

Heaven and Earth

King of Glory Lutheran Church

Year B: Ascension Day: Luke 24:44-53/Acts 1:1-11

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[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.”⁴⁵ Then 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.

Ascension Day completes Jesus' death and resurrection. He returns to God the Father and thus now exists in God's space and humanity's space. Heaven and Earth overlap in this way and as we followers of Jesus share His love with others.

This last Thursday, May 9th, was a huge day in the church. Forty days after the resurrection is Ascension Day. Ascension Day? Like, ‘Up, up and away in my beautiful balloon’ day? Oh, Jimmy Webb and the 5th Dimension were great. But no. Jesus’ Ascension Day.

We know the times Jesus showed Himself to the disciples after the resurrection: in the locked room, on the beach, on the road to Emmaus. Yet scripturally and in the church year, we don’t move straight from Easter to Pentecost. Otherwise, Jesus would be wandering the earth like some lost character in a sci-fi movie. No, He needs to return to God the Father from whence He came. Hence, Ascension Day!

The two accounts from Luke 24 and Acts 1 which we hear today describe Jesus being taken back into the heavens. For you scientists out there, our galaxy is light years across and if Jesus was travelling at the speed of light, He would be in the Milky Way today. Don’t know where exactly Jesus ascended to, but it was certainly out of this world.

Or was it...exactly? The act of Jesus ascending completes Jesus' birth, death and resurrection. *He returns to God the Father and thus now exists in God's space and humanity's space. What does that mean?*

We know in scripture, whenever a mountain appears, God is going to show up. The ten commandments given on Mt Sinai. The transfiguration of Jesus with His buddies Moses and Elijah on a mountain. Jesus tells His followers to go 'up' to Jerusalem where the spirit of God dwells in the temple there.

Up, and up, and up, both geographically and physically signify God space. God reveals Godself in higher places. We say, 'up in heaven' and in a spiritual sense, we're right. Up, is God space.

Down here on earth is humanity's space. Yet, 'the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory.' (John 1:14) Jesus moved into the neighborhood and through Jesus we saw the face of God. Fully human and fully divine, God walked upright on two legs down here with we dirt creatures made out of the dust of earth. (Genesis 2)

When Jesus ascends back to God the Father, it is not as if He is fully gone from this – humanity's space. Now heaven and earth overlap as it were. 'No longer does God dwell on earth in human form, but neither does God solely exist in heaven in divine form.' (Sundaysandseasons.com) Jesus exists permanently in both God space and humanity space. The uniting of the two realms becomes concrete in Jesus' death. "It is finished." (John 19:30)

Jesus is the new humanity that we are invited and called to become. 'Filled with the Holy Spirit, Christ makes us living stones being built into a spiritual house (1 Peter 2:4.) We become the temple in which Christ now abides. This is why we pray "Your kingdom come, on earth as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10)"—so that earth and heaven will be united again in the world around us.'

We too, you and I, will be enfolded back into God's heavenly realm one day upon our deaths. Yet...before He departs, Jesus sends the disciples out. They are now 'apostles', the sent ones. As Jesus taught, we as His followers are where Heaven and Earth overlap. When we share Jesus' love with others in concrete ways, heaven and earth are brought together.

In truth, this day we celebrate – Ascension Day – is both the ‘up’ day and the ‘out’ day. We go out to demonstrate our love of Jesus in loving others. That unites Heaven and Earth.

Last Sunday, our faithful crew from King of Glory hosted the last meal at LuMin, campus ministry at CSU. There were seventeen students, multiple graduates, surrounded by loving family and friends. They were so thankful for the brats and dogs, the potatoe salad and beans. Love was embodied in piled high plates coming from the kitchens of our members. Apostleship through food. Heaven and earth.

The SafeLot ministry website is almost complete. Last week, comments from former parkers were added. Listen to Brenda’s words:
"Loveland SafeLot had the most amazing people. I have had a new love for the folks that volunteer to help us get a new lease on life. I can't say enough good about these wonderful, patient, and caring people. I've really never seen such awesome concern for the homeless so thank you with all of my heart. Truly agape Love if I've ever seen it . My Love goes out to my new family at the SafeLot." **Brenda, a former parker.** Heaven and earth connect.

LuMin Student Housing Security Initiative was born three years ago by Pr Paul Judson. LuMin identified an apartment complex that was willing to discount some \$1,100-per-month units by \$100. Backed by funding from a range of Lutheran, Episcopal, Presbyterian and United Church of Christ groups and individuals, the initiative provides a \$250 monthly subsidy for each apartment. This allows 20 students to live two-to-a-unit for an out-of-pocket cost of \$375 apiece. The apartments are fully furnished, and all utilities are included.... In the first year the initiative housed 10 residents. The next year that number was 16, and this year it’s up to 20—which is where it will stay, because 10 units is the maximum the complex can offer at the reduced rate. Pr Paul Judson says, “Our goal is to help them graduate in a reasonable amount of time and with reasonable debt.”
(<https://www.livinglutheran.org/2024/04/accompanying-a-hidden-community/>)

Yesterday at Sharin’s committal we heard how she made baby blankets whenever there was a new baby in her circle of friends and family.

What is your favorite way to connect earth and heaven? Continuing the legacy of your parents? Reading to school children? Being the best parent you can? This week may we connect heaven to earth often!

Amen!