

THE CHRIST WAS TO SUFFER AND BE RESURRECTED – FOR YOU!

Christ is Risen!

Hear again the Word of God for this *Feast of the Ascension*, on this Thursday forty days after the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus the Christ:

Then He said to them, "Thus it was written: the Christ was to suffer and to resurrect from the dead the third day; and it is to be proclaimed in the Name of Him, repentance into the forgiveness of sins, into all the nations – beginning from Jerusalem."¹

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ

Tonight we celebrate the second of the three greatest and oldest festivals of the Church Year. In the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church, this day appears to be the least publicly observed one of the three. The Feast of the Ascension of our Lord was set early in the New Testament era. For a couple of centuries it was celebrated as it is now, after the first, and greatest, Feast -- the Resurrection of our Lord. In the annual remembrances of the Church, the Ascension found its rightful place in the calendar just ahead of the Feast of Pentecost.

What is so important about this fortieth day of the Resurrection Season to the people of God? Why are we annually encouraged to receive God's gifts together on this particular day?

Remember, this celebration dates back to the day of the actual events which occurred on the fortieth day after Jesus' bodily resurrection from the dead.

¹ Luke 24:46-47.

Recalling that day every year, we are then regularly given God's rationale for Christ's Ascension. There are several reasons we annually remember this Feast:

First, we recall the events of the Ascension because Jesus, in His body resurrected from the dead, ascended into the heavens that He might fill all things. That means that, since His Ascension, those who remain in the Church may be sure that His promise to be with His people whenever they gather around His Visible and Proclaimed Word will be fulfilled. Jesus ascended that He might be bodily present everywhere and all times where and when His Holy gifts are given and received. The Ascension means for us that we are free to understand that He is no longer fixed in time in His corporeal Body to any one location.

Second, we, every year, celebrate the Feast of the Ascension of our Lord to hear that He has placed our flesh - risen from the dead, ascended, and glorified - at the pinnacle of Creation. Jesus, Who in His death conquered death, bound the devil, and in whose resurrection declared us right with the Father and opened the kingdom of the heavens to all believers, Jesus has put Man back to the place of exaltation where he was set by God in the beginning. Before Adam's Fall, God had placed under his dominion all living things in the sea, in the air, and on the earth.² So, Jesus, our Head, reigns with His Body, over all things.

Third, the annual Ascension celebration reminds the faithful, you, that you have the Divine Gift for which the first followers of the resurrected Jesus had

² *Genesis* 1:28.

to wait. At that time, they knew not how long they would have to sit in Jerusalem for the Promise. That gift is the one which this past Sunday's Gospel proclamation served to prepare you for as you heard the Word.

Fourth, this Feast of Jesus is given to the Church that she, you who are baptized and remain believing, may hear again the Gospel – the Good News – of Jesus the Christ. This message is the central Truth of the Divine Writings. It declares that which God did, does, and will do, to keep giving you all His Promises. From the mouth of the risen Jesus, through the inspired hand of the Evangelist, declared from the one Office Christ established, you annually hear on this day God's Good News for you, and for all mankind:

“Thus it was written, the Christ was to suffer and to resurrect from the dead the third day; and it is to be proclaimed in the Name of Him, repentance into the forgiveness of sins, into all the nations – beginning from Jerusalem.”³

How different those words of our Lord are than that which comes forth from the “prosperity preachers” of our age. Jesus declares His Word – the heart and core of Scripture which anyone might believe and be saved to reign with Jesus forever. He declares that that which He has done is to be proclaimed to work repentance and the forgiveness of sins.

Hear this clearly – Jesus suffered and died for you, in your sins. He rose from the dead, having cast your sins into the grave. His Name is given to you with the water and Word. In that washing you received regeneration and renewal.

³ Luke 24:46-47.

Through that, God gives to you the ability to not just sorrow over your sins, but His power to will to turn from them and walk in new life in Christ.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, we live in an era of the Church in which men appear to be afraid to actually do that to which Jesus has called them. To preach the Good News means also to declare to you the Bad News – that is, to name you a sinner. That you might be moved to repentance, true contrition over your sins, you need to hear regularly that have broken at least one, and therefore all, of the Holy Words engraved in stone on our Chancel Wall.

Such proclamation is not, as some over-sensitive souls would teach, talking down to you. It is the proclamation of the Law – to you. It is done in the Love of God in Christ so that you might actually more than know, that you might truly believe, that you have sinned against God and fallen short of His glory.

