

Jesus is... Intercessor
Matthew 6:9-13, Revelation 5:1-10

Brothers and sisters, I think it is part of our human nature... to think that where we live is the center of the universe - and everything else revolves around it. We literally used to think this way prior to Galileo's discovery that the earth orbits the sun instead of the sun orbiting around the earth. But even though our broader understanding of the cosmos now stands corrected, we still tend to be locally or regionally focused considering everything else as peripheral to us.

For example, those of us who live in Calgary tend to think that Calgary is Alberta is Calgary... everything else in our province kind of revolves around our city, so we just can't understand why anyone would cheer for the Edmonton Oilers?!

On a national level, I know that those who live in Southern Ontario tend to think that Canada is Ontario, that Canada is Toronto – and I know this because that's how I used to think when I lived there... Calgary, Alberta were minor footnotes

that weren't part of your day-to-day concerns – oh, wait... didn't Canada host the '98 winter Olympics out here? Right...

Of course, sometimes there are valid reasons why people in a certain city or region think that everything revolves around them. Ottawa, for example, is where our Federal Gov't is located. It is the city where all of our national representatives gather together as Parliament to make the laws of our country, so there is a sense in which it is genuinely central to Canada.

And even though it is located far away from us here in Alberta, and we're focused on our own local and provincial concerns it would be to our own peril to ignore or be ignorant of what happens in Ottawa. Because what happens in Ottawa has a direct impact on us here in Alberta. The Fed gov't makes laws and enacts policy that affects us and impacts our lives.

So, its important that we are not only aware of what happens in Ottawa but that we have adequate representation in

Ottawa as well, to speak up and raise our concerns and fight for our interests with the Federal gov't.

Because even though the Fed gov't is central to our nation, they need to be directed to give equal consideration for the interests of other parts of the country to ensure they govern well. Federal gov'ts also succumb to that human tendency to think that everything centers around them and govern for their own interests to stay in power.

And this is how it works with centers of power and influence brothers and sisters.

Now perhaps you don't pay much attention to what happens in Ottawa – even though you should... so this political example isn't really connecting with you.

But maybe you're more attuned to what's happening in other centers of power and influence, Hollywood for example – it's a *cultural and entertainment* center of power and influence, or Silicon Valley, a

technological center of power and influence, Wall Street, an *economic and financial* center of power and influence.

And recently we've seen the combination of technology, entertainment, culture, and business form a center of power and influence that we call social media, which is dominated by platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Tik Tok.

So if you're not familiar with how things tend gravitate into orbit around a **political** center of power and influence, maybe you're more familiar with how it happens in these other centers.

If Hollywood has a particular point of view, we're all exposed to it in the movies and TV shows and entertainment that Hollywood produces. If Wall Street executives want big bonuses, even though our stock market portfolios aren't performing well and we're taking a hit, they still get big bonuses. If Twitter and Facebook, Tik Tok and Instagram want to influence what you see and are able to share on social

media so that it aligns with and promotes their values – they can easily do so by adjusting their content algorithms.

Centers of power and influence have the ability to cause everything peripheral to revolve around them, to be impacted by them, to become focused on them.

And centers of power and influence, occupied by sinful human beings, will advance and establish their own self interests - whether we like it or not, whether we even want this influence affecting us or not – that’s the ability of a center of power and influence.

And the only way to ensure that your own interests are not steamrolled and ignored is to have someone on the inside who can advocate for you and your concerns.

Now where am I going with all this? You might think I’m setting things up for a message on Phil 2:4 an exhortation about not looking to our own interests but looking to the interests of others.

Or you might think I’m preparing to expose and critique the ungodly, unbiblical, anti-Christian ideals and lifestyles that these centers of power and influence are advancing and encouraging us to resist them...

But actually, brothers and sisters, I’m giving you these examples of our regionalizing tendencies and the vortex-like capacity of centers of power and influence so that I can ask you if you realize - that Heaven is a center of power and influence? Were you aware of this?

Usually we think of heaven as a place in the sky where everything is nice and wonderful, you wear white robes with a halo and a harp and you get to eat Philadelphia cream cheese with angels...

And even if we’re more biblical in our thoughts about heaven we’re thinking about the place where we go to be with the Lord after we die, it’s the place where God dwells, and it does have angels - but they are not handing out cream cheese –

they are worshiping God and praising Him as He sits on His throne.

And I would also hope that we think about heaven as the place Jesus returns to when He ascends, since last Sunday we focused on Jesus' ascension and its significance for us.

