



Free EvangelicalLutheran  
Synod in South Africa

## Sermon for Ascension Day 2017

*Jesus ascends to the Father blessing His  
disciples!*



St. John's Lutheran Parish  
Shelly Beach

### • The Word of God for this Sermon is written in Luke 24,44-53:

- <sup>ESV</sup> 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 and 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 Then 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 worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy,
- 53 and were continually in the temple blessing God.
- *Let us pray: Come Holy Spirit, give us ears that can bear the risen Lord so that we receive His good gifts and rise with Him in Spirit now and later in body and see Him with our own eyes in the Resurrection. Amen.*

### • **Dear Members of Christ's Body!**

- "... as they were talking about these things", Jesus came and stood amongst them and said to them, "Peace to you!" What things were who talking about? Remember, the two disciples of Emmaus, whom Jesus followed and then taught, that the prophets already prophesied about Jesus' Death and Resurrection. Then their eyes were opened, after the Catechesis as He broke the bread and then He sent them away to go tell the other disciples.
- And now, well, the two disciples from Emmaus were doing just that. They were telling the other disciples, they were given the others the Catechesis,

which they had received from Jesus.

• And so, what would follow next? Jesus would reveal Himself! And He did. He comes to them, asks them to touch Him and see. He showed them the marks of the nails on His hands and feet and then He himself took a piece of broiled fish and ate it before them. The meat stayed in His body, that is Jesus was alive with His Body! He was no ghost or vision. They were facing a resurrected Body, never to die again!

• Then Jesus fills up what was missing from the Catechesis of the disciples of Emmaus, namely He reminded them about the Words He had spoken to them, that everything written about Him in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled! He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures by pointing out to them that the Christ should suffer, on the third day rise from the dead and then the proclamation of the repentance for the forgiveness of sins, to all nations should follow.

• Now, what is Jesus doing here? He keeps repeating the same sequence, the same pattern over and over again, suffering, resurrection and proclamation. And the content of the proclamation, of the good news, of the Exodus is: Repentance leading to forgiveness of sins and mission. And this pattern, Jesus says is already spelled out in the whole of the OT Scriptures! How does this work? The Gospel of Luke as a whole wants to answer this question for us. It does not make use of quotations, in this way, that it reveals that Christ has fulfilled every single quotation, like the Gospel of Matthew does. It wants to reveal that already in the OT Scriptures the pattern of death, resurrection, mission is repeated over and over not only in the work and lives of the prophets but also in the whole of Israel. It is prophesied that this same pattern will also mark the sending of the Christ into this world by God. And it will mark the Way of the Body of Christ. It will mark the Way of each member of His Body. The whole of Scripture proclaims this cruciform way, that first death, then resurrection, then mission is the Way. One can also say it like this:

Catechesis, Liturgy, Mission- exactly the pattern we have in our Divine Service. Death of the old Adam, Resurrection of the new Adam, Mission and the whole pattern starts all over again.

- So the Ascension of Jesus is all about preparing and getting the Church ready for Mission. He needed to open their minds and their eyes, so that they could understand how all that had happened in general, and in details, followed the prevailing pattern of God's Way of redeeming all nations! It was all written, long ago. It was all going exactly as planned.

- The disciples had been eye and ear witnesses, first without understanding, but now with understanding about these things. Now they needed to wait for the promise of the Father, the Holy Spirit.

- What this proclaims is, continuity, consistency and in the end certainty! This has always been the plan of God. We hear, we see it and we experience it as members of Christ, as Church as a whole and we are all part of the ongoing pattern which repeats itself until the mission of God will be finally accomplished.

- This is not some wild idea, Jesus is not a sect leader, who makes his own claims, who does something completely out of the order of God. To the contrary- He is exactly laying the foundation, fulfilling this pattern envisaged by God before the creation of the world. The thing that baffles the human mind the most is the inclusion of the suffering and Death of Christ as part and parcel of the Way. That is why Jesus has to open minds so that we will understand this, so that this will become certain for us. Because if we understand something we will be convinced to confess to others.

- That is what Jesus is doing with His disciples then and now. Its all about certainty and giving us His authority. We need Catechesis and we need His real presence and the certainty of His real presence. That is what the Holy Spirit does. He convinces us of the truth of Jesus assertion, that He is present

with us, to lead us to repentance, to forgive us our sins, to give us of His Spirit of faith which will lead us to proclaim in private or publicly, according to our personal vocation, the Way of Christ, the Redemption in His Name.

• And just see what Jesus does to give us a final thing to remember of Him: As He was blessing His disciples He was carried away to heaven. He was removed from their eyesight, we hear in Acts 1. The last thing they saw of Jesus was: He was and still is blessing them, all the time! Jesus is not only present with His Church, He is also blessing us continually!

• This is vital to remember when we are in the mission field. When we speak with others about these things, we can be 100% certain that He is present with us. This is true, even if the Catechesis we give is rejected!! Its part of the pattern. The prophets were rejected, Jesus was rejected, the disciples were rejected- we can expect to be rejected by telling others “these things”.

• In this way we are literally following in the footsteps of Jesus. The Cross is part and parcel of the Way. However, let us remember, it all ends, in the end, in Ascension, in our Ascension too! It all ends in our Exodus too. That is part of the Way, part of the patter. Its certain, has always been certain and always will be certain for those whom Jesus baptised into His ministry, into His Way!

• Therefore, rejoice as we remember Jesus’ Ascension Day! Peace be with you. He is with you all the Way! **Amen.**

• *Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. **Amen.***