

Order of Worship for May 12, 2024

Prelude:

P: Alleluia! Jesus Christ is risen.

C: He is risen indeed, Alleluia!

Reading of the Ascension Story: Acts 1:1–11 (The Ascension of our Lord)

P: In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when He was taken up, after He had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom He had chosen. To them He presented Himself alive after His suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. And while staying with them He ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, He said, “you heard from Me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” So when they had come together, they asked Him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by His own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” And when He had said these things, as they were looking on, He was lifted up, and a cloud took Him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as He went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw Him go into heaven.”

P: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Opening Hymn: “A Hymn of Glory Let Us Sing” - Hymn #493 vs. 1-4

Confession

P: O Christ, who ascended to heaven:

C: Hear us as we pray, and have mercy on us.

P: Jesus, You are seated at the right hand of the Father,

C: Forgive us, Lord, for the many times when we feel the need to be noticed in special places and seen as extremely important in certain circles of society.

P: O Christ, to You all power has been given in heaven and on earth, Your Kingdom has no end.

C: Forgive us, Lord, for those times when we see our kingdoms, our country, our wealth and security as the only real answer for our worries and our fears.

P: Jesus, at Your Ascension the entire company of heaven burst into song at the mention of Your Holy Name,

C: Forgive us, Lord, for the many other names that have a stronger influence on our lives than Your name.

P: Christ Jesus was put to death for our trespasses

C: and raised for our justification.

P: In the name of our Ascended Lord, you are forgiven.

C: Amen.

Service of the Word

Entrance Psalm: Psalm 110

P: God has gone up with a shout,

C: the LORD with the sound of a trumpet.

P: The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand,

C: until I make your enemies your footstool."

P: The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind,

C: "You are a priest forever

P: after the order of Melchizidek." The LORD is at your right hand;

C: He will shatter kings on the day of His wrath.

ALL: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

P: God has gone up with a shout,

C: the LORD with the sound of a trumpet.

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

Prayer of the Day

P: Let us pray... Almighty God, as Your only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, ascended into the heavens, so may we also ascend in heart and mind and continually dwell there with Him, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

Epistle: 1 John 5:9-15

R: If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that He has borne concerning His Son. Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning His Son. And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life. And this is the confidence that we have toward Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of Him.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Holy Gospel: Luke 24:49-53

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the twenty-fourth chapter.

C: Glory to You, O Lord.

P: Jesus said to His disciples, “I am going to send you what My Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.” When He had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, He lifted up His hands and blessed them. While He was blessing them, He left them and was taken up into heaven. Then they worshiped Him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to You, O Christ.

Children’s Message:

Sermon Hymn: “*On Christ Ascension I Now Build*” - **Hymn #492**

Sermon: “*He Will Come Again*” - **Acts 1:1-8**

Television shows live and breathe by the ratings. One of the keys to getting the rating is to have people involved in the characters. When TV first came out people were not so picky about it. They were just glad to have it and were satisfied by whatever the one broadcast station showed. But now with streaming and all that is on the internet something has to attract the audience. One way is to create tension between male and female leads. Often they are opposites, argue over things, and think they can’t stand each other. But down deep we root that they will get together. We saw that in comedies like “Cheers” with Sam and Diane, and in dramas like “X-files” with Mulder and Scully. But the one thing you don’t want to do—even if fans clamor for it—is have them get married and settle down. They call that the “Moonlighting” effect from the series that introduced us to Bruce Willis and had him in such a relationship with Cybil Shepherd. Once they actually got together, the tension that interested so many people was lost. The show lost popularity and was cancelled.

In a sense Jesus’ ascension produced a “tension” for us. Yes, we are saved through Jesus’ death and resurrection, but things are not fully consummated. Jesus ascended so that He can come again to consummate His relationship with us. Then all suffering and pain and worry will end. Then we will be complete as God intends.

But wouldn’t it have been easier if He just stayed here? Why did Jesus ascend into heaven? People flocked to see Him preach. He amazed them with His teaching and His miracles. Why not just stay here on earth so that more and more people are attracted and we have convincing proof that Jesus did rise from the dead? The critics would be silenced and who would not believe, especially with our information so much of the world through the internet.

