

Sermon for June 1, 2025 – Ascension

Luke 24:50-53 (EHV)

Theme: **Have Joy in Jesus' Ascension because it Assures You that:**

- 1) Your sins are forgiven.
- 2) Christ is in control.
- 3) He is coming back.

⁵⁰He led them out as far as the vicinity of Bethany. He lifted up his hands and blessed them. ⁵¹And while he was blessing them, he parted from them and was taken up into heaven. ⁵²So they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. ⁵³They were continually in the temple courts, praising and blessing God. Amen.

Did you notice something strange about our sermon text? It says that, after seeing Jesus ascend into heaven, the disciples worshipped Him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy.

If I were one of Jesus' first disciples, I could imagine myself having a hard time seeing Jesus ascend into heaven. Why? Because my dear friend and teacher is gone. To whom would I now go with all my questions and problems? On top of this, I would feel somewhat afraid. Why? Because the very same people who crucified Him were still in charge of Jerusalem and Judea. Who's to say that they wouldn't come after me, too? And then there was His talk about me being His witness to the world. Would I be ready for such a task after only three years of training?

Sad, alone, and afraid: that is how I could imagine myself feeling after seeing Jesus ascend into heaven. But such was not the case with the disciples. Joy replaced their sadness, and courage replaced all fear. Why? Because they trusted Jesus' promises and understood what His ascension meant. Let's consider this, under the theme: **Have Joy in Jesus' Ascension because it Assures You that:** 1) Your sins are forgiven, 2) Christ is in control, and 3) He is coming back.

Part One: Jesus' Ascension assures you that your sins are forgiven.

If Jesus' resurrection is God's declaration that all sin has been paid for in full, then His ascension into heaven is like a royal seal, confirming God's declaration as absolutely authentic. How so? Think of it this way: God is so utterly holy that He cannot tolerate even the slightest hint of sin in His presence. Since humans are sinful, no one can be welcomed into His presence in heaven.

But then there is Jesus, who is both true God and true man. Because He is fully human like us, He is able to serve as our substitute before God. He is the only human who lived a perfect life without sin. Nevertheless, God placed the sins of humanity upon Him to such a degree that He became sin personified, representing the entire human race before God. When He died, all our sins died with Him. When He rose from the grave free from sin and its consequences, we rose with Him.

The fact that Jesus, a human being, ascended into heaven shows that humanity has been fully reconciled to God. Through faith in Jesus, His record of righteousness is credited to us as our record of righteousness. This fact gave the disciples great joy. I pray that it gives you joy as well.

Do some sins from your past still haunt you? Remember that Jesus bore those sins on the cross for you and paid for them in full. Because Jesus, who bore your sins, was raised and welcomed into heaven, you can be absolutely sure that, through faith in Jesus, you will also be welcomed into heaven when your last hour comes.

Yes, Jesus' ascension gives us joy. It assures us that our sins are forgiven. Let us now see how it comforts us with the knowledge that He is in control.

Part Two: Jesus' Ascension assures you that Christ is in control.

Another remarkable result of Jesus' ascension is that the disciples were no longer afraid. Just think, 40 days earlier, when the resurrected Christ first appeared to them, they met together behind locked doors, afraid of what the Jews might do to them. Even when Jesus appeared to them a week later, they still kept the doors locked.¹ Can we blame them? The same people who crucified Jesus were still in control in Jerusalem. What would prevent the authorities from going after them?

But look at the disciples after Jesus ascended into heaven: at Christ's command, they joyfully went back to Jerusalem, waiting for Him to fulfill His promise. Instead of meeting behind locked doors, *they were continually in the temple courts, praising and blessing God.*

Let that verse sink in for a moment. Do you remember who else made the temple their home base? The priests, temple guards, and members of the Sanhedrin who arrested Jesus. Think of the irony! Before Jesus' ascension, the disciples acted like scared little church mice: cowering at home behind locked doors, waiting for their enemies to burst in. After His ascension, the disciples became more courageous than elite soldiers, storming the home base of their enemies with the Gospel to openly and joyfully tell those gathered there the good news of salvation. What gave them such audacity? They trusted Jesus' ascension promises wholeheartedly.

