

**1st Timothy 3: 16; “Jesus’ Triumphal Procession”, Sermon # 47 in the series –
“To Honor God in the Church”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall
on December 22nd, 2013, in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

We in verse 16, we have still want to look at the last 4 phrases, which relate to what has happened following the completion of Christ’s earthly ministry. They concern His triumphal passage back to heaven again, and all that this would mean for us who live in these days, during this present Church age. He was seen by angels, He was preached among the Gentiles, He was believed on in the world, and He was received up in glory. My theme in teaching these verses has been that – In our minds, we should always link Jesus’ triumph over sin and death with our becoming a more godly people. This the mystery of godliness.

Today we will think about these things by remembering where He presently is now. He has been received up into glory, it says in our text. Let us understand that from that position, at God’s right hand in glory, He is now administering His glorious spiritual kingdom in righteousness and justice over all men. As Christ sits upon His glorious throne, He is especially thinking of the advance of truth and righteousness, in regard to His people’s becoming holy. And in that regard He will defend them and do them good forever. So these four events which we read of here, in the latter part of verse 16, are given to us to assure us that Christ’s kingdom will advance with power and glory in every faithful Christian’s heart, and among all nations, all through this evil age in which we live.

1st of all – Jesus’ triumph was seen by angels.

For the past 2 Sundays we have been looking at Jesus’ triumphal passage into the world in His Incarnation, and through this world in perfect righteousness; His having been vindicated in the Spirit at every point in His earthly ministry. In my first sermon, we looked at Christ’s triumphal passage from heaven to earth; how He was God, the 2nd Person of the Divine Trinity before His incarnation. We saw how He was manifested in the flesh in order that He might be manifested in us. This is was the beginning of the mystery of godliness. Then the last time I spoke to you, we saw how Jesus was justified in the Spirit, and vindicated by the Spirit; how He came to fulfill all righteousness on behalf of all of His believing people. He came into the world in order to fulfill God’s holy law, and thereby He become the end of the law for righteousness, to all who will believe. The Holy Spirit, during the whole time of Christ’s earthly ministry, attested to Jesus’ worthiness to be King and Lord of all.

He did this by leading Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by the Devil. He did it at Jesus’ baptism when He descended as dove upon Him. And He did it by leading Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by the Devil. In all that Jesus said and did, the Holy Spirit was there with Him, giving to Him His own blessed influences without measure. And then finally, in His death and resurrection, the Holy Spirit declared that Jesus was the Son of God with power. Because it is true that all that Jesus did, was justified and vindicated by the Spirit, then the Spirit’s working and power in our lives as believers is justified well. And Jesus will also be vindicated in regard to our salvation; all of His applying the redemptive benefits to our souls and bodies; these all being given to us freely on account of His perfect righteousness and His sufferings. Since this is so, we have been seeing that the mystery of godliness, for us, is directly related to Christ’s precious and powerful working in us by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The angels, no doubt, followed the ministry of our Lord Jesus with great admiration and amazement, for He is also their Lord; not by redemption, but by creation. What wonder must have filled their holy minds at the Incarnation of our Lord, that their King, the King of glory, would choose a multitude of the heavenly host to be the bearers of the glad tidings to the shepherds; and further, that one of them would be given that great privilege of telling these

simple and humble men, “Do not be afraid”, for we bring you glad tidings. They were no doubt amazed, that the Son of God should take such a low position in identification with sinful men and women; that He would be united with human flesh, and that perfect deity would be united with weak and fallen humanity in a true union of natures in the one blessed Person of Christ. What kind of salvation did He come to work out, they wondered? They saw Him grow up in obscurity, but as a perfect Child. They saw Him in the wilderness with the beasts, being tempted by the Devil, and weak with hunger. And after He passed the test, they came and ministered unto Him.

But the thing which must have moved the holy angels the most was the approach of their Lord Jesus to the cross. Oh, how they must have greatly desired to come to His aid; for the whole mission of angels is to render help to those who will inherit salvation. How much more when their King, the One who had come to accomplish redemption, was suffering! The angels are ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation. But what could they do for their Lord when He came to the Garden of Gethsemane? One angel did come, having orders from God; He came to Jesus as He knelt there in the Garden to strengthen Him when He was in agony. Jesus was praying and sweating as were, great drops of blood in thinking of the wrath of God which was coming upon Him. He knew the just punishment which we so richly deserved, as sinners, and He was planning to bear it.

