

# Sermon for The Ascension of Our Lord

**Date:** May 17, 2020

**Location:** St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

**First Reading:** Acts 1:1-11

**Epistle Reading:** Ephesians 1:15-23

**Gospel Reading:** Luke 24:44-53

**Sermon Text:** Luke 24:44-53

**Sermon Title:** Restoration

**Introit:** Psalm 110:1,4-5; Antiphon: Psalm 47:5

## Hymns:

LSB 493 – A Hymn of Glory Let Us Sing

LSB 489 – Hail Thee Festival Day (*Ascension refrain only*)

LSB 494 – See, the Lord Ascends in Triumph

LSB 789 – Praise and Thanksgiving

LSB 821 – Alleluia! Sing to Jesus

## Songs:

Here I am to Worship

I Love You Lord

I Stand in Awe of You

Open Our Eyes

Hear Our Praises

## Liturgy:

Divine Service IV, p. 206



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## **Text: Luke 24:44–53**

Then [Jesus] said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God.

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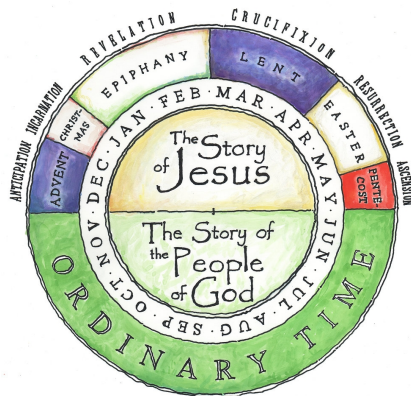
Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

When God created the heavens and the earth,<sup>1</sup> the crown of His creation was the creation of man. Only we were made in the image and likeness of God. No animal or angel was given that honor. Only us, people, were given dominion over the earth.<sup>2</sup> No animal or angel was given that responsibility or authority. Only man was a being both physical and spiritual; physical like the animals, and spiritual like the angels. All things were created for us to use, to enjoy and to rule.



Then something happened and everything changed. Sin entered God's perfect creation and it turned the world upside down. The honor of man was turned to shame, his responsibility abdicated in rebellion. The image of God was cast away, and now the actions of men make angels blush, and we, so steeped in sin and death, live more in the likeness of animals than the likeness of God. Human nature suffered a catastrophic fall.<sup>3</sup>

None of that is news to you, but it is important to remember as we celebrate the Ascension of our Lord today. The reason Jesus now ascends is because He first descended from Heaven. The Son of God did not come to meet us half-way. He came to raise us up from the depths of our sin and death in which we wallow helplessly.



That is what we have been remembering as we walk through the Church Year. The work of Jesus for us and for our salvation is what: Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, and Easter are all about. His birth, His perfect life and His perfect sacrificial death, His triumphant resurrection, are all about saving us. Today we come to the final step, His ascension back to Heaven.

Jesus' ascension was not for Him. It was not a reward for a job well-done. In Jesus, humankind is restored to His glory. In Jesus people once again have dominion over creation. In Jesus, the fall of man is reversed. In Jesus, man is no longer wallowing in the depths, because Jesus is now seated at the right-hand of God,

1 Genesis 1 & 2  
2 Genesis 1:26  
3 Genesis 3

far above all rule and authority and power and  
dominion... with all things under His feet.<sup>4</sup>

What was true for man in Adam before the Fall, is now true again. It is true for  
us in the second Adam, Jesus Christ.<sup>5</sup>

That is why we just sang:

He has raised our human nature  
on the clouds to God's right hand;

There we sit in heavenly places,  
there with Him in glory stand.

Jesus reigns, adored by angels;  
man with God is on the throne.

By our mighty Lord's ascension  
we by faith behold our own.<sup>6</sup>

It's all for you.

That is why the disciples were "filled with joy<sup>7</sup>" when they saw Jesus ascend. You would think that watching their friend and Savior leave them would have been an occasion for sadness, but just the opposite is true. Because in Jesus and His ascension they saw the completion of His work for them. They saw man returned to His rightful place. They saw the dominion and life stolen by Satan taken back. They knew everything was different. In Jesus everything is right again. This is the good news we celebrate today. That for those of us baptized into Jesus, everything is made right again.

