

**Jesus said, “For where two or three are gathered in my name,
there am I among them.” – Matthew 18:20**

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church (LCMC)
Springfield, GA
Home Worship Bulletin
May 24, 2020 – The Ascension of Our Lord**

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

The sign of the cross may be made by all in remembrance of their Baptism.

In the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Silence for reflection and self-examination.

Most merciful God, **we confess that we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen**

Almighty God, in his mercy, has given his Son to die for us and, for his sake, forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of the Church of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all our sins, in the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

GREETING

Alleluia! Christ is risen. **Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

SALUTATION

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray. **Almighty God, your only Son was taken up into heaven and in power intercedes for us. May we also come into your presence and live forever in your glory; through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen**

+LITURGY OF THE WORD+

FIRST READING

Acts 1:1-11

In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, ² until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. ³ He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. ⁴ 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; ⁵ for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” ⁶ So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” ⁷ He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. ⁸ 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.” ⁹ 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. ¹⁰ And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, ¹¹ 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.”

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

PSALM OF THE DAY

Psalm 47

¹ Clap your hands, all you peoples; shout to God with a cry of joy.

² **For the LORD Most High is to be feared; he is the great king over all the earth.**

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

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

⁵ God has gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of the ram's horn.

⁶ **Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises to our king, sing praises.**

⁷ For God is King of all the earth; sing praises with all your skill.

⁸ **God reigns over the nations; God sits upon his holy throne.**

⁹ The nobles of the peoples have gathered together with the people of the God of Abraham.

¹⁰ **The rulers of the earth belong to God, and he is highly exalted.**

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning is now, and will be forever. Amen. Alleluia! Alleluia!

SECOND READING

Ephesians 1:15-23

¹⁵ For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, ¹⁶ I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, ¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, ¹⁸ 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, ¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might ²⁰ that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹ 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. ²² And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

THE HOLY GOSPEL

Luke 24:44-53

The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke. **Glory to You, O Lord.**

⁴⁴ Then he 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.” ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶ and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, ⁴⁷ and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ 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.”⁵⁰ And he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. ⁵¹ While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. ⁵² And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, ⁵³ and were continually in the temple blessing God.

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to You, O Christ.**

THE SERMON

Dr. James Cavanah

In our First Reading from Luke, the physician, who wrote, “⁷[Jesus] said to them, ‘It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. ⁸But 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.’ ⁹And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, ¹¹and 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’” (Acts 1:7-11)

Today is Ascension Sunday; often referred to as the “Silent Holiday” on the church calendar. This is most likely due to the fact that Ascension Day actually falls on Thursday and not on a Sunday. But that fact should never undermine the significance and importance of the day.

Ascension Day is celebrated on the fortieth day or the sixth Thursday after Easter. Just as Easter is always celebrated on Sunday, the first day of the week, Ascension Day is always on the sixth Thursday after Easter Sunday.

Christmas calls us to remember our Saviour’s birth. Epiphany, the visitation by the wise men from the East. Palm Sunday, the triumphal entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem. Maundy Thursday, the institution of the Lord’s Supper. Good Friday, the suffering, death, and passion of our Saviour as He died for our sins. On Easter Sunday, we gather to recall the resurrection and our Savior’s victory over Satan, sin, death, and the grave. Then, on Pentecost, we commemorate the out pouring of the Holy Spirit upon the church.

Ascension Day has been called the “forgotten holiday” of the Church. Yet, as we look back at church history, this has not always been the case. Ascension Day used to be one of the biggest festivals and holidays of the church year. Churches were packed for worship. In Germany, even today, Ascension Day is still a national holiday. It’s not just a church festival, it is a national holiday! At least the Germans, mostly Lutherans, still understand the importance of our Lord’s Ascension and the beginning of His reign at the Father’s right hand as King of kings and Lord of lords!

As we consider the foundational creeds of the faith, the creeds we use in worship, we are reminded of the truth of our Saviour's present reign. The Apostles' Creed affirms that Jesus ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. Also, the Nicene Creed asserts that Jesus ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father.

On Ascension Sunday 2020, as we remain sheltered-in-place, this question that confronts us becomes even more fundamental to our theology: What is so important about the Ascension?

The first truth we learn from our text is this, the Ascension completes the earthly mission of Jesus Christ. Luke penned these words in Acts 1:3, 9-11, "After his suffering he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God ... ⁹And when had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, ¹¹and 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.'"

Let's look at our question in light of Luke's words, What is so important about the Ascension? One pastor has written, "The Ascension celebrates the ultimate consummation and completion of the redemptive work of Jesus the Christ on earth, securing the salvation of His people by His return to Heaven to reign as King forever more!"

Luke wrote in Acts 1:11, "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."

In Westminster Abbey in London, in the chapel of Edward the Confessor, there is "the" Coronation chair. Now, this is no ordinary chair. It is "the" Coronation chair. It has been used continually by every English monarchy since 1301. Every English king or queen has sat upon this chair for their official coronation.

