



Forty days after His resurrection, Jesus led the apostles  
to the Mount of Olives, where, before their eyes,  
He was raised to heaven.

**Ascension Day Service**  
**May 21, 2020**  
**Saint Paul Lutheran Church**  
**Catonsville. Maryland**

# THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD

"And you will be my witnesses."

## AS WE GATHER

Often a forgotten Thursday, Ascension Day should not be ignored. The day does not merely commemorate the physical fact of Jesus' ascension. It is an essential part of the Easter event. The resurrection, ascension, and promise of Pentecost are all tied together.

The disciples had just become used to having Jesus with them again when they were left staring into the sky and he was gone. They remembered his words and went back to the city to wait for the Spirit whose presence would open their eyes to recognize the risen Savior in Word and Sacrament. The Spirit would unleash their wills and tongues to "tell everyone what he has done." So today we trust and wait in the power of the Spirit. Though not having seen Jesus, we love him. Until he comes again in glory, we wait for him. Released from our fears by the Spirit, we boldly proclaim him risen, ascended, and glorified.

## PRELUDE

**ENTRANCE HYMN** "A Hymn of Glory Let Us Sing" [LSB 493]

- 1 A hymn of glory let us sing!  
New hymns throughout the world shall ring:  
Alleluia, alleluia!  
Christ, by a road before untrod,  
Ascends unto the throne of God.  
Alleluia, alleluia!  
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!
- 2 The holy apostolic band  
Upon the Mount of Olives stand.  
Alleluia, alleluia!  
And with His faithful foll'wers see  
Their Lord ascend in majesty.  
Alleluia, alleluia!  
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!
- 5 Be now our joy on earth, O Lord,  
And be our future great reward.  
Alleluia, alleluia!  
Then, throned with You forever, we  
Shall praise Your name eternally.  
Alleluia, alleluia!  
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

6 O risen Christ, ascended Lord,  
All praise to You let earth accord:  
Alleluia, alleluia!  
You are, while endless ages run,  
With Father and with Spirit one.  
Alleluia, alleluia!  
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

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## INVOCATION

[P] In the name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit.

[C] **Amen**

## THE SERVICE OF THE WORD

### COLLECT OF THE DAY

[P] The Lord be with you.

[C] **And also with you.**

[P] Let us pray.

Grant, we pray, almighty God, that even as we believe your only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, to have ascended into heaven, so we may also in heart and mind ascend and continually dwell there with him; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

[C] **Amen**

### FIRST READING Acts 1:1-11

*(Today we will hear two accounts of Jesus' ascension. Though the lessons from the Gospel according to St. Luke and from Acts share the same author and tell the same story, each emphasizes a different aspect of the truth. In Acts, Luke points to the future--to the coming Spirit, to the great mission given to the Church, and to the Lord's impending return in glory.)*

In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. To them he presented himself alive after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

**PSALMODY** Psalm 110 (spoken responsively)

[L] The Lord says to my Lord:

[C] **"Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet."**

[L] The Lord will extend your mighty scepter from Zion;

[C] **rule in the midst of your enemies.**

[L] Your troops will be willing on your day of battle.

[C] **Arrayed in holy majesty, from the womb of the dawn you will receive the dew of your youth.**

[L] The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind:

[C] **"You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek."**

[L] The Lord is at your right hand;

[C] **he will crush kings on the day of his wrath.**

[L] He will judge the nations,

[C] **heaping up the dead and crushing the rulers of the whole earth.**

[L] He will drink from a brook beside the way;

[C] **therefore he will lift up his head.**

[L] Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;

[C] **as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen**

**SECOND READING** Ephesians 1:15-23

*(Paul begins his letter with the traditional thanksgiving and prayer. Here the prayer takes the form of an extended hymn, celebrating the risen and ascended Lord who provides power for the Church's growth in wisdom and knowledge. The hymn continues by exalting Christ as King, both of the Church and of the whole world.)*

For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

**GOSPEL** Luke 24:44-53

*(In the book of Acts, Luke briefly tells the story of the ascension before elaborating on it. In contrast, here Luke looks back to the whole of Christ's earthly ministry and work. The ascension is seen as the conclusion to that ministry and work. In this farewell scene, Jesus blesses the disciples and disappears--leaving them not sad, but joyful.)*

[P] The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the twenty-fourth chapter.

