

Ascension Day and Seventh Sunday of Easter
May 21st, 2023

Introduction to the Day

In today's readings the risen Christ ascends into heaven and his followers are assured that the Spirit will empower them to be witnesses throughout the earth. The disciples were told to not gaze up into heaven to look for Jesus (Acts 1:11); we find his presence among us as we proclaim the word and share the Easter feast. We too long for the Spirit to enliven our faith and invigorate our mission.

Greeting – The grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you

Thanksgiving for Baptism

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,
by whose hand we are given new birth,
by whose speaking we are given new life.
Amen.

Joined to Christ in the waters of baptism,
we are welcomed, restored, and supported
as citizens of the new creation.
Let us give thanks for the gift of baptism.

Silence for Reflection

Holy God,
holy and merciful,
holy and mighty,
you are the river of life,
you are the everlasting wellspring.

In mercy and might you have freed us from death
and raised us with Jesus, the firstborn of the dead.
In baptismal waters our old life is washed away,
and in them we are born anew.

Gathering Hymn “A Hymn of Glory Let Us Sing!”

#393 vs. 1,2,5

Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, your only Son was taken into the heavens and in your presence intercedes for us. Receive us and our prayers for all the world, and in the end bring everything into your glory, through Jesus Christ, our Sovereign and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
Amen.

Acts 1:1-11

[Luke writes:] ¹In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning ²until the day when he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. ³After his suffering he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. ⁴While staying with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. “This,” he said, “is what you have heard from me; ⁵for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

⁶So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom

As water is poured into the font

Glory to you for oceans and lakes,
for rivers and streams.

Honor to you for waters that wash us clean,
quench our thirst, and nurture both crops and
creatures.

Praise to you for the life-giving water of baptism,
the outpouring of the Spirit of the new creation.

**Wash away our sin and all that separates us
from you.**

**Empower our witness to your resurrection.
Strengthen our resolve in seeking justice for all.**

Satisfy the world's need through this living water.
Where drought dries the earth, bring refreshment.
Where despair prevails, grant hope.

Where chaos reigns, bring peace.

We ask this through Christ,
who with you and the Spirit reigns forever.

Amen.

to Israel?" ⁷He replied, "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." ⁹When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. ¹¹They said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Children's Message

Holy Gospel according to Saint Luke, the 24th chapter, verses 44-53

⁴⁴[Jesus said to the eleven and those with 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, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled." ⁴⁵Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, ⁴⁶and he said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

⁵⁰Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. ⁵¹While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. ⁵²And they worshiped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; ⁵³and they were continually in the temple blessing God.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to You, O Christ

Sermon

People of God, grace to you and peace from God, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. AMEN.

The Ascension. 40 days after the resurrection. Jesus takes his disciples "away," has a moment with them, and is lifted up into heaven.

We have spent the Sundays since Easter hearing what the resurrection means for us as people of faith and how these stories inform our own tomorrows, and now we hear Jesus ascends to heaven.

Our texts throughout this Easter Season have found us, for a few weeks, getting resurrection encounters that happened some on that very first day, and some within that first week. And then, for the next few weeks we went back in time to before the crucifixion to be reminded of what Jesus told his disciples, the assurances he gave them, before the crucifixion and resurrection ever happened.

Now, in our text today, we are back on that first day for a moment, before we jump ahead 40 days to when he ascends into heaven.

But he doesn't just leave them. He doesn't *disappear* from their sight.

Before he leaves them, he gives them an assurance, again, because of course he does. But more than that he gives them marching orders if you will. What comes next is what we have come to know as the great commission. Now, when we think of the Great Commission, I would bet that most folks familiar with that term think of Jesus telling his disciples, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them and teaching them all that I have commanded you."

That is the great commission from Matthew's Gospel. In all honesty, it sounds a lot more fun. It can even be used as justification to go into places and impose our will for the sake of "making disciples." It is the

justification for Luther's belief of being a priesthood of all believers. "Go and baptize!" Who doesn't want to do that?

As a camp counselor at Luther Park in 2009 I played the role of Jesus in the Christwalk every Thursday evening. Campers would walk through camp seeing scenes of Christ's life and hearing the stories that shape us today. Week one of that summer I nailed every single line throughout the play. Sure, I had a disciple in the front row for the sermon on the mount whispering line by line, but I didn't miss a single word. Until the end. The Great Commission. I appeared in the upper room with the disciples and proclaimed to them:

"Go therefore....(and my mind went blank.)"

The words never came to me. Until finally I gave up and proclaimed, "Go therefore...and do good stuff!"

It isn't necessarily wrong.

It is Matthew's Gospel, when talking about the Great Commission, that gets all the glory.

But, there is a great commission in Luke's Gospel as well. It maybe doesn't seem as fun as being given the marching orders to go and splash water in God's name, but it is equally as important.

Luke's Great Commission gets at the dirty work of Holy Reconciliation. "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

In Luke's Gospel, the marching orders that are given are to offer forgiveness to those who would repent. The building block of repairing relationship. To admit we have done wrong and forgive those who've wronged us.

It's no wonder that Matthew's Commission gets all the attention. Because splashing water proclaiming God's love for all people is a whole lot easier, and, quite frankly, is a lot of fun.