This angel knew full well, what Jesus knew, when a multitude came with swords and clubs from the chief priests and elders of the people, to arrest Him. Peter and another disciple drew their swords, and Peter cut off the high priest’s ear. But Jesus said to him, “Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword.” “Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?” (Matthew 26: 52 and 53) The angels saw all this and they knew that they could not come to Jesus’ aid. They knew the Scriptures must be fulfilled. They knew that He must suffer first, and only then would come glory.

And so it is with God’s dear people. We too, are seen by angels. And the angels have been sent out, to render service to those who will inherit salvation; all because Jesus triumphed over sin and death. The angels are charged with protecting us. But they also know that we must at times suffer for the sake of righteousness. Sufferings are appointed at certain times in our earthly pilgrimage, according to the will of God. But let me now ask you now, whether you are thankful for the ministrations of angels? You cannot see them, but they are there watching over you for good, according to the holy will of God. Psalm 91, verse 11 says: “He will give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways”; physically that is, for an angel cannot keep your heart. Only God the Holy Spirit can do that.

And, if you will remember, this verse had its ultimate fulfillment in the Lord Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness, where Satan tried to get our Lord to throw Himself down from the temple; quoting this very verse, but leaving out the part, “in all your ways”. And it was angels who came to Him, and ministered to Him, after He passed this test. But Jesus was seen of angels at every step of His earthly sojourn, and we as believers are also seen of angels all during our life here upon the earth. When Jesus ascended to heaven He did so in the presence of many angels. And when you die, dear Christian, your spirit shall be carried by the angels to be in the very presence of the Lord, even as Lazarus was carried by angels to Abraham’s bosom. Therefore, let your heart be strengthened, for God has every aspect of your salvation has been planned out from beginning to end, and not only Jesus was seen of angels, but you are seen of them and helped by them, for His sake.

2nd – Jesus’ triumph was also preached among the Gentiles.

How you and I ought to glory that it is so; that we who were Gentiles, strangers and aliens to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. We who had no right

to expect that grace should be extended to us, have been shown the mercy of hearing and receiving the gospel. In His death, Jesus broke down the barrier between Jew and Gentile; He removed the wall of separation to create one new man, and thus He made peace between all people groups and nations, in Himself, as they would trust in Him. What a tangible benefit to godliness! What a blow to self-righteous and ethnic pride! Now, there is no longer Jew and Gentile, barbarian, or Scythian, slave or free in terms of spiritual privileges – We are one in Christ! Our boast is in Him. Since you have received such mercy, will you not present your body a living sacrifice to God which is your reasonable service of worship? Will we not leave behind the World's philosophies and ways of doing things, and prove to yourself that God's will as revealed in His word is good and acceptable and perfect? (Rom. 12: 1, 2) May it truly be so!

By way of application, seeing as Jesus has been preached to you from this pulpit as the One for whom you should live your life for, and live your life to, ask yourself whether you really are becoming more heavenly-minded? Is your mind really set on things above, and not the things of the earth? Do you really realize, dear believer, that you have died to sin and are crucified to the world, and that your life is hidden with Christ in God? I trust that you understand that this is the great end of preaching; that you would learn to cultivate the garden of your heart, in order to bring forth fruit to God. Are you becoming less worldly and more spiritually-minded? Christ's triumph in His holy life and sacrificial death, as you believe in it and look to Him by faith, is meant to truly change your heart for the better; so that you love righteousness more, and hate lawlessness so much that you will repent and change your way of life to bring it into accord with the truths of what God has commanded you to do, dear Christian.

Let this be a spiritually-minded Christmas this year for you. Let this be a time where you spend more time consciously thinking about what Christ would have you to do for Him. This will no doubt mean spending less time with television, movies, and video games, and more time in reading good books and sharing the truth of what it means to be a Christian with others around you. But this is what glorifies God, whereas worldliness is a scourge to true godliness. "Godliness with contentment is great gain." "For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out." O Christian please bear this in mind in the coming days; and prepare yourself for eternity. Store up for yourself a good foundation for the time to come. Lay hold on eternal life.

