

**Worship Service for May 16<sup>th</sup>: 7th Sunday of Easter - Ascension Sunday**

- **New Testament:** Acts 1:1-11
- **New Testament:** Luke 24:44-53
- **Psalms:** Psalm 47

**Announcements:**

- Welcome to our worship service! We're glad you are reading. We pray that God's blessings and peace will be with you all now and forever! Amen.

**Sermon Title: The Ascension!**

Today Christians worldwide are celebrating Ascension Sunday. Ascension represents Jesus' ascent into heaven on the fortieth day after his resurrection. The Ascension is a major part of the redemptive story. Talking about Jesus, Ephesians 1:20-21 says he was raised from the dead and seated at the right hand of God in the heavenly realms. We recite this in our Apostles' Creed acknowledging that Jesus died, was buried, resurrected and ascended into heaven where he was seated at the right hand of the Almighty Father.

The days and seasons of our church calendar represent truths and attitudes that remain important to us all through the year. It is therefore important for us to know what the ascension signifies for Christians.

The ascension of Jesus Christ marks the climax of his ministry on earth. For forty days after his resurrection, Jesus appeared to his disciples with convincing proofs. He showed them his hands and feet that were pierced and also ate with them to show that he was real. Jesus had however, mentioned to the disciples that he would enter into glory and that could only happen through his ascension into heaven. Luke tells us how this happens – he says as Jesus was blessing his disciples he was taken up to heaven.

Jesus visibly leaves the earth and enters triumphantly into heaven because he has successfully fulfilled his mission on the earth. The next time he returns will be to judge the earth. Jesus' ascension was different from his appearances after the resurrection where he appeared to people. Jesus visibly and bodily ascended to heaven, rising into the cloud. The cloud represents God's presence, and the ascension represents the completion of Jesus' ministry on earth and total handing over to the Church of Christ.

He was now going to prepare a place for us and takeover his new work as High Priest and Mediator of the new covenant. This also set a pattern for his return. Through Jesus' ascension his ministry could now continue through the Holy Spirit and the Church. It is only when Jesus ascends that the Holy Spirit can be poured out on believers. The gift of salvation could now be received by all who believed.

Our passage tells us that when Jesus was taken up, the disciples worshipped and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. They stayed in the temple continually praising God because they knew that their Master had been glorified and they had been assured of the help of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus' ascension confirms that the final payment for sin has been made and his new role as intercessor for the people had begun. The Bible says he is seated at the right hand of the Father interceding for us (Romans 8:34). We are now assured of continuous access to the Father forever.

Jesus has now been given total authority over principalities and powers. Ephesians 1:20-23 tells us that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead and seated at the right hand of God the Father in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the age to come. It further states that God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church.

His name now has total authority over these powers. Philippians 2: 9-11 says God has exalted Jesus Christ to the highest place and given him the name that is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee will bow in heaven and on earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

By reason of all these things, the Church has now been empowered to accomplish its mission. Jesus has been appointed head over the Church and the Holy Spirit has been sent to help the Church accomplish the mission of witnessing about Jesus' power to forgive and cleanse from sin.

The mandate of the Church is now to preach repentance for the forgiveness of sins. We are all called to proclaim this gospel of repentance and forgiveness to all those around us and the world. Jesus equipped us for this mission by sending us the Holy

Spirit to be our Helper. Therefore, we don't need to fear, we don't need to doubt if anyone will listen to us, and we don't need to be discouraged. We now have authority in the name of Jesus and when we mention that name, every knee shall surely bow, and every tongue will surely confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Let us arise therefore and move and takeover the earth as we proclaim the good news of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. We can now go forward rejoicing like the disciples knowing that Jesus will neither leave us nor forsake us; knowing that even though he has ascended, the Holy Spirit is there to lead and guide us. The resurrection and ascension bear witness to the completion and perfection of Jesus' work on the earth.

The ascension of Jesus provides Christians with grace, mercy, power and authority to enable them to advance the mission of Christ here on earth. May we, therefore, build our confidence and hope on the finished work of Christ Jesus our Lord, going forth in boldness and courage to proclaim the good news of salvation. Amen.

### **Prayer**

O God, Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer of all life, You have begun the work of creating a new world, a world where justice is known, where freedom and healing are available to all people. We pray for the places in the world that are caught up in violence, where people are held captive or struggle under oppressive powers, and where sickness prevails, and medical resources are scarce. Grant those affected courage and perseverance through your Spirit. May people everywhere find the fullness of life you intend for us all.

You have begun the work of creating a new community, a community where love is shared, and all find a sense of belonging. We pray for groups who are made to feel like they don't belong, for families that caught up in tension or strife, and for those who feel isolated or desperate because no one seems to care.

Grant them all courage and comfort through your Spirit. May people everywhere find the fullness of life you intend for us all.

You have begun the work of making a new creation, a creation where all that has been broken is being restored, where all that has been distorted is made right, and what has been polluted or damaged is renewed. We pray for the earth, the places

where its natural balances are threatened, and species put at risk by human exploitation. Send your healing Spirit to renew the earth and make us wiser stewards. May creatures everywhere know the fullness of life you intend for us all.

As you work towards making all things new, we pray for renewal in our churches and ministries, for leaders tired out by the responsibilities of coping with pandemic demands, and for church members who have drift away in the months of distancing.

Lord of Dawn and Darkness, how grateful we are for your loving mercies. You saw our fear and doubt, our suspicion, our mistrust, and you banished them from our lives, replacing them with hope, peace, love, and joy. You called us to be your witnesses, to all the world, unafraid of what others might think or say about us. We have been invited out of our darkened hideaways, into the light of your world as emissaries of hope and justice, peace and compassion. Be with us, as we participate in ministries of healing and hope through this church, in our community, region, nation, and world. Give us courage and strength to be your disciples in all the circumstances of our lives.

Eternal and ever-present God bless the gifts we offer you today with the power of your Holy Spirit. Use them and us to witness to the love of Jesus Christ and bring healing and hope to the world in his name.

Send your energizing Spirit to gather the church in ways both familiar and new. May your servants in every church know the fullness of life you intend for us all and be empowered to bear witness to Jesus in refreshing ways. For together we offer the prayer he taught us:

*Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be 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 debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.*

### **Benediction**

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.