That is the first part of the preaching of repentance. It is not to be watered down by lightening the Word of God for the sake of the oversensitive. After all, you know the men, including this man, whom God has called through you to preach, teach, and administer the Sacraments, are sinners. You know that the “you” of the bold preachers of the Law includes the man who is proclaiming.

You also recall that when such a called man stands facing you in the Sacramental position he is declaring to you Christ’s Word. Such Law preaching is intended to break you in your sins. It is declared to show you that you cannot in yourself save yourself from the least, let alone the greatest, of your sins. It is done

in loving correction, as a participation in the divine hope that you may continue to be saved.

(This again should make it clear how important the Ascension is. The ascended Jesus declares from the Office that you are among the “all” who have sinned and fallen short of God’s glory).

Having proclaimed that; having declared you to be what you are in Adam – sinner – I now preach that, in Christ, you are in Him – saint! Jesus rose from the dead to present you as declared right with our heavenly Father. As you remain clothed in Christ, in His Ascension, the Father sees you as one of the myriads of His holy ones. That is the truth for you! Jesus is declaring to you, through the Office He established, repentance into the forgiveness of all your sins.

Again, this proclamation is no time for a weak message or delivery. Jesus, God Who died for you, in your sins, rose for you. He paid fully the price demanded by the Holy God for your sins. Jesus then took your flesh, with all stain of sin gone, and He placed it at the right hand of God. That is great news!

This means, following Sunday’s illustration in the correct manner: Jesus has “named and claimed you!” Jesus Himself declares to you that all of that and more was foretold in the texts of the Old Covenant, as He continues to say:

These, (are) the Words of Me of which I spoke to all of you then when I was with you all, “It remains necessary to be fulfilled, all things, the ones having been written in the Torah of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms concerning Me.”⁴

⁴ Luke 24:44.

That gives us, you, a fifth reason for not resisting the Holy Spirit's leading you into each annual Ascension Feast Lord's Service. That is, Jesus declares that the Word of the Old Testament texts, summed up in the Jewish manner – Torah, Prophets, and Psalms – the Lord declares that the Word which speaks of Him is heard in them. Think about this: from the invocation this evening until the benediction coming at the end of this Lord's Service the Word proclaims Jesus to you.

Jesus reminded His first followers, as He prepared them to receive the Promise, that they had all they needed to behold Him for Who He is – the Word of God. This Gift from on High would open ears, hearts, lips, and lives to genuinely hear that Word of God. He would give them, as He now gives you, the power of God to comprehend the Scriptures even more fully than at the time that our text was first recorded:

Then He opened of them the mind, to continue to comprehend the Scriptures...⁵

Those men had not yet been clothed with power from on High. The disciples of Jesus needed Him to open their collective mind to grasp the Truth of the Scriptures concerning Him. If He had not departed so that He and the Father might send the Promise, human understanding of the Word would have been limited to being received by those who were physically present with Jesus.

⁵ Luke 24:45.

You may recall, that the Ascension Day was not the first time Jesus had opened their mind to behold Him for Who He is. As each Easter season begins, from Resurrection morning until Easter evening, we hear that Jesus' first followers needed Him to repeatedly reveal Himself personally to them through His Word. From Jesus calling Mary by name, to His revealing Himself in the breaking of the bread in the room in Emmaus, the followers of Jesus needed Him bodily with them in order to behold Him as having been raised from the dead.

At His Ascension, Jesus was promising something more than the wonder of His resurrected bodily presence among His followers. They were going to need this Gift of God to perform Jesus' calling which He was then giving to them. He said to them that the Good News of His death and resurrection was,

to be proclaimed in the Name of Him, repentance into the forgiveness of sins, into all the nations – beginning from Jerusalem. All of you (are) witnesses of these things.⁶

Since the Eleven were to be His witnesses, and their mind was open in time when He came to them; and since they were to go forth from Jerusalem to all the nations; they would need Him to be present in more than one place at one time. They needed Him, just as we needed Jesus, to ascend into the heavens as He did that day. That is because, from His Ascension, there would proceed the One Whom He promised.

⁶ Luke 24:47-48.

