

Sermon for May 16, 2026 – Ascension

Psalm 47 EHV

Theme: Sing the Praises of Our Ascended LORD.

- 1) He subdues the peoples under us.
- 2) He reigns over the nations for us.

All you peoples, clap your hands! Shout to God! Sing a loud song! ² Yes, the LORD Most High is awesome. He is the great King over all the earth! ³ He subdues peoples under us and nations under our feet. ⁴ He chooses our inheritance for us. It is the pride of Jacob, whom he loves. Interlude. ⁵ God has ascended with a joyful shout. The LORD goes up with the sound of the ram's horn. ⁶ Make music for God! Make music! Make music for our King! Make music! ⁷ For God is the King of all the earth. Make music for him with a wise song. ⁸ God reigns as king over the nations. God is seated on his holy throne. ⁹ The nobles of the peoples come together as the people of the God of Abraham. Yes, the shields of the earth belong to God. He is greatly exalted.

Is our little congregation actually making a difference in Christ's kingdom?

It can feel like we aren't. We plan a community outreach event - putting in many hours of hard work - only to have a handful of people show up, most of whom are already churching. We may spend much time and effort sharing Jesus with friends or family members, only for them to politely put us off.

And then there is the broader struggle of Christ's church against the world. With society's continued moral decay causing more people to fall away from the faith, it can seem as if Christ's kingdom is failing. Is our labour for the LORD all in vain?

Such thinking is dangerous because it can easily influence our actions. When we, out of frustration or timidity, withhold witnessing the Gospel, we sin. We need to repent. We need Christ's forgiving love.

And that forgiving love is exactly what our ascended LORD shows us in the Gospel! In our sermon text for today. He invites us to lift our eyes off our small corner of labour in Christ's kingdom, with all its frustrations, to marvel at the bigger picture of what our ascended LORD is accomplishing in the world.

With Psalm 47 serving as our guide, let us **sing the praises of our Ascended LORD.** 1) He subdues the peoples under us. 2) He reigns over the nations for us.

Part One: He subdues the peoples under us.

We don't know what historical situation prompted the sons of Korah to write Psalm 47. All we can say for sure is that the Holy Spirit inspired them to praise God for what Jesus would accomplish for His Kingdom.

¹All you peoples, clap your hands! Shout to God! Sing a loud song!

Notice that the call isn't just for Israel. All peoples are called to praise the LORD. Why? Because He is not just the Saviour of Israel, but of all who turn to Him in faith.

²Yes, the LORD Most High is awesome. He is the great King over all the earth!

The word translated "awesome" literally means to evoke fear and wonder. And that is exactly what the LORD does. How? Through His conquering reign.

History is filled with stories of mighty kings like Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon or Alexander of Macedonia, who evoked fear among the nations around them with their military might.

But as great as these kings were, none of them subdued the world, nor did all nations celebrate them with joy. Only the LORD accomplishes this for His people, as the next verse indicates:

³He subdues peoples under us and nations under our feet.

What a unique kingdom! Usually, soldiers fight and kill for the glory of their king. But in Christ's kingdom it's different. He subdues the peoples and nations under us. He fights so that we, His servants, might be victorious.

How? Not with a fearful show of arms, but through the revelation of His saving grace.

Arming us with His Law and Gospel, He sends us into the world to make disciples of all nations by baptizing and teaching them His Word.ⁱ His Spirit accompanies that Word,ⁱⁱ slaying proud hearts with the sharp sword of His Lawⁱⁱⁱ that exposes sin and moves people to fear God's wrath. Then the Spirit works through the healing voice of His Gospel – moving the fearful to repent and believe in the forgiveness of sins Jesus won for them through His cross.^{iv} Through our proclamation of His Gospel, the LORD brings the spiritually dead to life.^v

How do we know the Holy Spirit works through our witness of His Word? Because Jesus promised His disciples before His Ascension that He would send the Spirit to help us^{vi} – a pledge He visibly fulfilled on Pentecost.^{vii}

So even when our Christian labour to witness him meets hardship and apparent failure, the LORD promises us victory and peace. For not only does our ascended Saviour send His Spirit to work through our message to accomplish His will,^{viii} He has also provided a glorious future for us, as the next verse shows:

⁴He chooses our inheritance for us. It is the pride of Jacob, whom he loves.

