

## In Nomine Iesu

### Sunday after Ascension 2021

#### The Son of Man has ascended to be with us – Mark 16:14-20

“Afterward He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen. And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My Name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.” So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs.”

Grace be to you and peace from God the Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ, our ascended Lord and very present Help. Dear fellow redeemed:

When a dear friend moves away we are sad, even if we know that our friend will have better work, better living conditions, a fine home, everything better. We only think of distance between us. So, we might think that the Christian Church would observe this Ascension Day with a certain sadness. But that is not true. No, she celebrates this day as a festival of great joy. She marks this day on the calendar of her heart, joyful not only for her Lord but also for herself. For it is as Jesus Himself said, to her advantage that He do this. Let us then learn and be comforted this Sunday after Ascension that the Son of Man has gone to be with the Father, **and with us!**

#### I

He who is equal to God, who is, “God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God,” humbled Himself, came down from heaven, received His humanity from the Virgin Mary and took upon himself the form of a servant, as St. Paul said. As man He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross (Phil. 2:6-8). He did all this because His Father so loved the world and He, the Son, is one with the Father in this love. It was as much His as the Father’s desire to redeem us, win us from sin, death, the power of the devil, and lead us into heaven. This is the ministry of Jesus Christ that we hear proclaimed Sunday after Sunday.

The Ascension is the final act of our Lord’s earthly ministry. Today, we look back on His completed work of redemption, noting that He leaves the world and returns to the Father as the Victor over death and hell. He comes into the Father’s presence not only as the only-begotten Son of God, but also, and especially as the Son of Man, so that this day we celebrate the exaltation of the **Man Jesus Christ** to the throne of heaven. Today all power in heaven and on earth was given to Jesus Christ, the second Adam. Ascension Day is the coronation day of our Savior, Advocate, Brother, and Friend as King of kings and Lord of lords, Ruler of all things in heaven and on earth.

That is why Ascension day is joyful, and not a day of separation, loss, and sadness. Our Brother’s glorification, His ascension to the right hand of the Father, testifies to the exaltation of both His and our human nature. In Christ we share in the highest of

all honors, everlasting honor. Christ entered heaven in His human body. He sits at the right hand of the heavenly Father in His humanity. Think of it, dear Christian, Jesus, your Brother and Friend is at the right hand of the Father forever and ever! One of us, our Head, sits at the right hand of God, and, we, who by faith are members of His body, are exalted with Him. The ancient preface to Holy Communion for Ascension day reads: “We give thanks to You, O Lord, holy Father, almighty, everlasting God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who after His resurrection appeared openly to all His disciples and in their sight was taken up into heaven that He might make us partakers of His divine nature.” Dear friends, in the blessed Gospel of Word and Sacrament, not only Christ’s - our Brother’s – body and blood are given us, but His divine nature as well. Is this not then a joyous and glorious day, for Christ and for us?

And with this great glory comes also a sure and certain truth. Sin cannot enter into heaven with Christ. Sin must remain on earth. His ascension means that we are freed from the stain of sin, freed from slavery to it. Through faith we are drawn upward into the glorious liberty of the sons of God in heaven. Meanwhile, here on earth, we desire more and more to follow Christ for as long as we live and draw our breath in this world, until that day when we will no longer believe but see Him.

## II

Remember what Jesus commanded the eleven the very day He ascended: “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.’ So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs.”

Jesus’ promise does not mean every believer will perform all such things whenever or however he or she pleases. For St. Paul reminds us: “There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all ... But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.” (I Corinthians 12:4-11). If I am not given the gift of healing, for example, does that mean I am no believer or, as some might assert, less of a believer than others. Not at all. God does not lie. It truly is the Holy Spirit who gives these gifts; but He gives them wherever, whenever, and to whomever He wills and pleases.