You have that gift. He continues to open your minds to the Jesus of the Scriptures. But, those first followers of Jesus had to wait, as Jesus said to them:

And, behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon all of you; but sit in the city until when all of you may be clothed with power from on high.⁷

By the Promise given to us, we know that those disciples only had to wait ten days. They, however, were called to wait in the Faith, in the Promise. As they prepared to do that, they witnessed Jesus go in a manner in which you, one Day, will see Him return:

He led them out, until toward Bethany, and having lifted up His hands, He blessed them. And it became, in His blessing them, He was separated from them and was borne up into the heaven.⁸

That witness, in the Promise, empowers us to declare: Christ is Risen!

Christ has Ascended!

Christ will come again!

Until then, having repeatedly lifted up the hands of a man in the Office of the Holy Ministry, the ascended Jesus blesses you through this divine Word:

The peace which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus

Ascension (Historic One-year series)

II Kings 2:5-15; Acts 1:1-11; Luke 24:44-53

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Pastor Michael A. Morehouse

SOLI DEO GLORIA

⁷ Luke 24:49.

⁸ Luke 24:50-51.

[[Jesus] said to them, "It does not remain for all of you to know which times or seasons the Father has placed by His own authority. But all of you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on all of you; and you all will be witnesses of Me in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."⁹

Then, these things having said, (in) the sight of them He was lifted up, and (a) cloud received Him from their eyes.¹⁰

This One, Jesus, having been taken up from all of you into the heavens, thus will return in the same manner as you saw Him going into the heavens.¹¹

And, behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon all of you; but sit in the city until when all of you may be clothed with power from on high...because John certainly baptized with water, but all of you will be baptized in (the) Holy Spirit not many days from now.¹²

"Thus it was written, 'The Christ is to suffer, and to resurrect from the dead by the third day, and repentance into (the) forgiveness of sins will be proclaimed in His Name into all nations beginning from Jerusalem.'¹³

And He led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up His hands, He blessed them. And it happened, in His continual blessing of them (that) He was separated from them and was borne into the heavens. And they worshipped Him, (and) returned into Jerusalem with great joy, and they were through all things in the Temple praising God. ¹⁴

And they worshipping Him returned into Jerusalem with great joy, and they were through all things in the Temple blessing God.¹⁵

Christ-ascended to the right hand of the Father to fill all things, to rule all things, to place our human flesh at the pinnacle of creation...¹⁶

⁹ Acts 1:7-8.

¹⁰ Acts 1:9.

¹¹ Acts 4:11.

¹² Luke 24:49, Acts 1:5.

¹³ Luke 24:46-47.

¹⁴ Luke 24:50-53.

¹⁵ Luke 24:53.

¹⁶ Morehouse, Michael. *One Cannot Kill the Church of Christ*, Tucson: Catalina Lutheran Church. May, 16, 2010. 3.

*It is to Christ alone that any sinner may turn to find true divine forgiveness, and in that forgiveness, purity in his or her inmost being, spiritually and bodily.*¹⁷

*Says YHWH to my Lord, "Sit to My Right until I make Your enemies a stool for Your feet."*¹⁸

The Creeds:

*Apostles': he ascended into heaven, and is seated on the right hand of God, the Father almighty, whence he shall come to judge the living and the dead.*¹⁹

*Meaning: freed me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil...in order that I may be his, live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, even as he is risen from the dead and lives and reigns to all eternity.*²⁰

*Nicene: ascended into heaven, and is seated on the right hand of the Father: he shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom shall have no end.*²¹

Athanasian: For just as the reasonable soul and the flesh are one man, so God and man are one Christ, who ...ascended into heaven, is seated on the right hand of the Father, whence he shall come to judge the living and the dead.

At his coming all men shall rise with their bodies and give an account of their own deeds. Those who have done good will enter eternal life, and those who have done evil will go into everlasting fire.

*This is the true Christian faith. Unless a man believes this firmly and faithfully, he cannot be saved.*²²

¹⁷ Ibid. 4.

¹⁸ Psalm 110:1.

¹⁹Tappert, T. G. 2000, c1959. *The book of concord : The confessions of the evangelical Lutheran church*. Fortress Press: Philadelphia

²⁰Tappert, T. G. 2000, c1959. *The book of concord : The confessions of the evangelical Lutheran church*. Fortress Press: Philadelphia

²¹Tappert, T. G. 2000, c1959. *The book of concord : The confessions of the evangelical Lutheran church*. Fortress Press: Philadelphia

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