So, we return to the question we've asked since the beginning of Lent. What do we need for tomorrow, and how does this inform my tomorrow?

Jesus tells his disciples what they are going to need in their post Jesus existence. He assures them that they have what they need to go into all the nations proclaiming the love of Christ to all people.

But what about us? What does this say to us?

One, we know they did it because we are here talking about, and if they hadn't, we wouldn't be.

Two, let's take a look at the other Gospel text we could have chosen for today. This is from John 17. Jesus is sitting around a table with his disciples. It is there last time gathered before his betrayal and arrest. He has just finished giving them a long talk, all good things, assurances of things to come and they have everything that they need to carry out God's mission in the world, and he stands up. He stands among his disciples and he prays for them.

And his prayer is this. He reminds them, in praying to God, of all the things that are to happen to himself and all that has been promised and entrusted to them. And those are all good, but then he gets to the meat of his message. His why. Their why.

"I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them...Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, *SO THAT THEY MAY BE ONE, AS WE ARE ONE.*"

People of God, that oneness that we experience in our baptism that is Matthew's Great Commission is experienced when we dig into the Holy dirty work of Luke's Great Commission to repent and offer forgiveness.

It is that act that builds up the Body of Christ just as much as the fun splashing of water when we gather around the font.

In fact, the promise that we make around that font is that we will commit to that Holy dirty work for the sake of the Gospel.

People of God, let us continue to dig into the Holy dirty work of, yes, baptizing and teaching all that God commands, but also admitting that sometimes we mess up and sometimes we are wronged, but there is God's grace and forgiveness for that. And that is what builds up the Body of Christ.

Thanks be to God.

AMEN

Song of the Day "We Are Baptized in Christ Jesus" #451

Baptism of Maren Kay Gilbertson and Tate Daniel Gilbertson

Apostle's Creed

Prayers of Intercession

United in the hope and joy of the resurrection, let us pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

A brief silence.

Ever-present God, root your church firmly in you. Let us neither become entranced staring up into the heavens, nor distraught by the suffering of the world. Teach us to see you in every face, every place, and every moment. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

God of the cosmos, you cradle creation in your loving arms and anoint it with signs of your presence. In the budding of flowers, the birth of a baby, and the formations of the land and sky, reveal your abundant life. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Eternal God, your reign is above us, around us, beneath us, and beside us. As you rule the cosmos with justice and mercy, pour out your Spirit upon those in authority, that they serve humbly and justly. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

God of companionship, provide clarity and direction for those experiencing life transitions—in births and deaths, new employment and new relationships, divorces and departures. We pray for those receiving new diagnoses or undergoing treatment for illness or injury (*We pray especially for Peyton, Matt, David, Verna, Irene, Connie, Clarice, Steve, Kathy, Val, Jacob, Cherri, Keith and JoJo, Bob and Joanne, Bill and Bonnie, Frank and Heather, Bob and Sonja, Bill and Betty, Tom and Kay, Sherm and Mary, Sandy*). Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Immanent God, in you we live, move, and have our being. Draw us closer to you and clothe us in your power. Encourage those preparing for baptism, those affirming their baptism, and all who are assuming new roles in this congregation's ministries (*especially*). Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

God of welcome, you call us to feast at your eternal banquet. We give thanks for those who came before us, whose lives witnessed to your love. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Rejoicing in the victory of Christ's resurrection, we lift our prayers and praise to you, almighty and eternal God; through Jesus Christ, our risen Lord.

Amen.

Offering

Offertory Prayer

Generous God,
in this meal you offer your very self.
We give thanks for these gifts of the earth.
In the breaking of this bread
reveal to us the Risen One.
In the pouring of this wine
pour us out in service to the world;
through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Words of Institution

Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen

Communion

Prayer

Gracious God,
in you we live and move and have our being.
With your word and this meal of grace,
you have nourished our life together.
Strengthen us to show your love
and serve the world in Jesus' name.
Amen.

Blessing

The God of all,
who raised † Jesus from the dead,
bless you by the power of the Holy Spirit
to live in the new creation.
Amen.

Sending Song

“Sent Forth by God’s Blessing”

#547

Dismissal

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Go in peace, to love and serve the Lord!

Okay! We will! Thanks be to God!

And all of Good Shepherd said...

AMEN!

May Financial Snapshot

Through May 15

Total Revenue **\$18,571**
2 more Sunday Offerings to Come

Total Expenses **\$20,638**

2022 May Expenses: \$26,994
Difference to date:
\$2,067

Your generosity in action:

Last Wednesday, Shepherd's Closet held their Spring Clothes Distribution. Families were able to come through and shop and hopefully experience some relief on their family budgets.

THANK YOU!!

107 Surveys Completed! We did it!
Join us for Ice Cream Sundaes
this Sunday
following worship!

WHERE
ARE WE
GOING?



Vacation Bible School 2023

**+RE
NEW**  **THE GREEN VBS™**

Grow in Faith. Have Fun. Change the World.

June 12th - 15th, 9 a.m.- 12 p.m. 

If you have grandchildren or neighbors looking for something to do – have them contact Mary Toufar at 952-358-1807.