

Christ - Still Doing

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[0 : 00] Now we're going to consider, like I said, the subject tonight of Jesus' work ongoing. So Christ's still working. We've been looking over the past few weeks at all various aspects of who Jesus is and what Jesus has done in his wonderful work, the Gospel, and all of that means to us.

But tonight's title is Christ's Still Doing. Bible speaks about the fact that Christ sat down at the right hand of the Father of the Majesty and yet it's not like he does nothing now in heaven.

So his work in many ways is ongoing. So what does that look like? What does that mean? I want to start by asking you to just imagine for a minute. Cast your minds back if you do know the story in the Bible of Queen Esther.

You know the Queen Esther was somebody who was of God's people but came at a very peculiar time in many ways into the story of the Bible and she ended up married to the king of the country in which she was taken.

And she had this extraordinary situation where she herself and her people were in great danger. They got to a particular point in their history as a people and they were in great need. There were plots made against them.

[1 : 17] They were in danger of being wiped out. So she had a pretty key role because she was married to the king, king was powerful. Now if you know the story you'll know that she is the one who has to go to the king and try and influence the king.

Imagine then for a minute. Imagine in that situation where she's not the one who wields power but husband is and in those days the king in many ways could admit or not whoever they felt like or didn't feel like.

She's standing, approaching on the way to her husband the king's chamber and how she's feeling at that moment in time.

She doesn't have the assurance necessarily that she'll be welcomed and that she'll have an audience and that her plea will be granted. She stands as she reaches the door and if you like she waits for a minute and she doesn't know at that point in time whether she'll be accepted and whether she'll be granted an audience and whether she will as in God's province the king does hold out the scepter and accept her.

She doesn't know because she doesn't have the instinctive right to just walk into his company and say here's what I want you to do today. Here's my request for the day.

[2 : 34] She doesn't have the ability to do that. And the point of that just mentioning that isn't that she got to go into the king's chamber. It's not like well that was the key point that she was able to just walk in and look around and speak to him even.

The point was that she was accepted. Isn't that the crucial thing about that story that she gains an audience. She's not got assurance of that audience before she goes but she's given that assurance, that welcome and she's able to go in and she's able to make her request.

Now we probably know to greater or lesser extent that experience of going to somebody probably who's a superior and not knowing how they're going to react.

You stand outside your boss's door with bad news. You've no idea if you'll be welcome and if your news will be received with grace or with fury.

We have these situations that we have to deal with sometimes. Just don't know the outcome. Our presence there isn't guaranteed. Not necessarily welcome. We don't know how things are going to go. Now think about an even bigger thing than that as believers tonight.

[3 : 45] The extraordinary fact that as Christians we have guaranteed, promised, ongoing access directly to God.

Right into as it were the throne room. We are able to go every day, not just today, not just in this hour on a Sunday in church. You can go home and speak to the Father.

You can get up tomorrow and go back and he won't say, oh you again, he will welcome you as his child. And that is the incredible truth that the Bible presents to us.

And that's because we have Jesus as an intercessor, as a mediator, as one who is working to ensure the fact that we are able to go before him because of the work that he has done.

So all of what we've been talking about for the past months even, all of the work of Jesus was that we might be saved and that in an ongoing way we might be able to have assurance of an audience with the Lord.

[4 : 55] We can take great confidence in that. So I just want to look at that tonight. First of all, Jesus is rolling that. What does that look like? How does Jesus ensure that?

And then secondly, how it changes things for us. How it changes things for us in our daily lives. First of all, Jesus is rolled. So Jesus is the mediator making intercession for us.

Now you may have heard that before and you may not know exactly what that means. Well a mediator is somebody who speaks on another's behalf. So Jesus in heaven speaks on our behalf.

And the first thing to say about that is that's because we need one, isn't it? And again, that goes back to all that we've been looking at over the last few weeks. We know, we should know, that it's not possible for us simply to go to God on our own terms and say, here I am.

