Where are You Seated?

1. When you get invited to a dinner, it is often important to note where you will sit. Jennifer and I went to a YMCA fundraising dinner last year, and had assigned seats. We spent a bit of time trying to find our table and the seats that were assigned to us. We were pleasantly surprised to find ourselves at a very large round table seated with a familiar group of pastors and their wives.
   a. I wonder what would have happened if Jesus had been assigned a seat with us?
   b. I wonder what we would have felt like? I wonder if what we talked about might have been different that evening?
   c. But the truth is, each of us is in fact SEATED with Christ (in heavenly places).

2. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.
   (Ephesians 2:4-7)
   a. This is an action packed passage, that later ends with a verse we used during the series “Living Life on Purpose” that said, “created good works for us to walk in them.”
   b. We get a big picture view of the goodness and graciousness of God in verses 4 and 5 – “because of His great love with which He loved us, EVEN WHEN were dead in our transgressions (sins), made us alive together with Christ…”
      i. God did for you and me what we didn’t deserve. We didn’t earn it. We didn’t deserve it. We didn’t work for it. In fact, we were headed to hell when he did it for us. Even while we were still sinning and spitting in His face, God loved us with His great love. He even says, “by grace you have been saved.”
      ii. Grace is getting what you don’t deserve. Let me digress:
         1. When you get a diploma from high school or college, you earned it. (or lets hope).
         2. When you get paid a wage or a salary from your employer, you earned it (unless you are on welfare).
         3. When you get ticketed and fined for driving over the speed limit in Madison Village, you most likely earned it.
         4. But when you experienced God’s love and forgiveness…you didn’t deserve it, and you didn’t earn it. In fact, you deserved the opposite.
   5. GRACE: God’s Riches at Christ’s Expense.
      a. Grace is a free gift to the recipient but the gift still costs someone something. When you buy a gift for someone you care about, you may spend a sizeable sum on it, and when you give it to them, you expect nothing in return except for them to graciously receive it with joy.
      b. The same with God’s gifts. Christ paid an enormous price for the gift God gives to you. What is your response to His gift?
      iii. This wonderful gift of God’s grace is beyond our wildest expectations. We are forgiven. We are made alive where as we were once dead. And we have been raised up with Christ…that is the picture of resurrection from the dead.

3. The next part, is the one that we seem to miss. and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus
   a. Seated us with Him in THE heavenly places in Christ Jesus.
      i. That symbolizes ascension to the heavenly realms that Christ lives in now. Where the Father, God Himself resides.
      ii. But the language is more precise that that. He has seated us with Him.
         1. Just like at the table with him. We are together with Him.
2. And the problem for most Christians is that we don’t comprehend what that means. In fact, we consult our bible dictionaries and read the commentators talk about “theological position.” We accept their explanation and forget about even thinking about what it means.

3. But it is deep. So very deep.

iii. The meaning here is several layers deep. To unpack it requires us to understand something about what Jesus commanded us to do and be. In Acts 1:8, Jesus gives his parting words to the disciples before He ascends to the Father. Listen to what He says, “

iv. “…But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.””

1. We examine this verse, and dissect it over and over, but fail to read the most simple phrase of all. “You shall be my witnesses.”

2. That is what he says. He never says, “you shall do witnessing.” But rather, “You shall BE my witnesses.” Funny how we confuse being and doing. We do it all the time.

3. Our “doing” is the result of our “being.”

a. Unpack: Our being flows out of our relationship that we nurture with Christ.

   i. It isn’t automatic. It is the “work” of the Christian life.

   ii. There is one thing we are responsible for “doing.” That is nurturing our relationship with Jesus Christ. Everything we are and do flows out of that. (“Abide in me” John 15).

4. Now, think about what I just said about our “being” and lay that over the passage that we just read about us being “seated with Christ in heavenly places.”

   a. If we see that statement only as a theological statement, then it is useless to us other than to make us feel good about our future.

   b. But if we recognize that is the place where our spirit resides, that it is your place of ACCESS to the resources of heaven, the place of access to the account where your inheritance is deposited, then you begin to understand that you are expected to do more than live your life as a believer in Jesus Christ on autopilot.

   c. In fact, the time you spend with Christ in those heavenly places is the key to your accessing the resources that are with Him in heaven.

      i. You and I need to understand that Jesus didn’t just live a life on earth on autopilot, and do his miracles in his “God power.” He lived in the same limitations as you and I did, setting aside the priveleges and rights of divinity, and lived as a perfect man. He too, resided in heavenly places simultaneously as he lived upon the earth. His spirit dwelt in the heavenlies, and it was because he did so, that he could command a storm to quit and legions of demons to flee. As a result, He could see the heavenly picture, the heavenly version of what this world SHOULD look like; and He could bring that which was in heaven to earth.

      ii. Don’t ever forget the Lord’s Prayer. We gloss over the words when we pray it. But it is a powerful prayer. “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” We are responsible for bringing heaven to earth.

      iii. We need to get heavenly revelation (understanding of the way God intends things to be, the way God designed them to be) and confront the earthly versions.
1. In the natural we understand and see the powers of darkness at work. We know what shouldn’t be here. We know it is contrary to God’s plan that death, sickness, poverty, hatred, war, or evil rule in every corner of our globe. We understand we are to confront it and come against it.

2. But without a heavenly revelation (which is what we get from going to the place where we are seated with Christ) we don’t know what we are to replace the darkness with. It is how Jesus knew exactly what to do and how to do it when He was on this earth.

3. When you see someone in need of prayer, we understand that we are to go and pray with and over them. That is our “job” as believers. But there is even more! God wants us to draw from His spiritual well where we have soaked in His Presence and received intimate downloads to speak and act in supernatural power and wisdom.
   a. Where do we get the faith to perform miracles?
   b. Where do we get supernatural boldness?
   c. Where do we get wisdom to speak or prophetic words to utter?
   d. We get them from the heavenly places where we are seated with Christ. But it doesn’t come automatically. It comes as a result of the time and effort spent to press into the Presence of God where we are privileged to go (because Christ has us seated with Him).

4. We too often draw from this earthly realm to pray over situations instead of praying FROM the realm of heaven (where we are seated with Christ).
   a. I know it sounds like a play on words, but we are privileged to go into those heavenly realms in prayer to lay ahold of the limitless resources and unlimited power God gives in His Presence.

5. God has given us access to minister His resources to minister to people. He also gives us wisdom to know how to do so, if and when we spend the time in His Presence (in those heavenly places).

6. My favorite author calls it the “Presence centered life.” It is the result of living in His Presence in such a way that His Presence covers you wherever you go. His Presence becomes real to people you meet. You can’t explain it. It is the fruit of spending time with Jesus.

5. I know that the passage we read that it says “so that in the ages to come…” “He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”
   a. But we are living in the ages to come right now as well. God desires to show people who He is, and what He has done in your life. He desires to reveal His presence in you and through you.
   b. And there is only one thing holding Him back, because He is a gentleman. He will not force you to obey, and He will not force you to spend time with Him. It is your choice.
   c. I would like each of us to close our eyes and quiet our spirits right now. This is a holy moment, a time in which each person here can for a few minutes, experience what it is to be seated with Christ in the heavenly places.