I've never been to London but I have seen pictures of this chair. It's not a very pretty chair. It is a straight high-back chair with high arms. It is carved from oak and it certainly doesn't look very comfortable but this chair is the symbol of authority, power, rule, and dominion; it is the symbol of the King or Queen.

In Ephesians 1:16-21, the apostle Paul wrote, "¹⁶I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, ¹⁷that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him ... ²⁰that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹far 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."

Again, in Philippians 2:9-11 Paul underlines the expressed importance of the rule of Jesus Christ as our Sovereign King. He wrote, "⁹Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

What is so important about the Ascension? The Ascension completes the earthly mission and work of Jesus Christ as our prophet and priest. The Ascension is the virtual coronation of Jesus as the eternal King of kings and Lord of lords who continually rules over heaven and earth forever and ever!

The second truth we learn from our text is this, the Ascension empowers you and me in our mission for Christ. Look closely at the words of Jesus in Acts 1:8 as recorded by Luke, "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."

What is so important about the Ascension? The Ascension completes Christ's mission and it empowers our mission. You see, the Ascension is not just about Jesus. It is also about you

and me. It empowers us, encourages us, and strengthens us. In Luke 19:10, Jesus declared, “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

You know I love Peanuts. You also know that the late Charles Schultz was an American cartoonist and creator of the Peanuts comic series. Today, he is known as one of the most influential cartoonists of all time. What you may not know is that Charles Schultz was raised as a Lutheran.

But I want to turn your attention to another famous cartoonist. An English cartoonist by the name of A. A. Milne. If you don't recognize his name, you will most recognize one of his most famous characters, Winnie-the-Pooh!

In one very insightful cartoon Pooh asks, “Did you fall into the river, Eeyore?” Eeyore replies, “Silly of me, wasn't it?” Pooh, inquires, “Is the river uncomfortable this morning?” Eeyore responds, “Well, yes, the dampness you know.” Pooh offers his advice, “You really ought to be more careful!” Eeyore says, “Thanks for the advice.” Pooh then observes, “Eeyore, I think you're sinking.” Eeyore: replies, “Pooh, if it's not too much trouble, would you mind rescuing me?”

“Pooh, if it's not too much trouble, would you mind rescuing me?” This is the great need of our world. We live in a world, a society, and a culture that is most accurately illustrated by the hymn writer with these words, “I was sinking deep in sin far from the peaceful shore. Very deeply stained within, sinking to rise no more.” Those words more than adequately describe our world. We live in an evil, sinful, godless, and wicked world. Left to ourselves, we are without hope, without life, facing only death but the hymn doesn't stop there. It continues, “But the Master of the sea heard my despairing cry. From the waters lifted me, now safe am I. Love lifted me, love lifted me. When nothing else could help, love lifted me.” The hymn writer caught the essence of the Gospel as revealed in these familiar words, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16, KJV).

Those words take us back to Luke 19:10 where Jesus said, “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.” Now, what is so important about the Ascension? The ascension, affirms the purpose of the early mission of Jesus, to seek and to save the last, and it also strengthens and empowers a part of our earthly mission as well. Just prior to His ascension, Jesus said, “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, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20)

One day St. Francis of Assisi was preparing to go into a nearby town. He called upon several of his followers to go with him as he was planning to preach the Gospel to the people of the town. After they arrived in the town, the followers of St. Francis watched as he moved from place to place talking, helping, and interacting with the people. After several hours, St. Francis said it was time to leave. As they walked out of the city, one of his followers asked, “Why didn't you preach?” St. Francis replied, “I did and so should you ... Everywhere you go, preach the Gospel and if necessary, use words.”

As most of you know, I have spent years researching the history of what I like to call “the War for Southern Independence” or “the War of Northern Aggression”. There is a famous story from that time period that actually illustrates for us the words of St. Francis. One night in 1863, General Stonewall Jackson held a council of war with his senior staff. General Jackson placed a map upon a table that marked the positions of the Northern and Southern troops. He then asked each of his lieutenants, “What should we do? What would you do?” After listening to everyone General Jackson dismissed his staff saying he would consider their words and deliver his orders in the morning.

Upon leaving the meeting, General Richard Ewell, who was certainly not a Christian and often mocked those who were, turned to General Hill and said, “Well, I guess Ol' Jack has to

have time to pray about this too?” Several hours later, General Ewell had reason to return to the tent of General Jackson. As he neared the General’s tent he heard a voice. Slowly, as not to disturb the conversation, General Ewell peered inside. What he saw changed his life forever. There was Stonewall Jackson, on his knees before an open Bible on a table praying and petitioning God for wisdom and guidance. That moment so impressed General Ewell that he said, “If that is Christianity, I must have it!” General Ewell embraced the Gospel and in making a profession of faith not long after, he attributed his conversion to the influence of General Jackson's living example of Christian faith.