I presume you will accept me. I've been a pretty good person. We know that. That's what the Gospel compels us. It shows us who we are and the reality of ourselves. And if you like the poverty of our own righteousness, we don't have perfect righteousness, therefore we need it.

[6 : 02] And that drives us to the Gospel. So we can't just go by ourselves, knock on the throne room of heaven and walk in. We're not able to do that.

We're not able to stand in God's presence. We see that, if you like, if you look back into the Old Testament, we have seen that over the last few weeks. We see that in terms of the way that the community of God's people have always had to have an interceder, somebody who represented them, if you like.

Now in the Old Testament, that was the priests, wasn't it? The covenant people of God, whatever they were, wherever they lived, had to make atonement for their sins.

And who would do that but a priest? So if you like, if you go back to Leviticus, where you read about a lot of these things, Leviticus chapter 16 describes, it describes first of all the way that the priest would have to make a performer sacrifice for himself so that he was fit, if you like, to go before the Lord and then to offer a sacrifice on behalf of the people.

But there had to be this crucial role of this person who did this. And of course they had these very careful rules and regulations to observe signifying the care and the protection and the purity required to come into God's presence.

[7 : 16] You don't just breeze into God's presence, unclean. So we read, and you can read lots about that in the Old Testament.

And that is foundational to the fact that all of that points forward as again, we saw just last week, the week before, the foundational work of Jesus fulfills that. All of that is pointing forward to Jesus.

The sacrifices point forward to Jesus. They themselves were never able to make atonement for sin. You can't sacrifice an animal and therefore have your sins forgiven. They point forward to the work of Jesus.

And so Jesus comes as the ultimate priest. Why? Because he offered himself on the cross. So he gives himself the perfect sinless sacrifice for our sins.

And on that fact rests our hope and our belief. And that is the gospel. And so Jesus's ongoing work now always rests on that aspect of his completed work.

[8 : 22] I'm going to speak on, I'm going to go on just now to speak about his ongoing work. But we always, when we talk about the intercession of Jesus and what Jesus is doing now at the right hand of the Father in heaven, that is founded on, that rests on.

He's able to look back and refer to the work that he did on the cross, the finished work where he offered himself as the ultimate sacrifice.

So what does he do now? Jesus ascended, he went through the cross, he was raised again by the power of God and he ascended into heaven. And what does he do?

He makes intercession? What does that mean? What does he do? Well, he's our advocate. If you like to think about it like that. He's our advocate. He's the one who speaks for us.

I came across this great description. I actually think it was on an NHS website. It happened to be on this week. Listen to this. This is how he describes an advocate, how you might need an advocate if you are in trouble and health, you're healthy in some way.

[9 : 23] An advocate might help you access information you need or go with you to meetings or interviews in a supportive role. You may want your advocate to write letters on your behalf and here's, here's a really applicable bit.

Or speak for you in situations where you don't feel able to speak for yourself. So somebody, for example, perhaps somebody who's disadvantaged or who's really struggling to make sense of what's going on or who's too ill to deal with what's happening to them, who basically is disempowered, maybe need another to represent them and to support them and to speak for them and to help them.

It's a work of an advocate. Of course, there are many applications of an advocate in a legal sense in all kinds of ways. But Jesus is the one because of all that he has done, the certainty and the power and the effectiveness of the work that he's done.

Jesus, therefore, is the one who speaks before the Father on your behalf and on my behalf. In verse 34, it says in the passage that we read, Jesus is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

He's interceding for us. He's speaking on our behalf. He's aware of us and all that we are doing and have done and all of our needs and he represents us before the Father.

[10 : 39] He's able to say the work that I did is sufficient to cover their poverty and their need and therefore they are admitted.

So he speaks to the Father on our behalf. And that's in an ongoing way as well, isn't it? That's how we become Christians, if you like. We know that we go with our need and we say, Lord, I need your forgiveness.

I need the work of Jesus to apply to me. But you know the experience, perhaps, of being a Christian and in an ongoing way feeling like you take a step forward and a couple of steps back because we keep wrestling with sin.

