

“Where is Jesus? – Baptism & Communion”

In our fall message series “Worship in Beauty and Holiness” we have considered the following principles:

1. Worship is God’s Holy Conversation with us, his beloved, yet flawed and rebellious creatures.
2. Worship is about pleasing, praising, and exalting God, not ourselves.
3. worship expresses our thankfulness and praise for the Father’s great mercy and gracious tender love,
4. God makes worship an opportunity for us to sing Heaven’s favorites with the angels
5. In worship, the Holy Spirit speaks to us in very specific ways through Scripture and sermon
6. The peace we share is Jesus’ reconciliation, not our pleasantries.
7. The Offering is a joyful time of returning thanks to God and purposefully funding God’s mission on earth.
8. We are victorious over evil through our faith in God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who hears and responds to our prayers.

In the last 2 weeks of our series, we will take up the special presence of Jesus and what our purpose is in this world.

So today’s theme is “Where is Jesus?”

We hear the Bible stories from the Gospels and we know that Jesus was a particular Jewish man from the region of Galilee.

We know he was executed by crucifixion for alleged blasphemy because he acted as God and claimed he was God.

We know he was officially declared dead and buried.

We have eyewitness accounts of his empty tomb,
multiple appearances to groups of his disciples as risen from the
dead,
and his disappearance into the sky.

So where is Jesus now?

It's an important question and cannot be answered by science,
journalism, or ancestry.com

The answer lies in the being of God

– the Source of all matter and anti-matter,
whose Word and Spirit makes things happen.

God's Word and Spirit became a human being -- Jesus
– whose purpose and destiny is to bring the whole human race –
and with it the whole creation – into right alignment with God.

This is accomplished by the one man – Jesus
– **forming deep personal relationships** with people
and connecting them with God by his actions:

- --healing
- --casting out evil spirits
- --miraculous feasts and
- --other deeds of power

**Jesus' life was all about helping people connect with God the Father
through relationship with him.**

Well and good.

But how would Jesus overcome the limitations of time and space?

Everyone must die – even him.

God’s Word and Spirit needed to be multiplied beyond the death of one person.

**So, Jesus rose from the dead,
distributed his Spirit to others,
and sent them out with particular signs and messages.**

The first way he multiplied his Spirit was when he breathed on the disciples in the upper room and said “Shalom Aleichem – peace be with you.”

He went on to say, “*As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.*”
²² *And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.*
²³ *If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”*

The Holy Spirit has now moved from Jesus’ one body to the disciples’ many bodies.

**And each time that same peace is shared,
Jesus’ multiplication of Word and Spirit occurs**
– even this morning when we share Christ’s peace with one another.

But that’s not the only way God’s Word and Spirit are multiplied with Jesus’ death and resurrection.

In fact, for most people, it is not the first way,

because **only disciples know what God's peace is.**

And – as Jesus well knows – you must be born first in order to follow.

So, Jesus instructs his disciples to multiply his Word and Spirit in a particular way:

Make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you.

Baptism is the birth of a disciple, a follower of Jesus;

and the teachings of Jesus are the life-long curricula for learning how to follow.

Baptism is the first Sacrament

- The direct experience of God by God's own command and promise,
- the Word and Holy Spirit given with water and the laying on of hands.

Each Baptized child of God is a multiplication of God's Word and Spirit –a member of the Body of Christ that is many in one.

Birth happens once

– and Baptism happens once in the life of a disciple.

And just as babies need ongoing nourishment to grow and learn, so do disciples.

So, Jesus provided another way for God's Word and Spirit to be multiplied in his death and resurrection:

Luke 24 tells us that two disciples recognized the risen Jesus bodily present with them when he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and gave it to them.

Before his death, Jesus had celebrated the Passover with his disciples in a new way.

Taking the blessed bread, he said “This is my body, given for you. Whenever you do this, Do this in remembrance of me.”

And taking the blessed cup of wine, he said “This is my blood poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you do this, Do this in remembrance of me.”

Jesus is bodily present to us in the bread and wine – we have his word on it!

Whatever it may be called:

- Holy Communion –the Lord’s Supper –
- the Breaking of the Bread – the Holy Eucharist –
- the Mass –the Sacrament of the Altar –

This sacrament is a multiplication of Jesus

from the one body on the cross and in the upper room

to our many bodies who eat and drink him in faith.

When we take Communion,

What we receive is the living body, blood,

Word and Spirit of Jesus **in us and for us.**

And that gives us Jesus’ life of resurrection to live now!

So, we may say with St. Paul (Galatians 2:20): *I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

Where is Jesus?

- In the Water and Spirit of Baptism;
- In the word of peace we share;
- in the gracious Bread and cup of Holy Communion;
- in the gathered congregation of believers;
- in the Words of Holy Scripture;
- in the lives we have been reborn to live.

Jesus can – and does – show up in many places.

But these are occasions when he has *promised* to be present in Word and Spirit,

so that his resurrection might give life not just to himself,

but to many.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PhxzzM4t4Kw>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Lrds3SLz6E>