On numerous occasions during his earthly ministry, Jesus told his disciples that He would return to His and their Father to take His rightful place at God's right hand. Jesus promised that He would not leave his disciples as orphans, but would send the Holy Spirit to counsel, guide, and protect them. Not only that, but He promised that He would continue to be with them, even though they would not be able to physically see Him.

Seeing Jesus ascend into heaven with His hands outstretched to bless them encouraged the disciples. I can imagine them thinking: "Jesus is going to continue blessing us from His heavenly throne just like He promised. His resurrection proves his power over sin, death, and the devil. There is no reason for us to be afraid: Jesus is in control. He will send the Counsellor whom He promised. He will rule over all things for the benefit of His people."

Yes, Jesus' ascension promises emboldened his disciples. Do they encourage you as well? Are you willing to confess Christ in the heart of enemy territory with the same ascension confidence as Jesus' first disciples? If we are honest with ourselves, we often act more like the disciples before Jesus' ascension: hiding in fear over what's going on in the world instead of confidently witnessing His Gospel. We are afraid that if we speak too boldly against sin, we might become targets of internet rage, social shaming, or possibly even lawsuits. We're scared that our community will hate us and friends will disown us for being too zealous for the Gospel. Seeing how merciless the world is towards those who don't support its agenda, we want to stick our heads in the sand and pretend that everything going on in the world is a bad dream that will go away if we ignore it.

But brothers and sisters in Christ, our society's rejection of the truth will not go away. All the bad news we hear about in the world is a result of the devil snuffing out the proclamation of the Gospel. The only remedy for our world is Jesus. That is why He wants you to proclaim the truth of Him in love, taking to heart His ascension promise that He sits at the right hand of God and rules over everything for His Church's benefit.

Therefore, fight the good fight and witness your faith. Yes, you may have to suffer for it as Jesus suffered for you. Nevertheless, Jesus promises to be with you through everything. If people hurt you, He will heal you. If people insult you, He will defend you. If people kill you, He will raise you to life. Our world needs a clear witness of the truth given in love so that people might repent and be saved. Jesus promises us His same presence and Spirit that He gave His disciples. And He will keep His promise because He ascended to the right hand of God the Father in Heaven.

Jesus' ascension gives us joy. It assures us that our sins are forgiven, that He is in control, and that He is coming back soon so that we can be where He is.

Part Three: Jesus' Ascension assures you that He is coming back.

One of the most comforting promises Jesus gave His disciples before His ascension was that He is coming back. He even sent angels to reassure the disciples of that promise immediately after disappearing from their sight. *They said, "Men of Galilee, why are you standing here looking up into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."*ⁱⁱ

Jesus is coming back. His visible absence is only temporary. We are sad that he is gone, but because of what He is doing for us, we are also happy that He left! Why is that?

Think of it this way: Imagine a father telling his horse-loving daughter that he is going to Calgary for a few weeks to pick up a special pony for her from a renowned horse breeder. That daughter will certainly be sad that her father is gone, but she will also be happy that he went away. If he didn't go, how would she ever get her pony? Happy that he left, she will also eagerly wait for his return. Why? Not only because of the pony, but also because she wants to be with her dad again.

This is how the disciples viewed Jesus' ascension into heaven, and how God wants us to view it as well. Jesus went into heaven to prepare a special gift for us, as he told his disciples on the eve

of his crucifixion: *I am going to prepare a place for you.* ³*And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to be with me, so that you may also be where I am.*ⁱⁱⁱ

Because of this promise, we are happy that Jesus ascended into heaven. Moreover, we eagerly look forward to His return. When He comes back, He will bring all of heaven with Him so that we can enjoy that blessed place of sinlessness, joy, and perfection with Him for all eternity.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, I hope you now understand why meditating on Jesus' ascension is such an important and comforting thing to do. Whenever you feel lonely or scared, wondering where Jesus is and how you can face life's trials, ask God to give you joy as you remember the meaning and promises of Jesus' ascension: 1) It assures you that your sins are forgiven and are at peace with God. 2) It assures you that Jesus is in control, working in all things for your good. 3) And it assures you that He is coming back to take you to live with him forever in paradise. Amen.

ⁱ Cf. John 20:19,26

ⁱⁱ Acts 1:11 EHV

ⁱⁱⁱ John 14:2b-3a EHV