Then, 3rd, Jesus' triumph was that He was believed on in the world.

There is always a sense in which will be so. Christ shall always have a believing people in this world, even if they are only a few. There is a sense in which all the world has believed in Him at times, and there have also been times when it seemed that all was lost with regard to His cause. Look at John 12: 12-21 with me. "The next day a great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him, and cried out: 'Hosanna!' 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!' 'The King of Israel!'" "Then Jesus, when He had found a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written: 'Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold your King is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt.'"

"His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written about Him and that they had done these things to Him." "Therefore the people, who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of his tomb and raised him from the dead, bore witness." "For this reason the people also met Him, because they heard that He had done this sign." "The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, 'You see that you are accomplishing nothing.'" "Look, the world has gone after Him!" (That is how it appeared to them) "Now there were certain Greeks among those who came up to worship at the feast." "Then they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, 'Sir, we wish to see Jesus.'"

What great interest in Christ there was then! He was believed on in the world. There will always, in this age, be people on both sides of this great concern; people like the Pharisees who were opposed to Jesus because He spoke against their false religion of works-righteousness and their sacramental religion which they had built up around the truth of the Scriptures. These were actually concerned that the whole world was following Him! They didn't like it. And then there were those people who were trying to see Jesus – even the Greeks who had come up to worship at the feast. They were probably proselytes of the gate. They could not offer sacrifices, or have the priests offer them for them, but they came to worship anyway. Jesus is the essence of all true religion, and we must seek for Him and ask for Him for salvation, if we would know God. He was believed on in the world, even before His work was finished on the cross. But when He went to the cross and died, as the perfect sacrifice for our sins, then His death produced much grain, or fruit. He sowed His life, and His precious life reaped a harvest, and thus began the triumphal procession.

4th – We see that the Lord Jesus was received up in glory.

That is – Following His resurrection and ascension He was taken up into glory. It is from this vantage point, at the right hand of the Father, on the throne of glory, that our Lord Christ rules the world in righteousness, and He watches over His kingdom's advance. In the days of the apostles, the gospel was preached to their whole then known world. Thomas, it is reported, even went to India to preach the gospel to the Gentiles there. The Apostle Paul could say in Romans Chapter 15, verse 17 – “Therefore I have reason to glory in Christ Jesus in the things which pertain to God.” “For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ has not accomplished through me, in word and deed, to make the Gentiles obedient—in mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.” He even says that he desired to go to Spain to preach. (verse 24)

But let us see that in the providential ordering of God, Christ's kingdom shall eventually triumph in the earth because Jesus was taken up to glory. The Father says to the Son in Psalm 110 – “Sit at My right hand until I make all your enemies a footstool for Your feet.” And in Psalm 72, verse 15 it says: “And He (that is Christ) shall live; (that is He was raised from the dead) and the gold of Sheba will be given to Him.” “Prayer also will be made for Him continually and daily He shall be praised.” This is Christ's kingdom making progress during this present evil age.

But there will come a time when it will flourish in all the earth. Christ is being believed on in the world, and He will be believed on in a greater sense yet before He returns. Verse 16 says: “There will be an abundance of grain in the earth, on the top of the mountain; its fruit shall wave like Lebanon; and those of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth.” “His name shall endure forever; His name shall continue as long as the sun.” “And men shall be blessed in Him; all nations shall call Him blessed.” “Blessed be the Lord God the God of Israel, who only does wondrous things!” “And blessed be His glorious name forever!” “And let the whole earth be filled with his glory.” “Amen and Amen.” Do you see why Christians everywhere ought always to be very optimistic in their belief that Christ's kingdom shall flourish and indeed conquer eventually among the nations? His harvest will not be meager. The whole earth shall be filled with His glory. He only does wondrous things.

He is received up into glory; but His Elect are still being called and there shall be a multitude which no man can number who will inherit eternal life. The mystery of godliness is that Christ is triumphant in His incarnation, triumphant in His ascension, and even now, He is triumphantly reigning on His throne. It is from there that He calls sinners to repentance, and His saints to holy living, for He shall come again, and what a joy it shall be for all those believing in Him.