We keep, even though we don't want to often, our nature is such that we're often wrestling, fighting with our, with the temptations and all the rest of it.

And there's this wonderful verse. Let me just read this verse in 1 John, 1 John chapter 2. It says, I write this to you so that you will not sin. You know, it's never the case that the Bible says you've become a Christian.

[11 : 42] Relax, you're fine. We're always encouraged to live as Christ lived. So I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense, Jesus Christ, the righteous way.

See that? He speaks to the Father in our defense because he's the righteous one. He's the one who did all that was necessary and is covered, our unrighteousness and he's able to deal with it.

Now here's the thing about the kind of advocate that Jesus is and the kind of situation that exists there. We go to him, we go to the Father and we confess and we need to come back to him as we so often do.

Like this morning we were looking at the need to be re-centered if you like in our Christian life. Sometimes we can wander and stray to a greater or a lesser extent, but we go back to the Lord with all the realization of our stupidity sometimes, of our struggles and of how difficult we find it to follow the Lord's way.

With all of our guilt and the inclination of that moment is not to go back to the Lord because you know what it's like often if you go back to somebody who you've hurt or sinned against as a human you know how they're possibly inside if not on the outside going to be feeling or responding.

[13 : 08] They're going to be pretty hostile towards you. Often if somebody comes back to us and they've hurt us, our instinct isn't to be welcoming or receptive to them. And so as we go back to the Lord as we so often need to do, it's so hard and we just feel like going the opposite way and burying our head in the sand, but we're welcomed back.

You know the story of the prodigal who goes back to the Father and the Father comes to him in open arms and runs to meet him and welcomes him and throws a party for him.

And here's the thing, Jesus doesn't as advocate have to kind of convince the Father, just give them another chance. Or as we come to him even for the first time, honestly what I have done is able to cover them.

They're so bad I know because the Father and the Son are together in willing to save us. It's their work together that we might be saved.

And so as Jesus is able to say, this one is mine, I know them. They're my son and my daughter. I went to the cross for them.

[14 : 17] The Father is in complete accord with that. And though God is just and the correct judge, their desire is that we go and that they're able because of the work of Jesus, they're able to save us.

And so this wonderful sense of the ongoing work of Jesus, that's what Jesus is doing. That's what he's able to do because of the work that he did. He's the one who speaks as a good advocate, as a one who's able to speak for us and who is for us.

And that's the key thing about this, isn't it? Jesus's work is ongoing. Jesus is for us. So with all your difficulty, with your struggles as a Christian, with your struggles with sin, your struggles to keep going, your struggles to keep believing, know that the one who is at the right hand of the Father who intercedes for you is for you.

And know that the Father also is for you. And know that Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to be with you, to be your comforter and your counselor because he's for you and because he wants you to keep going.

He wants to strengthen you and help you in all that you do. And that is the great blessing of the knowledge that God is in an ongoing way aware of us, rooting for us if you like, and is able to support us effectively in all that we need.

[15 : 47] We often feel forgotten. Maybe you do. Maybe you feel forgotten often. Maybe you feel like God's forgotten about you. And knowing this means that we're able to say no to that thought.

Sometimes simply our emotions cause us to feel like that or our circumstances. But knowing this truth about the work of Jesus, we're really just referred to that in Romans there. We're just using these passages just to pick out these words and these verses.

Knowing that enables us to say, well, the Bible tells me that's not true and that God is for me and he cares for me. So then that's the work of Jesus.

What does that mean for us? How does that change things? As you plan for the week ahead, your own challenges and troubles and all that you will face. And in all of our lives, you know, we go through times of good and bad.

How does that ongoing knowledge that Christ is our mediator, he's our intercessor? How does that change things for us? First of all, it changes our status.

[16 : 50] I've already referred to this. We come to the throne room of heaven as children.

