

Order of Worship for May 17, 2026

Prelude

P: Jesus Christ is risen.

C: He is risen indeed, Alleluia!

Reading of the Ascension Story: Acts 1:1–11

(The Ascension of our Lord)

R: 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.”

R: 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 of sins

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...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.

Hymn of Praise: "*On Christ's Ascension I Now Build*" – Hymn #492

Epistle: Ephesians 1:15–23

R: For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, 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, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things under His feet and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Holy Gospel: John 17:20-26

P: The Holy Gospel according to Saint John, the 17th chapter.

C: Glory to You, O Lord.

P: Jesus prayed, "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word, that they may all be one, just as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You have sent Me. The glory that You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one even as We are one, I in them and You in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that You sent Me and loved them even as You loved Me. Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, may be with Me where I am, to see My glory that You have given Me because You loved Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, even though the world does not know You, I know You, and these know that You have sent Me. I made known to them Your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which You have loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to You, O Christ.

Children's Message

Sermon Hymn: "*Crown Him with Many Crowns*" – **Hymn #525**

Sermon: "*What Comes Next?*" - **Acts 1:1–11**

How do you top a great experience? What do you do next? One of the most iconic advertising campaigns of the last 50 years or so is when the Super Bowl MVP is asked "What are you going to do next?"—after his moment of triumph. The answer is, "I'm going to Disney World!" Now, they usually film different versions depending on which area of the country they're in, or whether they need more extra visitors at Disney World or Disney Land. But the answer, and the joy, is still the same.

How did this come about? According to former Disney CEO Michael Eisner, during the January 1987 grand opening for the Star Tours attraction at Disneyland, he and his wife dined with Dick Rutan and Jeana Yeager, who in December 1986 had piloted the first aircraft to fly around the world without stopping or refueling. After Jane Eisner asked what the pilots planned to do next, they replied, "Well, we're going to Disneyland." She later told her husband the phrase would make a great advertising campaign. She was obviously right.

What's next? That's what we're looking at today as we look at the story of Jesus' ascension. What comes next after Easter? How can you top that?

And if you were asked what Jesus did after Easter, ascension probably wouldn't be one of your first answers. It's one of the Feast days of the church, the end of the earthly ministry of Jesus, but we don't make a big deal out of it anymore. We didn't have a special service on Thursday,

which was actually 40 days after Easter. Families didn't gather together to celebrate like they do for Christmas or Easter. Here at Memorial we stop lighting the Christ Candle until Christmas, to show that we've reached the end of the earthly ministry of Jesus, that he is no longer with us the same way he was during his time on Earth. The Ascension is as important in the life of Jesus as Christmas is, but we don't get a lot of visitors today.

What's next for Jesus after Easter? He appears to doubting Thomas and the rest of the disciples. He meets them back along the shore of the Sea of Galilee. He's restored and forgiven Peter and his denials. He's taught, done more miracles, now he ascends. What does that mean?

What the Ascension means, though, is that Jesus is now at the right hand of the Father. It means that Jesus rules everywhere and everything. What the Ascension means is that instead of being limited to being only in one particular place at one particular time, Jesus returned to where he exercises his divine attributes of omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipotence. As Eugene Peterson writes, "Jesus rules church and world and every last one of us from heaven's strategic center."

What's next for the disciples? They're expecting Jesus to still just do what they'd expected him to do. The Messiah was to come and restore the kingdom of Israel.

The disciples want Christ to fulfill his promises of restoration. They wait as those who are still dependent on the father's faithfulness, those who have no control over the timetable of a beneficent God who graciously allows enough time to accomplish the work begun in Jesus.

The time between Easter and the restoration of the kingdom is a time for witness. There is work to be done.

The disciples' response is prayer. The action demanded of the church is more than human busyness and effort. Instead, they wait and pray for empowerment, for obedience, for patience. Waiting implies there are things that need doing in the world that are beyond our ability to accomplish solely by our own effort and programs.

The challenge is not in knowing enough about Jesus to witness about him. It is in having the authorization and empowerment to do the work of Jesus.

