

Ascension Day

King of Glory Lutheran

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Ascension Day: Year C: Luke 24:44-53

May 31-June 1, 2025

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.”⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, ⁴⁶ and he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ And 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.”

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

Jesus’ ascension completes His salvation for He must return to God so to make a way for us. Yet, He is still accessible and present to us here on earth. His return marks the way for the coming of the Holy Spirit. We are to be witnesses to His story and the Good News He brings.

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.*
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead. (Evangelical Lutheran
Worship pg. ***)**

We confess The Apostles’ Creed regularly. We’ll confess it this morning as we welcome new members into this community of believers. Can you find the line that says, “On the third day he rose again;” What do the next two lines say?

Jesus ascended into heaven. We don't often talk about Jesus' ascension back into heaven. But we would do well to do so! On Thursday, while you were out golfing or playing pickleball or studying fresh green beans at the grocery store, the Church celebrated the Feast Day of the Ascension. Why didn't you know, you say? Well, we don't give gifts to one another on Ascension Day. We don't buy lilies and cook ham on Ascension Day, either. But this incredibly important day must be celebrated in the life of the church. For it is the day Jesus left earth and returned to God the Father. It also has important implications for you and I.

Have you ever thought about where Jesus is and what He is doing? Is He just hanging out somewhere in space? After all that work and painful death, did He decide to check out and be done with us? Is He taking a really, really, long lunch break?

The whole scope of Jesus' saving actions for the world are as the creed notes: crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension. Pentecost, the sending of the Holy Spirit, which we'll celebrate next weekend, doesn't make any sense without ascension. It would be like having finished a puzzle, but you simply cannot find the very last puzzle piece. Without that piece, the picture isn't complete. The same here. Ascension is the last puzzle piece of Jesus' saving action for the world.

Look again the Creed. Notice the verb tense in this section. All the verbs are in the past tense for the first five lines. Conceived. Crucified. Died. Buried. Descended. Those are things that happened in historical space and time.

Then it changes to present tense. Rose again. Is seated. Will come again. It sounds like to me that this Jesus is alive. This Jesus is a God of the present. The Now. Which is why ascension makes all the difference.

Jesus had appeared to the disciples in various ways since His resurrection. He appeared in a locked room. He'd eaten breakfast on the beach with them. He walked on the road to Emmaus with them.

But there was a tiny clue that we heard seven weeks ago, way back on Easter from John's Gospel. Listen to what Jesus says to Mary at the open tomb. "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" Jesus' ascension was the final piece of the resurrection.

But it's not the final piece of Jesus' work in heaven or in earth! Here's what we need to know.

First. Jesus' returns to God, He ascends in order to make a way for us. The gift of the resurrection is eternal life with God. The roadmap is Jesus. We will pass through death and into life with Jesus. Just as Jesus did, so shall we pass through death into life with God. If the resurrected Jesus had stayed on earth, in flesh and blood, He would be contained in this reality. Ascended, He is now independent of time and space.

Second. When the creed states that He is seated at the right hand of the Father, it doesn't mean location. 'The right hand' indicates power and authority. Jesus rules and has dominion over all principalities in heaven and in earth. He has claimed His power and rule over all. Remember Paul writes to the church in Rome, (Romans 8: 38-39) "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." Jesus is Lord over all of that. We heard this as well in the Ephesians lesson today. 'God has put all things under Jesus' feet and has made him the head over all things for the church. His name is above every other name.'

Third. Before He leaves, Jesus tells the disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they are 'clothed with power from on high.' That means, wait here until they have received the gift of the Holy Spirit which comes upon them at Pentecost. With the Holy Spirit, they will have power and authority also. And all the stories of the beginning of the early church in the book of Acts, are stories of people preaching, teaching and healing with Jesus' power and authority through the Holy Spirit.

Fourth. Why is that important? Because, Jesus says, 'You are witnesses to all these things.' If you or I would get called to the witness stand in a trial and say nothing, would that be a credible witness? No! Witnesses speak. They tell the truth. They tell a story. Jesus tells the disciples, they cannot and ought not stay quiet! To be a disciple is to learn. To be an apostle is to witness. Why are the twelve called apostles? It's a different Greek word than disciple. Apostle means sent ones. If the disciples were now the apostles...the sent ones...the witnesses...what does that make you and me? Yes! Witnesses. To who? Jesus? To what? His Good News of love. To whom? To all nations.

Fifth. Even though Jesus ascended, He is still very accessible and present to us today. He is Lord of heaven and earth. Remember that heaven is not some

geographic space 'up there' and earth is 'down here.' Heaven is here on earth because of God. God makes this space heaven when we realize God's grace and love. When we are kind and loving. When we work for peace. Heaven is here because God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are limitless, outside the confines of time and space. We are here. Heaven is here.

Jesus came to earth to show us who God is.
He loved us so much, He died for sin.
He rose again and then returned to God.
We are called to tell and share this Good News.
His Ascension makes all the difference! AMEN