But consider: Through the sacrament of holy Baptism, do we not still put demons to flight? Do not we, who are baptized in Jesus’ name, still take up in our hands that old serpent, the devil, with all his deadly poison, and by our trust of God’s grace given us in and with the water, drown and kill him every day, so that a new man in us – Christ in us! – daily comes forth, rises from death, and lives before God in righteousness and purity, even as our catechism says? Is this not the greatest of all signs? Even as Jesus said to the very same men the night He was betrayed, “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works that these he will do, because I go to My Father.” (John 14:12)

The enduring meaning of the Ascension of Christ Jesus, our divine Savior and human Brother, was taken up to heaven and now sits at the right hand of God **not to go away from us**. No! The very opposite is true. What did He say about this? “All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, **I am with you always**, even to the end of the age.”

Now, after His ascension, Jesus is with us in until the end of time itself! He ascended in order to be near to all who are His, to be among us with His forgiveness wherever the Gospel is proclaimed, the life-giving water of Baptism poured, and His crucified, risen, and ascended body and blood ministered as He commanded. In these things Jesus’ promise is fulfilled: “Where two or three are gathered **in my name, there am I in the midst of them.**” (Matthew 18:20). He is among us speaking forgiveness. He comes to us – each of us individually! - in the gracious water of life and “washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:5-7). He is in our midst with His true body and blood, given and poured out for us for the forgiveness of our sins. Are these not the greatest of miracles?

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The presence of Jesus in the midst of His disciples, His Church, is so important for us. It shows us continually who we are - not that we have no problems, that we don’t struggle with sin, that we can’t fall into the snare of the devil, the world, and our own flesh. On the contrary we daily sin much and deserve only wrath and punishment. But the presence of Christ among us, **and for us**, in His word and Sacraments, whenever and wherever two, three, ten, a hundred or a thousand gather in His name, strengthens and cheers us. Here we hear Him say: Son, Daughter, be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven. At My Father’s right hand I reach out and touch you here and now, assuring you: All power in heaven and earth is Mine. I forgive your sins this very hour through the precious Gospel proclaimed by My servant. I drive out the sin and evil that is in you. More and more I Myself dwell within you, just as I promised. And finally, know this also, that here at the Father’s right hand I wait for you. I have prepared a place for you in My Father’s house. This too is why I went before you on the day of My ascension, why it was so to your advantage for Me to be here at My Father’s side for you. And remember, in due time I will take you to Myself that you may be with Me forever and ever. Believe this, dear child. It will surely be!

“Even so, come, Lord Jesus!” Amen.

**Soli Deo Gloria**

The prayers of the church are requested for:

The family of the Rev. Pastor Jerrold Dalke, who passed away on Monday, May 10, 2021, and will receive Christian burial on Monday, May 17 at Mt. Vernon, WA.

Charles Schroeder, the father of Gracie (PLS 3<sup>rd</sup> grade), who is hospitalized with COVID.

Tessa Faith Browning, who was born to Julia and Casey, on Friday, May 14, 2021.

Dear Father in heaven, You who gave Your only-begotten Son for us that we might inherit everlasting life, comfort the Dalke family as they mourn the loss of husband, father, grandfather, son, and brother, comfort them with the same sure and certain hope of life everlasting that Jerrold proclaimed in his 42 years of ministry, and which he himself believed with all of his heart, confessing the same to the end of his life.

Extend Your fatherly hand over Charles as he struggles against this disease, which has so ravaged our nation and the world. Grant skill and wisdom to his caregivers, strength to his family, recovery to Charles and, above all, confidence to his heart that in Christ all sin is forgiven and reconciliation won between God and man.

We give You thanks, dear Father in heaven, for the birth of Tessa Faith and for safe deliverance from the perils of child birth of Julia. Continue, we pray, to bless and uphold them, together with father Casey and sisters Rylee and Maya, as they rejoice in bringing Tessa into their family and, shortly, bringing her into the family of our Lord and Savior through Holy Baptism.

We ask all this for the sake of Your Son, the crucified, risen, and ascended Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.