

One of the fun of things of being a dad...
 is seeing your kids in **team sport**.
 And I remember a particular team - for my youngest child...
 It was mixed soccer - Under-8s...
 And here she is with her team.
 Ready and raring to crush and destroy.
 But the thing I remember most that year...
 Was a kid in her team named "Jay".
 And I don't know what Jay was **fed**...
 Or how many times he was...
 But let me tell you - Jay was **big**.
 And Jay was **very good**,.
 So much so... **that when Jay played**
 the whole team just played better...

In fact
 When Giant Jay was on the field...
It was all OK.
There was no need for.
He would get it done.
 In fact I remember one game...
 Where Jay was playing.
 And typically scoring far too much.
 That the coach of the team (who was his dad)...
 Made the rule for that day...
 That Jay couldn't cross the half-way line.

For rest of the game - He was only allowed...
 To play within the defensive side.
 And so what did Giant Jay do...?
 Without showing off...
 And not out of spite...
 (I mean he was sweetest, nicest kids..)
 Jay took the ball - to the half line...
 And booted the ball from there...
 And scored a goal from there.
 And that's how it was - with Giant Jay...

When Giant Jay was on the field - then it was all OK.
 Just get the ball to Giant Jay - and it will be OK.

And yet...
 When Giant Jay **WASN'T** there...
 Those were harder days...
 That was different story...
 When the team arrived - and looked around - **and saw there was no Jay**...
 Well, you hardly wanted play...
 You wished that you had Jay.

And the reason I tell you that story is...
 I think that's how we often feel
 As we think of Jesus' ascension.
 Indeed, I think that's how I sometimes feel...
 As I think of Jesus Ascension!
 As if "Giant Jay" has left the field...
 And we're now on our own.
 As if it was great when he had the ball...
 And will be again when he returns...
 But it is not that day right now...
 Today's a harder day...

At least for now - he's **off the field**...
 And we are left to play...
 Without our Giant Jay.

As one author put it - speaking of the ascension:
 "It's as if our best player by far was substituted...
 just as the game was beginning."

And I'll never forget another daughter saying pretty that...
 When small and hurt - through her tears she said?
 'Why did he have to leave?'
 'Why did he have to go?'
 'Why can't Jesus just be here?'
 'Why couldn't Jesus stay?'

And I want to ask...
 With all the ups and downs of life...
 And now at the end of a long semester...
 (And yes I know we know the doctrine!)
 But do you know what she means?
 Do you know how she feels?
 When **we** feel small and hurt and tearful...
 Do you know what she means?
 'Why did Jesus have to leave?'
 'Why can't He just be here?'

And what do we need to know when we do?
 (And what do we need to serve your students...)

We need to know the Ascension...
 And what that means for **now**...

What that means for the **game** we're in...
 What that means for our **mission**..

And what's that?

Well, it's that **because** our giant has ascended.
 And is right now at God's right hand...
 Exalted King. Forever Priest...

He IS here with us
 He IS ON the field.
 He's AT WORK in his world.

Physically there where we need him to be.
 Ruling his world - keeping us safe.
 Up on pride rock - Melchizedek priest

And yet precisely **because he is...**
 He's also here with us.
 Spiritually - really - with us.

Which I take it is why we heard in our reading...
 There in John 14:18...

**I will not leave you as orphans;
 I will come to you.
 Jn 14:18.**

(And I admit that verse is contended...
 Some see it pointing to when Jesus rose.
 Others look further to when he returns.

But I think Jesus means **different**...
 And I think Jesus means **sooner**...

I think he means what we saw Acts 2...
 When once **ascended** he sent his Spirit.
 And through Him came to us.
 Though the spirit and **word**...

And I take it's why he says, just a few verse later...
 In John 14 verse 20.

**I am in you
 Jn 14:20**

Or a little bit later, verse 23:

**and we will come to them
and make our home with them
 Jn 14:23.**

Which kind of ruins that saying - right?
 “Well, You can't be into places at once.”
 Either you're here or you're there.

Which normally speaking is physically true.
But wonderfully not by the spirit.
 And why?

Because of the ascension!
Both for him **and** us!

Him **physically** there with the Father...
 Yet **spiritually** here with us in His world.
 And us **physically** here together.
 Yet **spiritually** there with him.
 Through our **union** with Him.
Because of the Ascension.

Which I take it's why Jesus goes on to say a few chapters later...
It is good for you that I am going away...
John 16:7

Why?
 Because when he goes - the spirit will come.
 And when he comes - Jesus will too.
 Just as Paul will write in Romans 8...
 As he speak of of the Spirit - living in us...
 How does he describe it?

But...
if Christ...
is in you...
Ro 8:10.

Why?
 Because that's what happens when the Spirit comes.
 Indeed it's the very best thing about the his coming...
 That Jesus comes to us.
 He comes to **live** in us.

And I have to confess...
 that I don't think - that's how I often think...