[C] **Glory to you, O Lord.**

Then [Jesus] said to 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 and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

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

*(After the reading . . .)*

[P] This is the Gospel of the Lord.

[C] **Praise to you, O Christ.**

**HYMN OF THE DAY**    "Up through Endless Ranks of Angels"    [LSB 491]

- 1     Up through endless ranks of angels,  
      Cries of triumph in His ears,  
      To His heav'nly throne ascending,  
      Having vanquished all their fears,  
      Christ looks down upon His faithful,  
      Leaving them in happy tears.
- 2     Death-destroying, life-restoring,  
      Proven equal to our need,  
      Now for us before the Father  
      As our brother intercede;  
      Flesh that for our world was wounded,  
      Living, for the wounded plead!
- 3     To our lives of wanton wand'ring  
      Send Your Spirit, promised guide;  
      Through our lives of fear and failure  
      With Your pow'r and love abide;  
      Welcome us, as You were welcomed,  
      To an endless Eastertide.
- 4     Alleluia, alleluia!  
      Oh, to breathe the Spirit's grace!  
      Alleluia, alleluia!  
      Oh, to see the Father's face!  
      Alleluia, alleluia!  
      Oh, to feel the Son's embrace!

## **SERMON**

### **PRAYER OF THE CHURCH**

[P] Confident of our Lord's return, let us approach our Father's throne of mercy on behalf of the Church and of all people.

[P] Lord Jesus Christ, as You ascended up through endless ranks of angels You did not leave us or forsake us. By Your Word and the sending of the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, You continue to teach us, enlighten us, and strengthen us in the one true faith. As we look to Your return, keep us faithful in the proclamation of repentance for the forgiveness of sins which is to be preached in Your name to all nations. Lord, in Your mercy,

**[C] hear our prayer.**

[P] Lord Jesus Christ, continue to bring before Your glorious Father our petition for the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, that we may know Him better. As the Father has placed all things under Your feet and appointed You head over everything for the church, instill peace and unity throughout all of Christendom and especially in our Synod. Grant us faith to take to heart the promise of Your return and so be urgent about the task of baptizing and teaching to the ends of the earth. Lord, in Your mercy,

**[C] hear our prayer.**

[P] Lord Jesus Christ, through a multitude of vocations You attend to the needs of the sick, the suffering, and the dying. Give wisdom, patience, and a compassionate heart to doctors, nurses, medical technicians, and to all who support the healing of others in this life. Bless the loving work of those who attend to the dying, that by their tender care they may ease the suffering and bring comfort to those in need. To those involved in medical research instill a respect for Your marvelous design and purpose to life, that they may conduct their research within the boundaries You have set. Lord, in Your mercy:

**[C] hear our prayer.**

[P] Lord Jesus Christ, from Your place at the right hand of the Father You continually intercede for us. Hear the cries for mercy from those who are ill and those in pain. Grant comfort and peace to those who are near death. By faith draw the eyes of those who mourn toward Your cross and empty grave. For these and all others we name now in our hearts we pray (pause)—Lord, in Your mercy:

**[C] hear our prayer.**

[P] Into Your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in Your mercy; through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

**[C] Amen**

### **THE LORD'S PRAYER**

**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.**

## **BENEDICTION**

[P] The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you.

The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.

[C] **Amen**

## **RECESSIONAL HYMN "On Christ's Ascension I Now Build" [LSB 492]**

- 1 On Christ's ascension I now build  
The hope of my ascension;  
This hope alone has always stilled  
All doubt and apprehension;  
For where the Head is, there as well  
I know His members are to dwell  
When Christ will come and call them.
- 2 Since Christ returned to claim His throne,  
Great gifts for me obtaining,  
My heart will rest in Him alone,  
No other rest remaining;  
For where my treasure went before,  
There all my thoughts will ever soar  
To still their deepest yearning.
- 3 O grant, dear Lord, this grace to me,  
Recalling Your ascension,  
That I may serve You faithfully  
In thanks for my redemption;  
And then, when all my days will cease,  
Let me depart in joy and peace  
In answer to my pleading.

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## **POSTLUDE**