Because Jesus ascended to heaven – as a human being – we have assurance that we too will be able to be in God's presence. Because Jesus ascended to heaven, he now holds ALL authority... Because Jesus ascended to heaven He and the Father sent the Holy Spirit to be poured out upon His people – and we'll celebrate that and learn more about that next week Sunday.

But now that Jesus has ascended to heaven... and the Holy Spirit has been sent... what does Jesus do in heaven?? Is He just sitting there at the right hand of God the Father, getting our prayer requests, and then passing them on to the Father?

Well brothers and sisters, that is part of it – but there is so much more to what Jesus does as Intercessor in heaven, and but in order to fully appreciate this we really have to elevate our understanding of how Heaven functions as a center of power and influence – which is why I spent so much time describing how such centers work thus far.

And with earthly centers of power and influence we recognize how important it is to have someone on the inside who can represent us and bring forward our interests and concerns, and that's a good way to describe what Jesus is now doing in Heaven, as our intercessor.

But we need to understand that Jesus isn't there to represent the interests which come from placing ourselves at the center of the universe and thinking everything revolves around us, but rather to continuously present His atoning sacrifice before the Father – which is why when John gets his heavenly vision in Revelation, Jesus is portrayed as a Lamb that had been slain... Jesus intercedes for us as the lamb that has been slain perpetually, in order that our interests of being forgiven and

our concerns that we are protected from God's wrath for our usurping Heaven's central position has been taken care of.

Because brothers and sisters the truth is that the universe does not revolve around where we live, or even around other centers of power and influence – though it may appear that way... the truth is the universe revolves around where God lives, where God dwells, in Heaven.

Heaven is the ultimate center of power and influence – any other center of power and influence exists only because it suits the interests and the agenda of Heaven. Everything revolves around Heaven, everything that happens in the world is from decisions made in Heaven.

Go back to the creation of mankind, ourselves as human beings exist in the capacity as stewards over this world as a result of a decision of Heaven. Gen 1:26, God speaks to His heavenly court and says *"Let us make mankind in our image."* The Heavenly center of power and influence creates humanity to be a representative of Heaven's governing authority on earth.

And the Heavenly center of power and influence dictates how nature works and what happens politically as well, Daniel 2:21 *"He changes times and seasons; He deposes kings and raises up others."*

And our economic plans are also under the approval of Heaven, James 4:13-15 *"Now listen, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.' Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow... What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, 'If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.'"*

Even seemingly insignificant things are affected by the fact that the universe revolves around Heaven. Jesus says in Matt 10:29-30 *"Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered."*

So as we come to better understand Jesus' current work as intercessor in Heaven, we begin to realize just how central Heaven really is, and how everything else – including ourselves and especially ourselves – must shift and adjust and to be reoriented around Heaven's interests and agenda.

That's why Jesus teaches us to pray "*your kingdom come, your will be done - on earth... As it is in heaven!*" (Matt 6:10)

Because Heaven is the determining center of power and influence. And this isn't a bad thing brothers and sisters – its good.

Because honestly, whose will for this world do we want to see enacted? Putin's? Joe Biden's? Trump's? Trudeau's? President Xi-Jinping? The World Health Organization? The United Nations? Our own??

I think most of us - even in our most self-centered, self-interested moments we can see how our own plans for this world are so limited and imperfect and would fall short, containing all sorts of unintended consequences and

problems... and this is even easier to see with the worldly centers of power and influence because their interests are often steamrolling over our own.

But Heaven's plans and God's will for this world are better than our plans, and certainly better than any plans of a world leader. That's why we often describe something good as "heavenly."

So, it's a good thing to have Heaven's power and influence to bring about God's plans for this world, to reorient our own plans accordingly, and to be included in God's plan through salvation and sanctification.

And the good news brothers and sisters is that this is part of Jesus' intercessory work in Heaven. He is working to include us in God's plan, to give us parts to play, to take our self-centered interests and rework them so they are Heaven-centered interests. To make sure that regardless of what we experience as God's plan is implemented in this world that it

will confirm our salvation and contribute towards the completion of our sanctification.

That's why Romans 8:28 says "*we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*" And in 8:39 it says that nothing "*in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*"

And we can trust this as rock solid truth brothers and sisters because Jesus is in Heaven as our Intercessor, and our Intercessor also happens to be the one who is implementing God's plan for this world, He's our man on the inside who is working for our **best** interests.

We know this because in Revelation 5, the apostle John has a vision that shows Jesus doing this work in Heaven. John sees God on the throne holding a scroll, in His right hand, that is sealed with seven seals – this represents God's will and His plan for the course of human history and how He will arrange the events of human history to bring about the return of

Christ and establish the new Heavens and the new Earth that He has promised.