When I think of Jesus' ascending...
 And his sending the Spirit to us.

No I think for me - it's much more like...
 A sporting **substitution**...
 A kind of “spiritual relay”.

Like when my little Izzy comes from the field...
 And another goes in in to take her place.
 Or when the swimmer - touches the wall...
 And another dives to take it from here.

But according to God - it's not.
 It's not as **neat** as that.
 Not as **separate** as that.

Jesus hasn't just subbed out.
 Jesus hasn't left the pool.
 No, **he's** still on the field!
He's at work in his world!

Actually, if anything, as I thought about it - it's less like swimmers in a freestyle relay...
 And more like wrestler is in the WWE!

And especially that moment where one taps in...
 And just for a moment, they're both together...
 Both, they're in the Ring...
 Both, they're in the game...
 Both, they're in the fight!

And that's not to say - we don't still LONG...
 For the day he returns - the day we rise.
 Just as Paul will say again and again.

To be with Christ is better by far...
Php 1:23

Or we'd:
prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord
2 Cor 5:8

Or as John ends his book - and the Bible...
"Come, Lord Jesus" Come
Rev 22:20

And yet...
 While we wait for that wonderful day...
 We're not just left here on our own...

Or just with a coach on the side.
 Or just with a friend at the end.
 Cheering and calling us home.

No!
He is in the game.

He's at work in His world.
By his words and Spirit and people.

And before we go - in 2s and 3s - I want to ask:
Where do you see it?
Where do you see this truth...
On the pages of Scriptures.

Where does the Bible say or imply...
That Jesus **himself** - is at work in His world?

One clear place is Acts chapter 1.
(And... then through the rest of the book!)

As Luke's gospel ends - their recounting Ascension...
And the book of acts begins - again recounting Ascension...
What a Luke opening words?

**In my former book, Theophilus,
I wrote about...
all that Jesus began
to do and to teach
until the day he was taken up to heaven
Acts 1:1-2.**

Implication?
My current book is all about...
What he **continued** to do...
After he was taken.

That's why Philip Jensen - in his terrific book on the work of the spirit - entitles Acts as...
'the book of the acts of the resurrected Jesus through the Holy Spirit through his chosen apostles'

Catchy - isn't it?
And it's right!
With one possible improvement...

'the book of the acts of the resurrected **and ascended Lord** Jesus... through the Holy Spirit through his
chosen apostles' :)

And another example is in Act 26.
Listen carefully to what Paul says.

**But God has helped me to this very day; so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am
saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen**

[what's that?]

**23 that the Messiah would suffer
and, as the first to rise from the dead,
[He] would bring the message of light
to his own people and to the Gentiles.”
Ac 26:22–23.**

And again, I suppose that you could argue...
That's what he did when he rose again...
Those 40 days... seen by hundreds...
But again I think that Paul means **more**.

I think he means what **Luke did...**
Back in Acts chapter 1...
That this is Jesus **continuing...**
To **do** and **teach** - even now.
Though his spirit - though his people...
Yet still really - **Him**.

And I think it's why Paul was saying Ephesians chapter 2...

Chapter 2, Verse 17:

**He [Jesus]
came and preached peace to you
who were far away
and peace to those who were near.
Eph 2:17.**

And again, do you see it?

Jesus IS the **preacher** - even as we preach.
Jesus IS the **speaker** - even as we speak.

Every time the word is **preached**.
Rightly, truly, clearly.

Every time his word is **spoken** - even to a friend...
Jesus is speaking too - through his Spirit and people.

Or - in other words...
Giant Jay is on the field!!
He's still in the game!

And he's on the field too - **keeping His own...**
Holding His people - firm to the end.

Hear it here in 1 Corinthians 1:
**Therefore
you do not lack any spiritual gift
as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed.**

8 He will also keep you firm to the end,
so that you will be blameless
on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ
1 Co 1:7–8.

Or 2 Thessalonians 3

But the Lord is faithful,
and he will strengthen you
and protect you from the evil one.
2 Th 3:3.

Or Romans 14

Who are you to judge someone else's servant?
To their own master, servants stand or fall.
And they will stand,

Why?

for the Lord [Jesus Christ]
is able to make them stand.
Ro 14:4.

As Peter Orr puts in his really wonderful book.

It is Christ [...] who continues to work and who [...] continues to
cause the progress of the gospel.
Furthermore, it is Christ who ensures that believers will stand and be established in him.¹

Or better yet...

As once again, Australia's Premier theologian puts it...

In another piece of Colin Buchanan genius...

Hang on to Jesus - hold on to the truth
Hang on to Jesus - no matter what you do
Hang on to Jesus - He loves His children so

And then...

(and this is the genius...)

His grip is strong - so just hang on - he'll never let you go.

His grip is strong

Jesus' that is...

- so just hang on...

He'll never let you go.

