

Ascension Sunday 2021

And it came to pass as he was parted from them he was carried up into heaven.

**In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.
Amen.**

Last Thursday we celebrated the Feast of the Ascension, the fortieth day of Our Lord's presence on earth and the day he Ascended to God's Right Hand. Like many Holy Days, it is celebrated on a weekday which typically means lower attendance. Fortunately, the Ascension has an eight day celebration period known as an octave, so we have additional time to embrace its fullness.

After Our Lord rose from the dead he remained on earth for forty days. If you are familiar with the Old Testament, you'll know that 40 is a significant number in Scripture. So Jesus has been around for five weeks continuing to appear to his disciples and teaching them about the Kingdom of God and he is now ready to resume his place at God's right hand.

If I were to ask you the significance of Jesus' death on the cross and his resurrection, I'm sure you could tell me. But what of our Lord's Ascension? What does his return to heaven imply and what does it mean for us still here on earth?

Well, First, Scripture is clear that Jesus had to return to heaven. After all, God is a Trinity and from the beginning of time, actually even before the beginning of time, the Father, Son, and Spirit lived in perfect union. But then the unimaginable happened. God the Father sent his Son to a world that had become so broken that the only hope was an intervention; a sacrifice if you will, for man's wickedness. This, of course, was Jesus, who left his Father's side to be by our side. Now, his redeeming work complete, he could return to heaven. The Second reason Our Lord's Ascension is significant is the Descent of the Holy Ghost. We've heard in the Gospel these past few weeks that as Jesus Ascends, the Holy Ghost will Descend. Thus, we will not be left alone. In fact, Jesus says unless he returns to the Father, the Holy Ghost could not come. We will celebrate this arrival, this "initial" pouring out of his Spirit, next Sunday on the great Feast of Whitsunday or Pentecost.

So, Our Lord has Returned to the Father, Poured out His Spirit, and now He Prays for us. And that's our third point. One of the greatest comforts we have here on earth is to know that we are prayed for. We pray daily for one another and for the needs and intentions of the Church. It gives us a sense of comfort and peace when someone

says, "I'm praying for you." But the Ascension tells us something even more amazing. Jesus himself is praying for us. He is our intercessor, our only mediator and advocate. Paul reminded the Romans, "Christ, who was raised from the dead is now interceding for us." It is an awesome thought to know that Jesus prays for our comfort and strength and peace, and holiness. All of that. And as great as all of that is, he even prays for us when we sin. What do we here during every Holy Communion in the Comfortable Words?

"If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the Propitiation for our sins."

Our final point on the Ascension is that Jesus will come again. As Our Lord leaves the earth to return to His Father, it is not permanent.

He says, "Let not your hearts be troubled. Trust in God and trust in me. In my Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, ye may be also."

The Ascension means that Jesus left, but it also means that he is coming back. In the meantime, we have some work to do. As Our Lord ascends, the disciples are looking at him rise into the clouds when

two men in white, presumably angels, appear to them and say, “Why are you looking up” Almost like, “Why are you surprised?” As you have seen him ascend, he will also descend when the time is come. And until that time, we are to be about God’s work. In other words, not merely “standing around.” We are to share our faith with others. A concept not really understood or embraced in most churches is the concept of evangelism. And I’m not talking about growing a particular parish or sitting around a conference table passing around ideas on church growth. The only way a church grows is by individual witness. Every person sitting here today has the responsibility of bringing others to the faith. You are a living, breathing witness. I was at a retreat two weeks ago and the retreat master asked, “How many people have you brought to the faith?” It is a somewhat scary question. Scary, because I’m sure we’ll be asked that same question on the day of our judgment. It is not enough to merely “look up.” As scripture reminds, we should be “redeeming the time until our Lord’s return.”

We may not talk about the Ascension as much as we do about the Cross or Resurrection. But it is still a vital part of our Christian faith. Think of it like this: The Cross is empty because Jesus died. The tomb

**is empty because Jesus Rose. The earth is empty because Jesus
Ascended.**

**Let us give thanks to God for the Glorious Ascension of his Son, and
take to heart the words we will hear just moments from now in our
Communion Preface:**

**“That where Jesus is, thither we might also ascend, and reign with
him in glory.”**

**In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.
Amen.**