So you come with confidence, not because of you, but because of what he has done for you. He's changed you. He's made you acceptable so that you can have a relationship with him because he wants to have a relationship with you because he wants to call you his son or his daughter.

He wants you to go to him and call him father and so you come with confidence. And that is every time, that is always. Not as strangers.

We often feel like this, but often we feel like this, but not as those who have to stand outside and wonder, does he even know my existence? Is he even going to listen to me?

Yes. And so we go as children and again we're welcomed with open arms. So it changes our status, but I think in many ways it also changes our experience.

[17 : 52] Now we have to be careful when we speak about feelings, don't we? In Christian life, because often there's such a blend of our own circumstances and how that makes us go up and down. But our experience is if we're children and if we're welcomed by the Lord, then that means that we have assurance and we have comfort, assuring comfort.

See the tone of Romans chapter eight, if you follow through, if you go home tonight again and read back over Romans eight, or if you read in Romans, read the passage from Romans there, a lot of Romans and even if you read through the whole book, it feels like a great crescendo, it's building towards this great crescendo of assurance.

Yeah, you read a passage like that in Romans eight and even the way the sentences read, it builds up, I'm convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels or demons, nor the present or the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation.

It builds like this because it's almost stacking up the certainty that we have that God is for us. We get assurance upon assurance upon assurance that the one who has called us and who has begun to work in us is faithful and he is for us and he is in an ongoing way working in us.

So we have this great confidence and this is because we have a good advocate who is in an ongoing way for us. So we have confidence. You know, I read a novel years ago and it came back to me this week, actually, I watched a bit of the film, it was made into a film as well and it's called *The Trial*, a guy called Franz Kafka wrote it.

[19 : 35] The *Trial* is about a guy called Joseph, Joseph Kay, and he wakes up one morning and he's under arrest for no apparent reason.

Nothing's explained to him, nobody really helps him, he staggers around in a whole bunch of confusion for a while, pretty bleak book. And kind of about halfway through, he has a family contact who's an advocate and he's taken to see the advocate by his uncle who knows that he's in trouble and he's in this real sense of despair and bewilderment because he's not the place who arrested him, it's some shadowy body and they say he's accused, they never explain it, they don't know what's going on and in many ways it's a novel that encapsulates a sense of kind of modern despair, helplessness, confusion in the human condition.

He meets the advocate and the thing about the advocate is he's utterly useless. The advocate adds to his confusion, the advocate he finds out has loads and loads of different clients going to him and speaking to him about their conditions and actually the advocate is more of a tyrant than a help.

He basically encourages people to go to him and grovel in servitude and sense their helplessness while he does very little to help them.

And so Joseph Kay's experience is of being as it were the little man, being helpless, being confused, needing somebody to speak on his behalf in front of an impenetrable law court that makes no sense and say clear through the air, explain what's going on and set him free and he receives no help, no help, there's nobody to speak for him, there's nobody to help him.

[21 : 22] Now that is not our experience. That is not our experience. Our experience is in an ongoing way with all our guilt and with all our problems and our struggles. We have assurance that there's one who speaks on our behalf and so we have a right relationship with God and so our daily experience is of being at peace with God, of having our sins forgiven and of knowing that assurance every day and of knowing that we go to one who sympathises and who doesn't add to the confusion but who sympathises and who knows what we need, who knows the circumstances that we are in and who encourages us to go and to talk and to express all of our needs.

So we have assurance and we have comfort and I think also just finally, I think this means that we can act. I think one of the things that comes out of say a novel like *The Trial* and if you read a lot of stuff from the 20th century, this is just this feeling of existential despair and inertia of not being able to deal with humanity, of not being able to deal with all the problems that are thrown up in our face, of feeling like there are as it were great forces at work against us and not being able to know where to go or how to deal with things.

I think sometimes that sense comes out nowadays. People feel like they're powerless in the face of world power. I saw a headline, it was just yesterday and the news didn't actually read the article but a headline was let's boycott boycotts because they're pointless.