Jesus himself is “the pride of Jacob” – the Messiah in whom all God’s covenant promises are fulfilled.

The term “Jacob” represents all believers in Christ - Jew and Gentile alike. We find our pride not in our works, nor in our righteousness, but in Jesus alone. Only He could reconcile us to the Father. Only He could prepare an everlasting inheritance for us in God’s house, as Jesus explained to His disciples on the eve of His crucifixion.

In my Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you. I am going to prepare a place for you. 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.^{ix}

Everlasting life with Jesus in paradise is the inheritance God has chosen for His people. In Him alone we have victory over sin, death, and the devil. In Him alone we have life – all because He gave up His own life in payment for ours.

This truth is reflected in the word “inheritance.” To inherit a gift, someone must die. And that is exactly what Jesus did: He died on the cross in payment for all sins.

From the cross, He cried, “It is finished,” shortly before commending His spirit into His Father’s hands.

“It is finished” – all your sins have been paid for in full.

“It is finished” – even your doubts and timidity in sharing His gospel are wiped from your record.

“It is finished” – your guilt and shame before God are taken away – replaced by Jesus’ perfect record of righteousness, received through faith. You are reconciled to God. The LORD himself is your inheritance. Heaven is your home.

And to prove that Jesus accomplished all this for you, He rose from the dead on Easter morning and ascended into heaven to rule over the nations for you.

Part Two: He reigns over the nations for us.

⁵*God has ascended with a joyful shout. The LORD goes up with the sound of the ram's horn.*

Notice what the Psalmist calls Jesus here: not merely Messiah, nor only a prophet, but “God.”

And that is exactly who Jesus is: the LORD incarnate - less than the Father as to His humanity; equal to the Father as to His divinity, as we confess in the Athanasian Creed.^x The Bible says He was with God from the beginning. Through Him all things were made.^{xi}

Jesus took the punishment of our sins upon Himself and paid for them in full, rose victorious from the grave, and ascended into heaven – not to rest from His work, but to take His place on God’s throne to rule over everything for the growth of His kingdom and the benefit of His Church.

With that view of Jesus in mind, the Psalmist encourages:

⁶*Make music for God! Make music! Make music for our King! Make music!*

Why this repeated exhortation to make music and sing? Perhaps the psalmist shared the insight Martin Luther once expressed:

“Music is one of the noblest gifts of God. It is a good antidote against temptation and evil thoughts.”^{xii}

Whenever you are tempted to give up or give in to the pressures the devil, world and your sinful nature throw your way, take a step back and look at who Jesus is and what he does. Break out your hymnal and sing hymns to Him – not just to feel better emotionally, but to be encouraged with this truth:

⁷*For God is the King of all the earth.*

Jesus, your God, who ascended into heaven, rules over everything on your behalf. All people and powers are subject to Him who saved you. May this truth move you to:

Make music for him with a wise song.

In and of itself, music can accomplish nothing. Only when joined to God’s Word does it bring lasting healing to the soul. Therefore, our psalmist urges us to sing a “wise song” - to joyfully sing

and speak the truth of what our Saviour has done for us. Encourage your brothers and sisters in Christ with the truth that:

⁸God reigns as king over the nations. God is seated on his holy throne.

The psalmist is not only speaking about how God has always ruled over the nations. He is looking ahead to what the apostle Paul described in our second lesson: that, after raising Jesus from the dead and welcoming Him back to heaven, God the Father seated Him in the highest place in Heaven and *placed all things under his feet and made him head over everything for the church.*^{xiii}

Did you catch that? Regardless of how difficult life seems, Jesus is ruling over all things for your benefit. He lives to intercede with His Father on your behalf^{xiv} – bringing all your trials and triumphs to His attention. More than that, He is working all things together for the good of those who love God.^{xv}

Yes, Jesus is using you - your prayers, your offerings, and your personal witness of His Gospel - to gather His elect from every nation on earth, as the next verse shows:

⁹The nobles of the peoples come together as the people of the God of Abraham.