Paul, in his letter to the Christians in Ephesus, wrote, “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, 19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might 20 that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places (Ephesians 1:18-20).

It is important for us to note the words of Ephesians 1:19. Paul did not pray for power to be given to believers. Paul prayed that believers (you and me) would be given the awareness of the power we already have! The words of the apostle underline the promise of Jesus, “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” (Acts 1:8).

What is so important about the Ascension? The truth of the Ascension not only completes the earthly work of Jesus. In the Ascension, Jesus is exalted to the right hand of the Father and is empowered with all authority and power to rule and reign in Heaven and over the earth. In Him, you and I can take courage in our earthly ministries. The fact that Jesus is the High King of Heaven, the living and reigning Christ, gives us the knowledge and the assurance that we are loved, forgiven, accepted, strengthened and empowered by Him who died for us but now lives for us forever and ever!

The Ascension confirms the promises of the Gospel for you and me, “1There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus...38For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:1, 38-39). Thanks be to God! Hallelujah!

APOSTLES’ CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth,

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit,

And born of the virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended into hell.

On the third day he rose again.

He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints,

the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

Amen!

THE PRAYERS

Let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus, and for all people according to their needs.

Heavenly Father, You are the God of glory. Today we remember Your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ, who, having secured our salvation ascended into Your presence as the glorious King – victorious over Satan, sin, death and the grave – and now reigns in power and authority over heaven and earth at Your right hand in glory. Receive our worship, praise and adoration. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for Your one true holy catholic church. Pour out Your blessings upon Her and empower Her to stand firm upon Your Holy Word against all evil and wickedness. We pray for the LCMC and our sister churches: Bethel, Bible, Laurel Hill, and Winggard Memorial. We pray for our partners in the work of the Gospel: World Mission Prayer League, Mission on the Move, Family Promise, Habitat for Humanity, God's Mission House, Tartu Theological Academy, St. Paul Lutheran Seminary, and all who faithfully serve You. Lord in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Gracious God, You are the source of every blessing, give us a zeal to become faithful witness to the hope You have instilled in us. Use us as instruments of Your peace calling people to faith in Christ through our thoughts, words, and deeds. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord Jesus Christ, You rule over all creation, we pray for our elected and appointed officials who serve in our governments and in our courts. Pour out Your Spirit of wisdom and power upon those who make, administer, enforce, and judge our laws but more than this, call them to faith in Your holy name. Lord in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Almighty God, You so loved the world, that You gave Your One and only Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. Lord in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Gracious God, we pray for those in need of work and for those that have families to support. We pray for those who have lost their jobs and are in need of employment. Watch over them and meet their needs according to Your riches in glory. Lord in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

All Knowing Lord, be with our students and teachers and those who work in our educational institutions. We pray especially for the “Class of 2020” and those graduating from high school, colleges, and universities. Pour our Your blessing upon Elizabeth and Patrick. Fill them with Your wisdom and lead them in Your path of life. Give them diligence, wisdom, understanding, to look to You for their futures. Lord in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Heavenly Father, we pray for our members Brian, Elizabeth & Fulton, Charles & Loretta, Mary Will, Margaret, Brenda & Carl, Patricia, Doris, Harper, Preston, Angie, Debbie, and Dawn; for our extended family and friends Becky, Darwin, Pr. Robert, Merry, Elizabeth, Bobby, Raymond, Steve, Christopher, Tracy, Alice, Shirley, Jim, Monteen, Charlene; Fran, and Izzy for our homebound Betty Jo, Linda, Eva Belle; and for those serving in the military, Marcus and Dustin who is deployed. Lord in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Holy and Righteous Father, we pray for You to intervene in our world. Allow us to very soon gather in Your holy house that we may worship and praise Your name together in corporate worship. And send Your Holy Spirit into our world again, as You have done in the past, to bring about a great revival and calling of all people to salvation in Christ our Saviour. Lord in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Gracious God, hear our prayers and receive them for the sake of the crucified and risen one, your Son our Lord, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

As our Saviour taught us we are bold to prayer: **Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by 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.**

GREETING OF PEACE

The peace of the Lord be with you always. **And also with you.**

MEMORIAL DAY PRAYER

On this weekend, as our nation honors the memory of those brave men and women who laid down their lives in service to our country defending the liberties and freedoms that we daily enjoy, let us remember their sacrifice before our Father's throne of grace: **Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, in Your hands are the living and the dead; We give You thanks for all those Your servants who have laid down their lives in the service of our country. Grant to them Your mercy and the light of Your presence, that the good work which You begun in them may be perfected; through Jesus Christ Your only Son our Saviour and Lord. Amen.**

BLESSING

The Lord bless us and keep us. The Lord make His face shine on us and be gracious to us. The Lord look upon us with favor + and give us peace. **Amen.**

DISMISSAL

Let us go in peace to serve the Risen Lord. Hallelujah!