

The Festival of the Ascension of our Lord
St. Mark 16:14-20
May 10th, 2018
Sts. Peter & Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, UAC
Simpsonville, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

He Was Received Up into Heaven

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

O Lord, send out Thy Light and Thy Truth, let them lead us. O Lord, open Thou my lips, that my mouth may show forth Thy praise. O Lord, graciously preserve me, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Ascension of Our Lord + Jesus Christ is a Festival of the Incarnation; our Lord's taking on our flesh to redeem us from sin, death and the devil. It is a celebration that the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, became Man. He took up our flesh by means of our distant relative, that maidservant in David's lineage, from Nazareth, the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Lord's Holy Ghost overshadowed her. He was conceived in her without the aid of a man, with only God as His Father, His Only-Begotten from eternity and His Only-Begotten of a woman in time. All this that He might raise up for Himself a worthy sacrifice to atone for all the sinners who ever sinned. He was that worthy sacrifice. He was both High Priest and the once and for all time sacrifice for mankind, and especially for them that believe. The Lord God has provided the Lamb for the offering. He provided Himself. The cords that bound us to Hell's altar were severed, by the nails that bound our Lord + Jesus to the tree of the holy cross. By being man, the Lord God has fulfilled the Law for us in His dying, He confirmed it in His rising again to life, and, in His ascending, He gives the gifts that He won on the cross to the whole world by drawing all believers into Himself through the means of grace and the work of the Holy Ghost.

By becoming one of us, a man, the Triune God elevated our position. One of the holy three Persons is one of us. The Lord God is our Brother. By virtue of that holy Incarnation the Lord + Jesus' Father is our Father. Likewise, by that holy Incarnation, the Holy Ghost comes to us and is our Guide and Comforter. In this way, we enjoy greater honor and privilege than even Adam and Eve did before the Fall into sin. The gifts of Heaven are better than the trees in the paradise of the Garden of Eden, for just as mankind was overcome by a tree in that Garden, by the tree that our Lord + Jesus hung upon in sacrifice for us, He overcame sin, death and the devil, and gave to us who believe on Him the spoils of His victory.

To Heaven, the Body of our Lord + Jesus which was mocked, beaten, and nailed to the cruel tree, but raised again to life, has gone. From there He sends His Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Truth who lives in us and guides us into all Truth, Who bears witness of the Lord + Jesus and what He has done for us through the means of grace. From there the Lord + Jesus mediates and intercedes for us to the heavenly Father. He advocates on our behalf that He has indeed fulfilled all that was necessary of the Law and paid our punishment. At the right hand of the Father the Lord + Jesus Christ pleads our case in the scars of His holy Body. But His Body in Heaven is exalted, glorified, for this man, flesh of our

flesh and bone of our bone, ransom for our sin, is also God, has always been God and will never cease to be God. There is no division between His natures. There is only one Christ. He is capable of being everywhere for He is omnipresent. He has no limitations, save those He sets for Himself. So, it is that He Who ascends into Heaven promises to His disciples, and also to us, "Lo, I am with you always." And He is. He is continuously present among us whenever the Word of God is preached in its purity and the sacraments are administered according to His institution. He is present with us whenever the Holy Ghost is performing His work of guiding us into all truth and comforting us with the promise of the Gospel of our Lord + Jesus Christ.

He ascended in His Body. But His Body borne of the Blessed Virgin Mary, is not gone from us. He is present for us in Word and Sacrament. He is present for us in His Body in Holy Communion. He Who died, lives for all eternity. He Who went away to Heaven, is here in the means of grace. For in His last testament; in His dying promise, He said, "This IS my BODY given for you. Do it. Eat it.; This IS my BLOOD shed for you. Drink it. Do it often." His Body and Blood was given to the heavenly Father on the tree of the holy cross as a sacrifice for guilt, and it is given now to us as the benefit of that sacrifice, the removal of that guilt, by being eaten. It is the Body crucified, risen, and ascended for you. It joins you to Him by His entrance into you. It is a Holy Communion, a uniting of the God-man to your sinful flesh, sinful no more, but pure and immaculate as He is pure and immaculate. In the Holy Communion, the Feast of His Body, we join with angels and archangels, they descend by this living Bread, and join us. Christ ascended into Heaven, but Christ is here. He joins us to Heaven, to angels, and to the saints before us. We are in Heaven though we are on Earth for we are with Christ and the holy angels. Our sins are removed, forgiven by Divine declaration and Grace! We feast on the foretaste of the feast that will not end.

This is what the Ascension of our Lord is about. Not about Christ leaving us, for He has not left. It is about Christ preceding us. He goes to prepare a place for us even as He is still with us, still for us, still in us. He who broke down the gates of Hell that locked us in has also broken down the gates of Heaven that kept us out. His holy, precious Blood and His innocent suffering and death has paved the way and laid down the trail. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. There is no one who can bring an accusation against you. You have no more guilt; it has been paid, so there is no need to feel shame, or regret. Your sins are forgiven.

Death is dead, buried in the grace. Life lives for He rose again out of the grave. Heaven is open for He ascended up into Heaven and was received by the heavenly Father and prepares a place for us all there. Christ, our Brother and Savior, has ascended, He was received into Heaven on your behalf. He will come again on the Last Day in the same fashion, accompanied by the blast of the trumpet, and He will call all those who believe on Him to their eternal home in Heaven. Therefore, we pray often, "Come Lord + Jesus quickly. And take us from this valley of sorrow to our home in Heaven. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory! I will extol Thee, O Lord, and I will praise Thy Name forever and ever. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo gloria!