And then John sees the Lamb that has been slain, who is able to take the scroll from God's right hand and open it, which means Jesus is able to implement God's plan. Thus, all of heaven breaks forth in praise and worship for the Lamb. And the rest of the book of Revelation is about what happens, what will happen as the Lamb, Jesus, breaks each of the seals on the scroll, opens it and implements God's will for this world.

And the purpose of the apostle John receiving this vision in the book of Revelation is to help us see and understand that even though it may look like the worldly centers of power and influence like Ottawa and Beijing, Wallstreet and Washington, Hollywood and Tik Tok are calling the shots and directing the course of world events... that is not actually the case.

It is in fact Jesus doing His intercessory work in Heaven that is influencing and directing what is happening in the world right

now. We need to trust that Jesus is interceding and working to bring all that we see occurring – both good and bad – in line with Heaven’s ultimate interests and plans for God’s glory – which includes our salvation and sanctification.

The vision of Revelation shows us that as He is in Heaven right now, He is working to bring this about. And because He is also our Intercessor we can trust He is working this plan out in such a way that it is for our ultimate good.

And brothers and sisters, knowing and believing and trusting that Jesus is our ongoing Intercessor in Heaven addresses the major struggles that we have once we have come to believe in Jesus Christ as our savior.

The truth is that even though we’ve confessed we are sinners and asked for Christ’ forgiveness, we still commit sins... there’s even sins that we commit habitually... on purpose... right? You know what I’m talking about – you know which sins you struggle with, they’ve probably popped into your head right now.

Every Christian struggles to trust that God will keep on forgiving them for repeating the same stupid sin over and over and over... and over again.

So after the umpteenth time we start to think maybe we need to do a little something to prove how sorry we are so that God can justify forgiving us again... We can understand how God would be fed up with us, but maybe there’s something we can do about it – or not and we plunge into despair.

Brothers and sisters, Satan loves this – not only because you’re sinning, but because you’re struggling to trust that Jesus’ forgiveness covers ALL your sin. He accuses you, stirs up that doubt, pushes you to try to do something to prove you’re worth forgiving, tries to stop you from living by the grace of the gospel and derail your sanctification.

But brothers and sisters – Christ is our intercessor. He is perpetually seen in Heaven by God as the Lamb that has been slain. While we emphasize how Christ only had to die once to make atonement for sin, we also need to emphasize how

Christ perpetually offers this atonement to God in Heaven to continually ensure we are covered by His blood until we are perfected at His return. So, be confident of Phil 1:6 *“that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”*

Because Jesus is our perpetual intercessor with His atonement we know Romans 8:34 is true! *“Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.”*

So the next time you sin – and you’re struggling with asking for forgiveness, and feeling like God has to forgive you AGAIN – remember Romans 8:34. Jesus is your intercessor.

And this also comforts us in the trials, tribulations, and suffering that we are called to endure in this life. I do not know a single believer who has not wrestled with why God has answered their prayer for something that is good with... No!

Or who hasn’t wished they could avoid persecution, Or who hasn’t wondered why a tragedy or terrible loss was permitted to occur in their lives... Or who hasn’t struggled with why the wicked prosper and kick the good guys while they are down. This is the other great struggle in the Christian life.

And again, Satan loves to attack us in this struggle and cause us to question and doubt the very Goodness of God, His justice, and His power and whether or not He truly cares about us and we start to pull back from God and His people...

But brothers and sisters, our man on the inside understands this struggle, because Hebrews 4:15 tells us *“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.”*

So let Jesus know you’re struggling with this, pray – speak to Him, journal it out to Him, cry it out to Him, however you express this struggle – communicate it to the one who is Interceding for you and knows what it is like.

His empathy will bring you a degree of consolation and comfort, and knowing that He is your intercessor in Heaven will give you the encouragement to overcome the temptation to doubt God's goodness.

It will give you the strength to endure the struggle, and the faith to see how Jesus has arranged for it to be used for the good purpose of your salvation and sanctification.

Jesus is our intercessor – He can do this.

So brothers and sisters, I pray that you see there is so much more to Jesus interceding for us in Heaven than just passing on our prayer requests to the Father – important as that is.

What is actually more important, is that we are moving away from our tendency to center everything around ourselves and coming to realize that how everything is centered around Heaven.

Brothers and sisters, the world does not revolve around us or where we live, the universe revolves around Heaven, where God lives – and that's why Jesus is there... interceding for us.

May it be on earth – as it is... In Heaven. Amen.