Look what happened before Jesus left. It may have been only 40 days that He appeared after Easter and before His ascension. But who believed in Him? The ones who had followed Him before. What about the rest? His enemies bribed the guards at the tomb and threatened them if they did not lie and say Jesus’ body was stolen. If they didn’t think He had risen, why do that? Why not just have them tell the truth and say Jesus was not alive? If Jesus had stayed,

then people would still turn away from Him. Or they would look upon Him as someone to heal them from diseases as he had done or feed them like He did the 5,000. Look what happened after He fed the 5,000:

Aware that His disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, “Does this offend you? Then what if you see the Son of Man ascend to where He was before! The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life. Yet there are some of you who do not believe.” For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray Him. He went on to say, “This is why I told you that no one can come to Me unless the Father has enabled them.” From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed Him.

People would lose interest in Jesus if He had stayed. They would focus so much on what He could give us in this life that we would fail to look forward to the eternal life He wants to give us. After a while they would still see that people die, that wars go on, that people are enslaved, abused, and humiliated. Jesus would be like a drug that could satisfy for a time. Then they would move on.

Instead Jesus ascended into heaven, as the angel told the disciples, to come back in the same way. There is more to the story. It is not all over with. It is not something for us to get excited about for a while, and then move on to something else. We live in the anticipation that Jesus will come again to complete the story, to give us something to anticipate, to give us a goal and direction to our lives.

Many have accused Christianity and the teaching of Jesus coming again to take us to heaven as an excuse to ignore problems in the world today. Karl Marx called it the “opiate of the masses,” a way the ruling class kept the masses of poor people content as they looked forward to life after death. But Jesus did not ascend into heaven to give us an easy cop out to ignore life now. Instead He did it to give us the desire to hold on to Him until He comes again. The Christian hope of eternal life does not lead to indifference, but to do something about what is wrong in our world today. It keeps us “interested.”

Look what happened to Jesus’ followers. Did they hide in caves until the day Jesus came? Did they just let themselves die so they could leave this world and rest in Jesus until He comes again? No, they fed the hungry, cared for the sick, took care of widows ignored by society and raised children who were left to die.

Knowing that Jesus will come again also helps us to anticipate Him coming. Many in this life try to be “satisfied,” to get the maximum comfort and enjoyment out of life before it ends. Why not if there is nothing after this life? But knowing Jesus will come again puts us in tension, not being satisfied with this life. It gives us the “itch” to do something about the pain and suffering in this world, to not just simply “accept” death, but to fight it. But neither do we get overwhelmed by all the suffering in this world because we know this life is not the end.

Jesus is coming again to put an end to sin, suffering, and death and make a new world for creation and humanity to live with Him forever.

Why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.

The angel said that to the disciples as they watched Jesus ascend. Because of that message the disciples did not stay there staring into space. Instead Luke Gospel tells us:

While Jesus was blessing the disciples, He left them and was taken up into heaven. Then they worshiped Him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.

They could rejoice knowing that Jesus would come again. They stayed in Jerusalem because Jesus told them to, but only for ten days until the Holy Spirit came on Pentecost. Then, like a tightened spring let go, they went out in the world sharing their faith in Jesus.

Jesus is coming again. He makes us live in that tension so that we live, not just for this world and life, but in anticipation of what comes when He comes again.

Prayer of the Church

P: Lord, in Your mercy

C: hear our prayer.

Offering:

The Call to Holy Communion:

P: Jesus, who rose and ascended to sit at the Father's right hand, bids us to come to His table to receive His true body and blood in, with, and under the bread and wine of His Holy Supper.

Therefore, we partake of His Sacrament, confessing our faith in Him:

All: I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from all eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord, who has redeemed me a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sin, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, that I may be his own and live under him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reign to all eternity. This is most certainly true.

The Words of Our Lord:

Lord's Prayer:

Distribution: *"See the Lord Ascends in Triumph"* - **Hymn #494**

"Christ High-Ascended, Now in Glory Seated" - **Hymn #840**

Prayer After Communion: P: Let us pray... O King of glory, Lord of hosts, uplifted in triumph far above all heavens, leave us not without consolation but send us the Spirit of truth whom You promised from the Father; for You live and reign with Him and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen

Blessing: (Pastor)

C: Amen.

Closing Hymn: “*A Hymn of Glory Let Us Sing*” - **Hymn #493 vs. 5-6**

Postlude: