Jesus; oh, minister to me today; oh, minister to me out of thy fulness, grace for grace." That's a prayer he delights to hear; that's a prayer he delights to answer. That's what he promises us in John 15 as well. In John 15, he promises us, if you abide in me, if by faith you abide in me, if by faith you live

in fellowship with me, if by faith you walk with me, I will not disappoint you. And I will abide in you, and you will bear much fruit (verses 1–6).

Turn with me to 2 Corinthians 9, verse 8, a beautiful passage by the Apostle Paul that underscores this very truth. There, we read God’s Word, it says: “And God is able”—and I’ll read it slowly—“And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.” I couldn’t say it any better than that. I couldn’t say it any stronger than that. And so, Christ wants you to know, dear believer, that in him, there is an inexhaustible fulness for every need of your life, every aspect of your life. There is a grace for every aspect of your life. And therefore, oh, he wants you to open your mouth widely, and he will fill it. He will not disappoint those that seek him, that desire to be ministered to him, out of his fulness, and to receive grace for grace. It’s so beautifully expressed also in 2 Corinthians 12, verse 9, three chapters later, where Paul is struggling with a thorn in his flesh; a thorn that caused him so much grief; a thorn from which he desired to be delivered. And then Christ answered him once and for all. He said, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” That’s what the Catechism is saying here. It is saying, Oh, dear believer, lift up your eyes on high towards this precious Christ who is seated at the Father’s right hand on your behalf; a Christ, who not only has merited grace for you, who not only has merited salvation, but whose desire it is, out of his fulness, to minister to you grace for grace.

And, it says here, *By His power He defends and preserves us against all enemies*. What a comforting truth that is as well, congregation, because those enemies are real. And so, here, of course, the answer is focusing on what we call *the militant church of Christ*, the church that is still in this world. *The church triumphant*, God’s redeemed people who are already in the presence of Christ, they are forever delivered from their enemies. But here below, we are the church militant. We live in enemy territory—that wretched three-headed enemy that relentlessly seeks to take us down. But of course, there is Satan, the archenemy of Christ, and therefore, the archenemy of his people. And there is the world, this ungodly world that Psalm 2 talks about; this world that hates God, that hates Christ, a world that would love to swallow up God’s church, and to eliminate it from the face of the earth once and forever; a world that is under the dominion of the prince of this world, Satan himself. And of course, as we said here before, then there is that traitor within, our own indwelling corruption, that painful reality for the believer; that indwelling corruption with which we will have to deal until we breathe our last breath; that indwelling corruption that conspires with Satan and with the world. And what a mighty enemy it is. Jehoshaphat cried out, when they were surrounded by enemies, “We have no might against this [enemy]” (2 Chronicles 20:12). And congregation, you well know from your own experience, we too have no might against this enemy. And this three-headed enemy would prevail in the lives of God’s children, were it not for the fact that we have an exalted Savior at the Father’s right hand, who not only pours out his graces upon us, but who’s actively engaged in defending us and preserving us against all enemies.

And congregation, dear believer, where would you be if that had not been the case? Look back in your life, especially those of us who, by grace, have been on the pathway to glory for some time. Where would we be if this were not true, if Christ did not defend us, and if he did not protect us against that enemy? And so, what the Lord Jesus said to Peter, he says to all of his children. He said to Peter—you know, on the eve of his crucifixion—he said, “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not” (Luke 22:31–32). What a precious truth that is. We have a Savior who prays that our faith will not fail. And Peter’s faith would have failed if it were not for that intercessory prayer. Peter

would have gone the same way that Judas went. Judas filled with remorse, who ended his life. But Christ maintained his firm hold on Peter. He prayed for him, he interceded for him that his faith would not fail.

There have been those times in our lives, have there not, that it appeared that we would be swallowed up by our circumstances, swallowed up by our trials. And why is it that we are what we are today? Because we have a living Savior, an exalted Savior, a Savior who is committed to our spiritual wellbeing, a Savior whose delight it is to bless us out of his fulness, but also a Savior who is committed to defend us and to preserve us. In John 16, verse 33, he promises, “In the world, ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” There again, he makes a reference. Even before he died, he makes a reference to what already was a guaranteed outcome, namely, that he would overcome the world. That is our comfort that we have a Savior who has been victorious. It may seem at times that the ungodly will yet prevail, that the ungodly will yet succeed. But be of good cheer. Christ says, “I have overcome the world.” And that’s the comfort of Psalm 2. That’s the beauty of it, that we are lifted above what goes on here below, lifted above all that’s happening in our world, and our eyes are focused on Christ, the exalted King of kings and Lord of lords; a Savior who has promised before his ascension, a promise that he is keeping until this day, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28:20).