What's next for us? Christians are often accused of having our heads in the clouds. We are told we are so heavenly minded that we're no earthly good. We can spend so much time and energy thinking or worrying or speculating about what comes next, about spiritual things, about God's will for our lives, that we forget about the people around us.

Every year on Seminary choir tour, this reading from Acts would feature prominently in the tour booklet. The message from the angels, "Why do you stand looking into heaven?" was used to remind us that we shouldn't just stand around looking up to heaven. Instead, we should look around and see what else needed to be set up or taken down, make sure we knew our parts, and

maybe even talked to the congregation members who were around to greet us.

When the angels ask the disciples why they are still standing looking up to heaven, though, it's not because the disciples had work that they needed to be doing. Not yet. Jesus had told them that they should return to Jerusalem to wait. They were to wait for the Holy Spirit. Then they would be sent out. They would no longer just be disciples, or students, but would be apostles, sent out into Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Instead, the disciples are standing there staring at the last place they saw Jesus. They look up and feel abandoned.

Jesus didn't ascend to abandon us. He ascended to complete his mission. O.P. Kretzmann wrote "The Ascension did not take Jesus away... It brought heaven near... In the realm in which He now reigns time and space have no meaning... There is no up and down, no near and far, no darkness, and no distance in the world of faith... He is as near as yesterday's prayer, today's joy, tomorrow's sorrow... His homecoming has made heaven a home for us who still walk far from home..."

After Jesus ascended, the disciples become apostles, those who were sent out. They traveled the whole world, sharing the Good News that had so impacted their lives. They told what they had seen, what they had heard, what they had experienced. And even when they were met with hostility, imprisoned, or even killed, they knew that God was with them through it all. They knew that Jesus wasn't with them the same way he had been, but he was with them nonetheless. They knew that he ruled.

It's graduation season. ISU's graduation is this weekend. So is Gilbert's. Ames High graduation is next weekend, and other area high schools are following a similar schedule. Graduates may think they know what's next. They've got plans. They've got dreams. They know where they'll go to school or work, know where they'll move to, know who they'll be with. But there will be questions. There will be detours. There will be unexpected opportunities and obstacles.

We don't always know what comes next. We don't know what the future holds. But we know who holds the future. We know that Jesus ascended to bring heaven near. He ascended to be at heaven's strategic center. He ascended so that he was no longer limited by time and space as he was during his earthly ministry. He ascended so we could know he is in control, whatever comes next. What a wonderful promise that is.

Prayer of the Church

P: Lord, in Your mercy

C: hear our prayer.

Sharing Our Ministry

Offering & Voluntary

Service of the Sacrament

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 reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true.

The Words of Our Lord:

The Lord's Prayer:

P: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C: Amen.

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

"He's Risen, He's Risen" - Hymn #480

P: Look up to heaven, O people of God,

C: for there is where our Savior is seated at the right hand of God.

P: Look down upon the ground, O people of God,

C: for this is where our feet must tread as we spread the Good News of our ascended Lord.

P: Look all around, O people of God,

C: for this is where opportunities abound for us to serve Christ Jesus, our King.

P: As we look up, O Lord,

C: encourage and inspire us, we pray.

P: As we look down upon the ground, O Lord,

C: strengthen and sustain us in our witnessing, we pray.

P: And as we look all around, O Lord,

C: keep us open to Your call and aware of Your will. Amen.

Blessing of the Seed and Soil:

P: While earth remains, there will be day and night, summer and winter, planting and harvest, cold and heat. For as the rain and snow come down from heaven and do not return until they have watered the earth, making it blossom and bear fruit, and give seed for sowing and bread to eat, so shall the Word, which comes from God prevail.

C: It shall not return to Him fruitless without accomplishing His purpose of succeeding with the task He gave it.

P: Lord of springtime and harvest, bless these plants as symbols of the seed that is sown

throughout the world that it may nourish and sustain Your people. And so water the soil with Your gentle rain and warm it with Your golden sunshine, that it may bear fruit to the glory of Your name and the welfare of Your people.

C: Amen.

Children's Message:

Dismissal of Children:

Hymn: "On What Has Now Been Sown" - Hymn #921

Final Blessing: (Pastor)

C: Amen.

Postlude