



## Seventh Sunday of Easter / Ascension May 16, 2021

### Introduction

*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 are 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.*



### Thanksgiving for Baptism

*You may want to have a small bowl of water available to remind you of your baptism!*

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

**Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!**

Refreshed by the resurrection life we share in Christ,  
let us give thanks for the gift of baptism.

We thank you, risen Christ,  
for these waters where you make us new,  
leading us from death to life, from tears to joy.  
We bless you, risen Christ,  
that your Spirit comes to us  
in the grace-filled waters of rebirth,  
like rains to our thirsting earth,  
like streams that revive our souls,  
like cups of cool water shared with strangers.

Breathe your peace on your church when we hide in fear.  
Clothe us with your mercy and forgiveness.  
Send us companions on our journey as we share your life.  
Make us one, risen Christ.  
Cleanse our hearts. Shower us with life.  
To you be given all praise, with the Holy Spirit,  
in the glory of God, now and forever. **Amen.**

**Gathering Hymn ELW # 392/ LBW # 158**

***Alleluia! Sing to Jesus***

*Listen and sing along [here](#).*

## 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.**

## First Reading: Acts 1:1-11

*Before he is lifted into heaven, Jesus promises that the missionary work of the disciples will spread out from Jerusalem to all the world, and that the disciples will be accompanied and empowered by the Holy Spirit. His words provide an outline of the book of Acts.*

*Read the complete text [here](#).*

## Psalm: Psalm 93

<sup>1</sup>The LORD is king, robed in majesty;

the LORD is robed in majesty and armed with strength.

The LORD has made the world so sure that it cannot be moved.

<sup>2</sup>**Ever since the world began, your throne has been established;  
you are from everlasting.**

<sup>3</sup>The waters have lifted up, O LORD, the waters have lifted up their voice;  
the waters have lifted up their pounding waves.

<sup>4</sup>**Mightier than the sound of many waters,  
mightier than the breakers of the sea,  
mightier is the LORD who dwells on high.**

<sup>5</sup>Your testimonies are very sure,  
and holiness befits your house, O LORD, forever and forevermore.

## Second Reading: Ephesians 1:15-23

*The risen and exalted Christ reigns over the entire universe. The author of Ephesians prays that we are given the wisdom to know the power of the risen Christ and the empowering hope that the knowledge of this inheritance provides.*

*Read the complete text [here](#).*

## **Gospel: Luke 24:44-53**

*On the day of his ascension, Jesus leaves his disciples with a commission, a blessing, and a promise of the Holy Spirit.*

*Read the complete text [here](#).*

### **Reflection on the Text**

The Ascension of Our Lord is not a day often celebrated in the modern Lutheran Church, even though it should be. Once upon a time, this would have been a weekday service that many would have attended, but schedules and lack of time for church during the week have made it difficult to have mid-week worship services. Even Lent and Advent have become much less attended than they once were.

This day, forty days after the Resurrection, is the day, according to the author of the Gospel of Luke and The Acts of the Apostles, when Jesus was taken up into heaven. The Ascension of Jesus is mentioned elsewhere in scripture, but this account in Luke is the most detailed, and it gives us the 40-day timeline. Jesus ascends 40 days after his resurrection, and 10 days before Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit. This gives us an Easter season of seven weeks – 49 days, and then Pentecost occurs on the fiftieth day after Easter, beginning a whole new season.

There are several reasons why the Ascension of Jesus is important. One is that it marks the time when Jesus leaves the disciples and when the promised paraclete arrives – the holy comforter promised to the disciples.

The Ascension also marks the promise to the disciples – that Jesus would only be with them awhile, and then he would send the Holy Spirit to be with them as they continued his ministry on earth. Forty days is also a repeat of that number that is so important in scripture -especially for Jesus. 40 years wandering in the wilderness for the Israelites; 40 days in the wilderness being tempted by Satan; then 40 days on earth after he was raised from the dead.

