

The Sunday after the Ascension of our Lord, Luke 24:44-53 (B)

Acts 1:1-11

Psalm 47

Ephesians 1:15-23

Preached at the Lutheran Church of Our Saviour, Greenville, SC on Sunday, May 16th, 2021

The grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ
- who was raised from the dead to bring everlasting life –
be with you all. Amen.

*Many congregations celebrate the **resurrection** of our Lord at **Easter-time**
with a **Passion Play**.

This production usually consists of the retelling of the story
of Jesus' **suffering** and **crucifixion** on the cross,
and his glorious **resurrection** from the **tomb** Easter morning. ____

Well, one congregation decided to do things a little different.

Instead of focusing on Jesus' life from Holy Week through his Resurrection,
they decided to perform a drama based on his post-resurrection;
covering the forty days he appeared to his disciples and others
from the time of **Resurrection** to his **Ascension** back into heaven.

This "**Ascension**" Play would **conclude** with the actor portraying Jesus
being **hoisted up** from the stage
while the other actors (who depicted the disciples and the rest of the crowd)
looked **upward** as "our Lord" continued to **bless** them,
departing from their sight into the **fake clouds** above. ____

But things went a little **wrong** the night of the performance!

When the play had reached its dramatic ending,
as the actor playing Jesus was being **lifted up** from the stage,
- **blessing** the crowd below-
the person operating the **hoist** accidentally slipped,
and back down to the stage came Jesus with a **bound!** ____

Well, the other actors didn't know what to do and looked dumb-founded.

But staying in his character, the actor representing Christ said,
"Oh yeah, one other thing ... Love one another!" ...

When he had finished saying this, he was quickly raised from the stage. ____

*Today we gather to celebrate the Sunday **after** the Ascension of our Lord.

A few months back - at **Christmas** –
we celebrated God's de-scension from heaven:
that is ... God's incarnation,
God's taking on of **human flesh**,
God being **born** as a baby in Bethlehem. ____

God deliberately **stooped down** from His throne on High to live **among us**;
to be both fully **human** and fully **divine**
in the person we came to know as **Jesus Christ**. ____

Today we celebrate Christ **return** to heaven,
where he regained his throne as **King** of kings and **Lord** of lords! ____

The Ascension of Our Lord is indeed a glorious day to remember! ...
Just as important as **Christmas Day**!
Just as important as **Easter Morning**!

God, in Christ Jesus, came and lived among us!
God, in Christ Jesus, prepared his followers (his disciples)
to **continue** in his mission,
to **go forth** into this world,
retelling the **Good News** of God's **power** and **unconditional love**
for *everyone*!

We are being called by our Lord to go **talk** with others and **tell** them
who God *is*,
and **why** life in a **community of faith** is so **vital** to our human **well-being**.

We are being called by our Lord to **reach out** to others in need
following the examples **set by** our Lord Jesus;
examples of love, healing, and caring. ____

*At the time of his **Ascension**, Jesus leaves the disciples
with the **promise** of the coming of the **Holy Spirit**.

Jesus leaves with the **promise** that he will **return** some day
and take **all believers** in him to his **heavenly kingdom**.

Jesus leaves with the **promise** that we **need not** be afraid
of what to **say** or what to **do** ...

... because he has **promised** - through his **Holy Spirit** -
to **clothe** all believers in him with “power from on high;”
“**power**” to carry on in the **mission** of the Church,
making Christ **known** to others! ____

*Ask yourself:

“**Where** is the **mission field** that Jesus is sending me?

Who are some of the people **I** can **witness** to - by my **life** and by my **words**?

And **who** are the disciples in **my** life that encourages me in **service** to Christ?

... Perhaps, like the disciples and crowd present at the **Ascension** of Jesus,
we are still looking **upward**,
wondering **what** to do now,
wondering **who exactly** Jesus was **sending forth** in mission. ____

... Perhaps we might be thinking:

“He didn’t mean me!”

OR, “I couldn’t possibly do that!”

OR “I’m scared to undertake such a task!” ____

So, what is holding us **back** from sharing the message of Jesus? ...

Is it a lack of **knowledge**?

Is it a lack of **concern**?

Is it the lack of courage to face

non-Christian friends or acquaintances? ...

Whatever our **excuses** may be,

We are the one being **called forth** to **continue** in Christ’s mission!

We are the ones Jesus has **put in control**
to **continue** spreading the word of God!

We are the ones **commissioned** by Christ
to keep **retelling** his story of **Salvation** to others!

We are the ones who can find **courage** to do so
because we have been **clothed** with the **power** of the **Holy Spirit**! ____

*As his **disciples**, we have been **instructed** by Christ
concerning the coming of the kingdom of God
and God’s never-ending **grace**! ____

And now, we are being **called forth** to take on the role of an **apostle**;
to be **witnesses** for Christ and **make disciples** of others. ____

We have been **baptized** with the Holy Spirit,
which is the **fruit** of Christ's Ascension.
We have been **anointed** for service.
We have been **clothed** with **power** from above.
We have been **instructed** through Scripture and the **preaching** of the Word.
And we have been **given strength -nourished** again and again-
through the partaking of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ
at his Holy Supper! ____

*Just as we receive **life** through Christ,
we receive **power** through the Holy Spirit!

We need not merely stand still, looking upward,
wondering *when* Jesus will return;
but **move on** in mission, **move on** into *action*! ____

Our **mission** is to live life in the **Spirit's power**,
bearing **witness** to God's **faithfulness** and **Kingdom**!

The focus of **Ascension Day**
is the **Lordship** of Jesus Christ,
his **intercession** for us,
our living with the **expectation** of his return,
... and - during this "**in-between**" time - being his *witnesses*! ____

Every Christian has **forgiveness** of sin, **peace** with God, and **eternal life**.

Boldly go forth *in mission*
and **share** this Good News of **Salvation** with others. ____

Love one another.

And be filled with **joy** knowing *while* Jesus was carried up into heaven,
he blessed those who were present;
and we remain under his **continual blessing**!

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

Amen!