And congregation, if that were not so, we would not be here. We—this congregation—we are the living proof of Christ’s commitment to his church. Because, if that were not true, as you well know, Satan would have succeeded long ago in eliminating the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. And he’s relentlessly pursuing that goal. And alarming things are happening in our very own nation. The hostility that is manifesting itself is becoming ever more clear. Because, when we go back to Revelation 20, we know there is a time coming that he will be released for a short season; that he will again succeed in deceiving the nations. And there are troubling signs that that’s happening, that Satan is being loosed. And we see what Paul describes, and we may want to look at that passage in 2 Thessalonians 2, where he talks about the great apostacy, the great falling away, which will set the stage for the man of sin. And we need to realize that this will happen. And when that happens, it will be a time of great persecution, great tribulation, some of which, many of God’s children are already experiencing today. Just imagine living in Nigeria, where people are being slaughtered over, and over again, where their homes are invaded, and they are brutally massacred. That’s a reality. That’s what God’s people are living with. They are living with that reality. And many of God’s children throughout the world are facing the reality of persecution. And if we think of all the persecution that has taken place, the vicious response to the advance of God’s kingdom into the world, I can assure you, we would not be here today. It’s a fact that the church of Jesus Christ is alive and well today, that the gospel is being proclaimed to the very ends of the world can only be attributed to the exalted Christ at the Father’s right hand, who continues to pour out his graces upon his church; who continues to defend and preserve us against all enemies, until his work is complete, until he will come again to judge the quick and the dead.

3. The Final Step of His Exaltation

But obviously we have no time to deal with that, and what is contained in Question #52 is enormously important. And so, with God’s help, in a couple of weeks, I will devote an entire sermon to the return of Christ, the substance of Question and Answer #52.

And so, let me end then, by making again this very personal, because the Catechism is so personal. *What profit is this glory of Christ...to us?* And that means, of course, that means, is this

Christ your portion? Do you know, on biblical grounds, that this Christ suffered and died in your place? That this Christ rose again in your place? That this Christ has carried you into the very presence of God, that you are represented by him at the Father's right hand? How may we know this? How may we know this—if this Christ is ours? That means that the Holy Spirit has made this Christ exceedingly precious to us. Precious, why? Because we see in him the God-given Savior who alone is able to save us from our sins. This is the Christ to whom we will have taken refuge by faith to find our salvation alone in him. This is the Christ in whom we find everything we need for our guilty and polluted soul. This is the Christ who, by the work of the Holy Spirit, has been made precious to our soul, altogether lovely; but also, a Christ that, by grace, we honor, a Christ we follow, a Christ we seek to honor, honoring his Word, because true faith is never alone. True faith will always manifest itself in a Christ-like life. It will manifest itself in the fruits. Because if there is true faith, that means there is a true and living union with this Christ. And that living union with Christ cannot but be fruitful, cannot but manifest itself. And that's why, if we profess to believe in Christ, and there is no evidence that we are also followers of Christ, no evidence that we desire to honor that Savior by honoring his Word, then our faith is not real, then our faith is not the faith of God's children. And that is the people Jesus talks about in Matthew 7, those who call him "Lord," and there are many today who call him "Lord" but who are not doers of the Father's will. That's so remarkable that Christ emphasizes that. As you know, at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, he clearly emphasizes the significance, that true believers, the wise builders, they are doers of the Word; not to merit salvation, but that doing of the Word flows out of a true and living union with the Lord Jesus Christ, the living Word.

And so, I ask you, is this Christ your Christ? May you know, by grace, that he is your Savior. Because that is ultimately the matter we have to come to grips with. Because only when this Christ is our Christ, only when we may know that we are found in him, only when we know ourselves to be washed and cleansed in his blood, only then can we continue our brief journey here below. And so, if you do not know him, you do not know this Christ savingly, oh, I urge you to seek him today, while he still proffers peace and pardon; that you would seek him today, while he still stands before us as the willing and able Savior of sinners, before he comes to judge the living and the dead. Amen.

Let's pray.

Our gracious God, we give thee thanks that we could gather together tonight again, to hear thy Word, to hear about thy precious Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who not only suffered and died on behalf of his people, but a Savior who also rose again, ascended on high, and who is now seated at thy right hand, where he governs all things until thy purpose has been fully accomplished in this world; where he lives to make intercession for us, praying that our faith would not fail; a Christ who, from his heavenly seat of glory, pours out his graces upon us until this day. Oh, how indebted we are to this Savior, not only for saving us, but preserving us in that salvation. And so, we pray that thou wouldst remember us now, as we return to our homes. We pray that thy Word would bear fruit. Also, in this coming week, wilt thou bless us, keep us safely in all that we do. Bless the labor of our hands. Bless our children in school, and gather with us again this coming Lord's Day. Forgive us our sins of this day and of this hour. We ask it alone in Christ's name. Amen.