I guess the person was getting out of the fact that trying to change things is impossible. What's the point? Big businesses, too powerful governments are too disinterested and therefore we really have nobody to speak for us.

It was a real sense of despair and so there's no point in trying. I just get on with my life in my own little corner of the world. But we can go forward because as Christians we are actually called to serve, we're called in many ways to a great calling, a high calling and a hard calling.

[23 : 37] See we're called to remain faithful to the gospel. That's a great calling and at times a hard calling with all of the temptations and the struggles of battle inside of us.

We're called if you like to remain steadfast ethically, we're called to remain faithful to God's principles wherever you work where maybe other people don't follow the same desires or principles.

We're called to remain faithful. We're called to stand up for the disadvantaged. We're called to go out with the gospel. Isn't that hard? We're called to go and make disciples of all nations.

What a great calling is that? And I think sometimes the temptation of the reality is we just feel, I can't do this. God has asked too much of me.

Nobody will listen to me. Nobody does listen to me. I don't know what to say. I don't understand everything. They'll just think I think I'm better than them. I'm just going to say nothing.

[24 : 43] Now that's a, in many ways that's a completely understandable feeling isn't it? And that can be the reality for us sometimes. And sometimes we wish we could just get on doing our jobs, seeing our friends, doing the usual.

Not being remarkable, not being gospel people transformed by the Lord. That's weird to remember in all of that, though we're little people in many ways with what feels like a calling that's too hard for us.

That we have an audience at all times with the Lord. And that that work that we're called to, that he has for us to do, that you're called to do in your situation, whatever you are, that's his calling for you.

That's what he wants for you. You know, he's for you. So he's the one who calls you and assures you of the salvation which he has bought for you. And he also is with you and for you as you live out that Christian life.

He is, Jesus is interceding on your behalf. And it's not like he just did that once when you became a Christian. He knows all that you will face this week. He knows all the desires that he has for you, the work that he has for you, whether you serve helping with Bethany, helping with those who are disadvantaged, whether you serve trying to witness in your workplace, whatever it is he knows and he knows and is for you.

[26 : 12] And he's there for you to go to. So we're simply to remember that we don't do this work powerlessly and tremblingly on our own with nowhere really to go, no power.

And that is the truth. No, there's no power within ourselves often. You know, the trouble we often get into is because we try and do all that we do by our own strength. Well, we are to go to him who calls us and says, come to me and talk to me about all that you go through.

I am the one who has saved you and I'm the one who knows that all you're doing and I'm for you. Let me just read one passage just as we close in the second Corinthians chapter four.

This gives us a real sense of our fragility, our ongoing frailty, but the great resource that we have from the one who is our savior and our mediator.

Paul writes, the God of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers so they can't see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ. Who is the image of God? For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ is Lord and ourselves is your servants for Jesus's sake.

[27 : 23] For God who said, let light shine out of darkness made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. See that's God's work, isn't it?

God instigates it. God's God who does it. But we have this treasure in jars of clay. In other words, we're so weak in and of ourselves to show that this all surpassing power is from God and not from us.

We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed, perplexed, but not in despair, persecuted, but not abandoned, struck down, but not destroyed.

We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus so that the light of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. There's our hope and there's our assurance.

Let me pray. Lord, we are thankful for your work and your care. Thank you, Jesus, you are powerful to save.

[28 : 25] Thank you that you speak on our behalf. Help us tonight if we're far away from you, even though we're in church, if we're far away from you. Help us to come back to you and to know again your blessing and your forgiveness.

Help us as we go on in our Christian lives. Lord, we need you to strengthen us. We need you to assure us and reassure us and comfort us. We need you to challenge us sometimes.

We need to step out seeing that we are called to be your ambassadors and that it is your power that is behind us. It's your gospel and it's your power.

You're building your kingdom, Lord, and if you would just use us, that is such a great privilege and a blessing for us. So we pray that you'd help us tonight, Lord, with this and go with us and help us to know your presence.

In Jesus' name, amen.