Who are “the nobles of the people”? You are, dear Christian, as you look to Jesus in repentance and faith. The Holy Spirit inspired the apostle Peter to confirm this truth when he wrote:

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, the people who are God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.^{xvi}

God chose you in His Son– not just as a friend, but to be a child of Abraham and heir of what was promised. Make no mistake: even though the Jews claim Abraham as their biological ancestor, the only heirs of God’s promises are those who believe God’s promises like Abraham, regardless of where they came from or of whom they were born, as the Scriptures say:

Understand, then, that those who believe are the children of Abraham... And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants and heirs according to the promise.^{xvii}

Because God considers you and heir of the promise He gave Abraham, you don’t have to fear the evil powers of this world that try to silence your confession of Christ. Why not? Because, as the psalmist indicates:

Yes, the shields of the earth belong to God.

Who are the shields of the earth? They are the earthly governments and authorities God has put in place for His purposes.^{xviii} Even powerful godless leaders who persecute the LORD’s people, like Pharaoh in the of Moses, are not exempt from His rule. They must ultimately do His bidding and further His kingdom. This confidence moves us to sing with Luther:

“And do what they will—Hate, steal, hurt, or kill—
Though all may be gone, Our victory is won;
The kingdom’s ours forever!”^{xix}

Yes, Christ’s kingdom is ours forever. Nothing can separate us from His love.^{xx} Nothing can stop His reign because Jesus is God.

He is greatly exalted.

Brothers and sisters in Christ. Let's return to the question I asked at the beginning of this sermon: Is our little congregation really making a difference, or is all our work for Christ in vain?

Whenever you are tempted to think that way, take a step back and look at God’s kingdom in the light of Christ’s ascension. Listen to what Scripture says about it and what the LORD promises about your work because of it: *your labor is not in vain in the Lord.*^{xxi}

Let the meaning of Christ’s ascension reinvigorate you to sing the praises of your ascended LORD to everyone God puts in your life. Through our proclamation of His Law and Gospel, He subdues peoples under us, bringing many to repentance and faith. He reigns over the nations for us, working all things for our everlasting good.

And, as the angels promised the disciples when they saw Jesus go up into Heaven, this same Jesus will come back.^{xxii} He will return to gather the countless multitude of believers from every nation on earth and bring them home to Himself in paradise.^{xxiii}

How we look forward to that day!

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with all the saints. Amen.^{xxiv}

ⁱ Cf. Matthew 28:19-20

ⁱⁱ Cf. Ephesians 6:17

ⁱⁱⁱ Cf. Hebrews 4:12

^{iv} Cf. Thessalonians 2:13, 2 Corinthians 2:3

^v Cf. John 6:63

^{vi} Cf. John 14:26, 15:26, 16:17

^{vii} Cf. Acts 2:33

^{viii} Cf. Isaiah 55:11

^{ix} John 14:2-3 EHV

^x Cf. The Athanasian Creed, line 31

^{xi} Cf. John 1:2

^{xii} T. Stork, *Luther at Home* (Philadelphia: Lutheran Board of Publication, 1872), p. 56.

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- xiii Cf. Ephesians 1:20-22
- xiv Cf. Hebrews 7:25 and Romans 8:34
- xv Cf. Romans 8:28
- xvi 1 Peter 2:9 EHV
- xvii Galatians 3:7,29 EHV. Cf. Romans 4:6-17, Galatians 3:7-9, 28-29
- xviii Cf. Romans 13:1
- xix Martin Luther, "A Mighty Fortress is our God" from the 1997 Christian Worship Hymnal. Hymn 200.
- xx Cf. Romans 8:35-39
- xxi Cf. 1 Corinthians 15:20-28, 50-58
- xxii Cf. Acts 2:11
- xxiii Cf. Revelation 7:9
- xxiv Revelation 22:20-21 EHV