

The Ascension of our Lord
10 May, Anno Domini 2018
St. Luke 24:
Pr. Kurt Ulmer

In the Name of the Father, and of the +Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

I find it so interesting that the ascension of Jesus doesn't get a longer treatment in the Scriptures. When you read the Gospel accounts of the event there is something unsatisfying about it. It's like it just kind of happens. Sometimes I get the impression that it was kind of like those scenes when you see a long shepherd's staff poke out from stage left and suddenly yank the actor away mid sentence. I'm sure the apostles felt much the same way and that's why they were just standing there, looking into the sky where Jesus was and then wasn't.

But this event was anything but ordinary or secondary to what Jesus had done, the last little thing He needed to take care of. Jesus' ascension was His triumphal enthronement as the Mighty Lord who has conquered all His enemies, all your enemies, and made them his footstool. The One who so humbly rode into Jerusalem just over a month ago now takes His seat at God's right hand of power to rule as the Savior king who has slain the devil, broken the jaws of death, and brought eternal peace between God and man by sacrificing His own life on the cross. Nothing happens in Jesus' kingdom that He isn't aware of and intimately directing for His purpose – your salvation.

Jesus' ascension doesn't mean that His work is done, and I think that's why the accounts seem so abrupt. Jesus' departure from our sight sets in motion His continued work through the Church, whose sole purpose is to bear witness to what Jesus has done – to let the light of the Gospel shine into the darkness, exposing the darkness for what it is and to hold up Jesus for all to see. That's what the world needs (it's what we need) – to see Jesus, the real Jesus, who brings peace beyond all human understanding. We look everywhere for this peace except where it is, where Jesus says it is. "Why do you stand looking into heaven?" Because that's where Jesus is, up there. Says who? You won't find Him there. You won't find Him in your job. You won't find Him in sports. You won't find Him in helping your neighbor. You won't find Him on the internet. And truth be told, your heart isn't the place to find Him either. He hasn't promised to be there. But you will find Him here. You will find Him in His Word which He has directed to be preached. And you will find Him in the bread and wine, which His own Word promises is His Body and Blood, given to you as a seal of your salvation.

Is there any greater joy and comfort than to know that the King of Love, who has rescued you from everlasting death, is the one who has been given ALL authority in heaven and on earth? It isn't Moses, who can only terrify you with the Commandments and show you just how broken and guilty and full of sin you are. No. It's Jesus, the One who says "Peace be with you." It's Jesus, whose hands and feet and side still bear the proof that He is the Lamb who was slain for sinners. It's Jesus, who healed the sick, raised the dead, and ate with tax collectors and prostitutes. It's Jesus, who became our brother by becoming one of us and who still and for all of eternity is one of us. And He knows. He knows how you hurt. He knows how you suffer. He knows the temptations that plague you and just how hard they are to resist. He certainly knows the weight and terrible burden of your guilt - He knows because He suffered under it, He was crushed by it.

He has ascended but He hasn't left you. He now fills all things. Not in the pantheistic notion that if you pray to the trees you are praying to God, but in the sense that His kingdom and all of its blessings are everywhere. There's no place where the kingdom of God's grace and mercy are unavailable. His kingdom isn't of this world. And that's great news. It isn't confined to a specific race, economic class, geography, country, type of earthly government, or language. Jesus' kingdom is found wherever His Word is preached, wherever Old Adams are drowned in the waters of Holy Baptism, wherever His Body and Blood are given to His children as He directed them to be given - for forgiveness and comfort. His kingdom is here. He has gathered us together into His kingdom to give us the things of His kingdom - life, peace, mercy, hope, and strength for the battles we fight against the devil, the world, and our own flesh every single day. And even more than strength, He gives you victory. He is the victory. His holy Flesh and Blood were offered as the sacrifice and His holy Flesh and Blood have overcome sin and death for all of eternity. Now His holy Flesh and Blood, the very same we are fed, sit at the right hand of the Father, always interceding for us. And in this Holy Supper we are partakers of this ascension.

Jesus has ascended. What greater news could there be? Our Savior is Lord of all. Out there He rules by power. In here He rules by grace. Here you find the King of Love doing His proper work, the work that lies at the center of who He is, the work that He loves to do - showing mercy, destroying death and despair, creating life and hope, binding up the broken-hearted, showing steadfast love. Jesus - our Savior and brother and our head - has ascended. He has prepared a place for you and one day you will follow Him to your eternal heavenly home. All who believe in His Name will ascend in body and soul to the heavenly places to join the dear

saints who have gone before us and to look upon our Savior as we long to right now - face to face because Jesus has ascended.

May the joy of this day and this glorious reality be yours and sustain you now and forever more.

In the Name of +Jesus.