¹ Peter C. Orr, Exalted above the Heavens: The Risen and Ascended Christ, 176–177.

And isn't it just wonderful!?
Isn't just so good!?

As we go about Christian lives...
AS we go about our Christian mission...

What is Jesus's now?
THAT
THAT is what he's doing.

He's at work - advancing the gospel.
He's at work - keeping His own.
He's at work in His world.

And as I hinted at the start of the weekend...
This has been a precious, precious truth for me.
And especially these last few years.

To be reminded clearly again that **he's the one at work.**
Even as I work.

That **ALL** ministry is **Jesus'** ministry.
BEFORE and **MORE** than it's ours

Even as He's there - where we need him to be.
Exalted King, forever priest.
On pride rock our new Melchizedek...

He is **ALSO** here.
He is on the field.
He's at work in his world.

And so as we come to close - I just want to share just 3 of the ways - this has especially impacted me - and I hope will impact you.

And first of those is: **Communion**
Or perhaps even better: **Intimacy.**
Our intimate communion with God through Christ.

I've become convinced these last few years...
Just how important our **communion** is...

Both **in and of itself...**
As a goal for which we're saved.

And as the thing that **feeds and fuels** pretty much everything else.
My best attempt at mission courage...
My best attempt at holy living...
My best attempt at counting the cost...

All of it, largely, fed and fuelled...
 From a foundation - of communion with HIM
 Willing to count the cost.

And one of the things that's really helped...
 Is remembering the ascension...
 Remembering **where** he is...
 Remembering **what** he's doing...
 Remembering **myself** WITH him!

As that old 13th century prayer once put it:

**O most merciful Redeemer, friend and brother,
 May I know thee more clearly,
 Love thee more dearly,
 Follow thee more nearly,
 Day by day. Amen."**

And remembering the Ascension has helped me pray that.

And just one of the ways I've been trying to express it...
 Is by praying more **intimate** prayers.
 And sharing more **intimate** things
 (as much as a former engineer can... :)

And in particular by writing it down.
 As little morning letter to God.
And to Jesus His son.
 To Jesus - our king and priest.

And often what that looks like is beginning by praying to God our Father - just as Jesus' himself modelled. The stable pattern of Christian prayer
 But then at various points...
 Addressing Jesus himself...
 Just as, I think, Paul does in his letters **because** he has ascended.
Because he's at work in his world.

And remembering the Ascension has helped that.
 It's helped me take it personally.
 It's helped in my communion.

1st: Communion
 2nd: **Calmness**
Calmness

For which there has to be a better word for right?
 But there you go - that's all I've got...

And it's not like it's true all of the time...

I'm naturally stressey...
I fear public speaking...

But **knowing** that he's at work in his world...
And knowing that I am not alone in word...
That **ALL** ministry is Jesus' ministry...
Before it's mine and **more** than it's mine...

It has made me calmer - in living for Him.
And the language that's helped me a lot, I think...
Is the language of: "WITH"

That I don't just live FOR my Lord.
And I don't just live UNDER my Lord.
(Though both of those things are wonderfully true.)

But that I also **live** WITH Him...
I also serve WITH Him...
Every time I do.

Like a dad with his daughter - building a deck...
Or a mum with her son - baking a pie...
Where let's honest - Nobody is fooled...
About who's really getting it done...

And yet there are those kids...
With hammer and spoon and hand.
Really working together.
Together getting it done.

And... so it is with me...
With my heavenly father...
Even, in fact, right now...

And that has made me calmer - in my service of Him
And finally... **courage**.
Courage.

I think it was a colleague of mine: Cathy Walter who first taught me.
That when a person feels at risk...
 They tend to play it safe.
But when a person's knows their safe.
 That's when they take risks.
 That's when they show courage.

And actually, by the way, even the good people at Google agree.
I their famous 2012 Project Aristotle - where they poured 2 years and loads of resources into learning what makes teams work...

Do you know what was top of the list?
 It was this!
 "psychological safety"
 Meaning?

When their people felt safe - that's when they took risks.
 When their people felt safe - that's when they had courage.

And...
 How much more should I...!?

In light of Jesus' ascension.
 And what that means for us.

That because he rose.
 And then ascended.
 And then he sent His Spirit to us...
 He's at work in His world.
 He is here with us.
 Giant Jay is on the field.

And so...
 With that friend at work or Uni...
 With my money or prayers or time...
 With whatever needs to be done.
 I can give it a go.
 His ascension give me courage.

Or as one wonderful timid student put it...
 In a campus mission - a few years ago...
 After a series of talks just like this...
 (and with this we close)

Faith

T2 Mission Encouragement 🗣️🗣️

We're not only serving Jesus but doing it with Him and it's not up to us to transform people but it's through God's power.

Therefore 🙌, we don't need to be afraid of rejection or feeling like you're not good enough to serve.

Jesus is with us, playing on the field!



Let's praise God that He is!

Let's pray.