Sit, Stand, Run

Introduction
Years ago the Chinese evangelist Watchman Nee wrote a famous book called Sit, Walk Stand. It was based on Paul's teachings in Ephesians. This morning I want to do an adaptation of that trilogy to Sit, Stand, Run. These are all mental attitudes we need to live the life God has for us. At various times in a day we can be in any one of these modes. But I believe they are sequential in their efficacy for faith. Spiritually, we need to sit in the heavenlies with Christ before we can stand against all the forces that would defeat us. Then we can run the race God has for us at this church. This is our theme for the service today. Let us pray.

Seated with Christ.

Eph.1:20-22 says Christ sits at the Father's *right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominions and every title that can be given not only in the present age but also in the age to come. God has placed everything under Christ's feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church*. The consistent scriptural picture of the ascended Christ is of a reigning Lord - the victor over all powers and authorities and evils that rule the world and assail us.

But there's more. The Bible also says **believers are actually <u>seated with Christ</u>** in these heavenly realms. Ephesians 2:5-7: *By grace you have been saved and God raised us up with Christ and <u>seated us with him</u> in the heavenly realms*. In the heavenlies God blesses us with every spiritual blessing (Eph.1:3). The incomparable riches of his grace come as we experience those blessings. There he gives us His authority. There He gives us His victory. There we can experience His power over all sin and evil and everything that would enslave or destroy us.

But we need to possess this truth, beloved.

> "Wilfredo Garza. Garza lived the life of an illegal immigrant for more than 35 years. Year after year, he would cross the border from Mexico into the United States—some days finding work, some days not, always looking over his shoulder. He was caught by the Border Patrol four times during that period and bused back to Mexico every time. Undeterred he would swim back across the Rio Grande to try again.
> Then one day, Garza worked up the courage to walk into an immigration lawyer's office. There, incredibly, he found out that his father was born in Texas and spent time working there, which meant that Garza was actually a U.S. citizen! All these years he possessed the very papers—his father's birth certificate and work records—that proved his citizenship, and yet he lived as an illegal immigrant in guilt and fear. Now he lives in terms of a certificate of citizenship. He doesn't have to sneak across the border; he can walk through the main gate. Anderson Cooper, "360 Degrees, On the Border" (aired 5-25-06).

The application to each of us and to our church is that having our citizenship in heaven radically reorients our daily living, our choices, and our struggles with sin. We can enter with Christ's righteousness into the throne room of the King to enjoy every blessing and spiritual authority over evil and sin.

Standing against evil

This position in Christ becomes the basis on which we can s As Paul says in Ephesians 6:12 *our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms*. We are to take our stand against t*he devil's schemes.* Eph.6:13-14 Stand firm. Stand against. Withstand. There is an enemy to God's purposes in the world and the church.

Christians must stand firm against every lie and distraction and issue of suffering which cause them to vacillate in their faith. Such strategies of Satan have attacked the church through the centuries. Satan plays head games with us, often leaving us demoralized by fear or doubt - just as Alexander the Great did in military warfare. "On one occasion when his army was in full retreat from a larger army, he gave orders to his armorers to construct oversized breastplates and helmets that would fit men 7 or 8 feet tall. As his army would retreat, he would leave these items for the pursuing army to discover. When the enemy would find the oversized gear, they would be demoralized by the thought of fighting such giant soldiers, and so they would abandon their pursuit. *Tim Downs, Head Game (Thomas Nelson, 2007), p. 309*

These mind games also occur when Satan deceives us into thinking that "the problems around us are bigger than they are. We act as though Satan is "greater than he really is" when we think there is nothing we can do to combat the evil powers behind pornography or greed or injustice or human trafficking. So the way to stand firm in the Lord and win his victories in all these areas is to gaze upon the greatness of our God so we can get true reality in perspective. " *Tim Downs, Idem.* God is greater than Satan and Christ's crucifixion, resurrection and ascension has defeated the power of evil.

One way to stand firm in the Lord is to worship - to exalt the Lord. Scripture says *God is enthroned on the praises of His people*. Worship songwriter Brian Doerksen believes that God wants to use worship in this battle against all the forces of spiritual darkness. Brian writes: "The gathering of the church is meant to be a number of things: a hospital to heal the sick and wounded; a family where everyone is accepted; a school where we are taught the Word of God; **and an army** that engages and defeats the Enemy. Becoming a worshiper means becoming a warrior. And by toning that down—or cutting it out altogether—we have sent men and women away from the church in droves. It's time to call them back...But we need them to return as worshiping warriors. That doesn't mean that all we do is sit around and sing...Worshipp*ing warriors* know they have authority because they are under authority of the King. .Our King is a warrior because there is a rebellion against his rule and reign." *Satan's War on Worship" and "The Call to Battle," Men of Integrity (entries 3-7-10 and 3-8-10 from the March/April, 2010 issue); Brian Doerksen, Make Love,(David C. Cook, 2009)* As we exalt Christ in worship, He can help us defeat the forces of doubt or discouragement or deception that Satan uses in our circumstances to wear down the saints.

Run the race God has set out for us as a church

And that brings us to the concluding verb in the trilogy - sit, stand, **run.** Throughout the New Testament there are repeated allusions to the fact that all believers are in a race - a corporate race God has set out for us. A race focused on Christ. Discouragement or defeat hampers us as we run. A lack of a clear goals also hampers us. We are to strain forward to fulfill the calling of our mission statement and know exactly what it means to be a church on mission. So I invite you to open your bulletin and let's read together our mission statement which is on the front cover:

"Ogden Dunes Community Church is building a vibrant God-honoring community of faith in Jesus Christ where God's global heart is demonstrated, God's power is evidenced, joy abounds, hope sustains, and reconciling love is the glue that binds us together."

We are called to run the race God has set before us as a missional church. At its core, missional is a shift in thinking. Missional describes what happens when you and I replace the "come to us" invitations with a "go to them" life. It is . where people are exploring and rediscovering what it means to be Jesus' sent people as their identity and vocation. The missional church is evangelistic and faithfully proclaims the gospel through word *and* deed. It will move beyond superficial faith to a life of supernatural living. The missional church gathered will be for the purpose of worship, encouragement, supplemental teaching, training, and being realigned with God's missionary purpose - to go and make disciples in all people groups. Part of that is an intentional effort to practice hospitality by welcoming the stranger into the midst of our community.

The missional church is a church dedicated to living out God's mission for the world in the world. This understanding of the missional church reframes success. In the book Dream Awakener J/R.Woodward describes *A Working Definition of Success* for a missional church:

- Not simply how many people come to our church services, but how many people our church serves.
- Not simply how many people attend our ministry, but how many people have we equipped for ministry.
- Not simply how many people minister inside the church, but how many minister outside the church.

Therefore, in order to be a missional church, I believe we need to live out Paul's trilogy of **sitting in the heavenlies with Christ**, **standing firm** against all the forces that would undue us or dishearten us or distract from our calling. And **running the race** set before us as we reach out to minister outside our walls. As we continue to do that, and train more and more of our people in such outreach ministries and mindset, I believe God will send us others who want this kind of church family and ministry. So, by the power of the Holy Spirit, with our eyes focused on Jesus, let us sit, let us stand, and let us run, straining forward to fulfill His calling joyfully in this place. For Jesus' sake. Let us pray.

Dr. M.L. Codman-Wilson, Preaching Pastor at Ogden Dunes Community Church 8/6/23