You can be certain Satan does not want you to know that, or believe it. "Look at your life," he says. "You? Triumphant? No way! You're the same sorry sap you were yesterday and will still be tomorrow. You are a let-down, a disappointment and a failure." The old evil foe who promised to open the eyes of our first parents<sup>8</sup> but gave them only blindness, now seeks to blind you; to blind you to the Truth, Jesus, the way **the Truth** and the life. He seeks to blind you to the truth of your victory in Christ.

Do not look at your life. Do not look at Satan's assertions. Look to Jesus the founder and perfecter of our faith<sup>9</sup> Look to Jesus who now ascends in triumph, and

4 Ephesians 1:21-22

5 Romans 5:17

6 LSB 494 – See The Lord Ascend in Triumph v.5

7 Luke 24:52

8 Genesis 3:5

9 Hebrews 12:2

promises to send His Holy Spirit to enlighten us and open our minds to see the truth. St. Paul tells us:

Enlighten the eyes of your hearts, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places.<sup>10</sup>

Do not be beguiled.<sup>11</sup> Do not be deceived. It is true!

The disciples, ten days later, when they received the Holy Spirit, would realize how tiny-minded their question was when the asked:

Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?<sup>12</sup>



Jesus has restored us, not to an earthly kingdom, but to the Kingdom of God. When the apostles realized that, as we will see on Pentecost Sunday, they began to proclaim this message to the world. In their lifetime they filled the world with this awesome and saving message. They proclaimed it to Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.<sup>13</sup> They, in their life-time reached as far West as Spain and as far East as India.

They proclaimed the prince of this world,<sup>14</sup> the usurper and pretender to the throne, has been cast down.<sup>15</sup>



10 Ephesians 1:18-20

11 Genesis 3:13 (*King James Translation*)

12 Acts 1:6

13 Acts 1:8

14 John 12:31

15 1 Peter 3:19-20





He is cast down by our mighty Savior our Champion and Defender. Every time a sinner young or old is Baptized. They are Baptized into the Death of Christ.<sup>16</sup> They come to the water bringing nothing but sin and the image of filth. They leave with everything but sin and in the image of God. Satan is cast down!



He is cast down every time you hear the words, the wonderful words:

I forgive you all your sins.  
In the name of the Father and of the  
Son ✝ and of the Holy Spirit.



He is cast down every time we eat His precious body and drink His precious blood.

He is cast down!

That is why the disciples are told not stand gazing up into Heaven.<sup>17</sup> They are told, as we are told: Seek the Lord where He may be found. Call on Him when He is near.<sup>18</sup> Gaze where our Lord has promised to be. He is found in the Holy Word, in Holy Baptism, and in Holy Communion. See Him there! See Him there in triumph! See Him there in victory! See Him there in supremacy over all of creation.<sup>19</sup>



16 Romans 6:3  
17 Acts 1:11  
18 Isaiah 55:6  
19 1 Corinthians 15:27

Sin, death, and devil reign no more! Though you are attacked by them they do not reign, they cannot win. The liar has been silenced,<sup>20</sup> the destroyer has been destroyed,<sup>21</sup> and Jesus now rules over all things. He is ruling in every circumstance, come what may. No matter what is happening in your life: hardship or heartache, problems or pains. He is greater! Under His care He will see you through this life, to His life which has no end. When He comes again in glory He will take you home to Paradise restored.<sup>22</sup>

That is why we join the disciples in rejoicing this day. Not because our Savior left, but because He is now risen from the dead and ascended into Heaven. Our Savior is enthroned! Praise be to God!

Alleluia. Christ is risen!  
He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

In Jesus' name.

Amen.



**Proclaim God's Word,  
Encourage one another in faith,  
Witness to God's love and  
Serve all people**

20 John 8:44

21 Revelation 9:1-11

22 Revelation 21:4