For us, Luther says that the Ascension of Jesus marks our freedom from sin. Jesus has ended our captivity to sin, and now we are truly free. As Jesus ascends to the right hand of the Father, as we profess in our creeds, we can be assured that our sins are forgiven, and that sin and death no longer have power over us.

Jesus proclaims this to the disciples as well, telling them, “that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.” This is their mission – to proclaim to all that their sins are forgiven in the name of Jesus – who died, was raised, and who has ascended to the right hand of God.

This is good news to us! We can know that our sins are forgiven, and that they hold no power over us. We are also called to spread that good news to others – that in the name of Jesus, they are forgiven!

As Luke tells Theophilus in the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles, Jesus spent the forty days instructing the disciples, but telling them to wait until they had received the Holy Spirit. The appearance of Jesus over 40 days to many people – the disciples and other followers – provided proof for the disciples to use as they spread the word of who Jesus was and as they continued his mission.

These stories, and appearances, and words of Jesus as he was taken up into heaven give us hope. Our hope is that in Jesus, we are saved and granted eternal life. Jesus was resurrected so that we could be too, as Paul reminds us in his letter to the Romans. Jesus has ascended to prepare a place for us as mentioned in John's Gospel. Jesus sits at the right hand of God and intercedes for us as Paul tells us about the power of prayer. Jesus – whose name is above every name, as Paul continually reminds us. It is in the name of Jesus that we pray. It is Jesus whose body and blood infuse us, sustain us, and free us from sin in Holy Communion. Jesus whose saving act redeems us from sin. Jesus who is exalted above all the powers of the universe. Jesus who loves us so much that he gave his life for us. Jesus whom we worship, whom we praise, whom we follow. Jesus in whom we profess our faith in the creeds of the church.

Jesus was raised from the dead and lifted up to the right hand of God so that we can believe, so that we can be free from sin, so that we can hold onto the promise of eternal life with Jesus. Thanks be to God! Amen.

**Hymn of the Day ELW # 604 / LBW # 300 (vs 1-4,6)      *O Christ, Our Hope***

*Listen and sing along [here](#).*

## **Nicene Creed**

*We profess our faith with the whole church in all times and places:*

**We believe in one God,  
the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God, begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father;  
through him all things were made.  
For us and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven,  
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary  
and became truly human.  
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.  
On the third day he rose again  
in accordance with the scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,\*  
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.  
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.  
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.  
We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

### **Prayers of Intercession**

Alive in the risen Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, we bring our prayers before God who promises to hear us and answer in steadfast love.

*A brief silence.*

You call the whole church on earth to worship and bless you. Empower your church to bear joyful witness to your love made known in Jesus Christ.  
Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You have fashioned a habitat for all your creatures and you fill the earth with your glory. Give rain where it is needed and rescue those inundated by floods. Mend what we have torn in the fabric of creation and replenish and nourish your world.  
Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

In the majesty of your love, you rule the world with justice and mercy. Give those in authority the spirit of your love, so that all who are hungry and poor receive food and resources, and all people flourish and live in peace.

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You heal those who are sick and bind up the brokenhearted. Attend to the cares and needs of the hurting and hopeless in our congregation, community, workplaces, schools, and families especially those we name now. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You have gathered us in this congregation, enlightened our hearts, and given us a share of the immeasurable greatness of your power. Help us love one another, be reconciled where we are divided, and share the riches of your grace with our neighbors.

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

In raising Christ from the dead, you put your great power to work in the world. Raise us and all who have died in the faith with Christ. We remember saints in our lives and in our community. Thank you for their gifts among us.

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

In the hope of new life in Christ, we raise our prayers to you, trusting in your never-ending goodness and mercy; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### **Lord's Prayer**

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:

**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.**

**Closing Hymn ELW # 393 / LBW # 157**

*A Hymn of Glory Let Us Sing*

*Listen and sing along [here](#).*

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Today's reflection was written by Pastor Ray Sipe.