



Free Evangelical
Lutheran Synod
in South Africa

Sermon- Ascension Day (Proper B) 2018

*Jesus Christ ascended to heaven
while blessing His disciples!*



St. John's Lutheran Parish
Shelly Beach

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

• ^{ESV 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 worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy,

• ⁵³ and were continually in the temple blessing God.

• **Let us pray:** *Come Holy Spirit, open our ears and give light to our minds and our hearts so that we will bless the Lord while He is blessing us! Amen.*

• **Dear beloved of God!**

• "...and were continually in the temple blessing God." With these words the Gospel of Luke ends. Just like it began, in the temple, with Zechariah, father of John the Baptist receiving the good news of the birth of John. There is a long and decisive road connecting these temple visits. It begins with a worship in the temple where nobody who Jesus is and what exactly he would do and accomplish. The Gospel ends with a group of worshippers who for the first time in the Gospel fully realise who Jesus is and therefore also worship HIM!

• John the Baptist was called to point to Jesus. Jesus accepted His calling and

fulfilled His ministry by suffering, dying and being resurrected on the third day. That was not all though, His ministry continues, through the called disciples!

- For this reason Jesus taught them all along His journey, prepared them for this moment where repentance and faith would be proclaimed from Jerusalem, as the prophets of old had prophesied. The whole Gospel moves towards this moment when Jesus disciples minds are opened to realise, Jesus' death and resurrection were the goal of Jesus' ministry.
- This, what happened in a small corner of the world, needed to run into the world as the good tiding that it really is. Jesus' Exodus, coming, suffering, dying and going back to the Father accomplished an Exodus for all human beings from under the slavery of sin, death and satan. For this they worshipped Him and the Father with great joy.
- It is important to note that in the Gospel of Luke counting the days, paying attention to time stopped with Jesus revealing Himself to the two disciples of Emmaus at the meal. In other words everything that happened after that revelation, happens on the day of resurrection.
- It is interesting to note that the same author, Luke very much counts precisely in the other book that overlaps that time period, in the beginning, namely Acts.
- So, the Gospel teaches us that since Jesus Resurrection Jesus and His disciples are both outside the constraints of time and yet, in a different way, still inside the constraints of time to fulfil the extension ministry of Jesus. The disciples will go on a journey beginning in Jerusalem, but leading or spreading away from Jerusalem into the ends of the earth. Now, we are witnesses that this has actually happened! Most of our forefathers came to support the proclamation of the Gospel here in South Africa or to proclaim it themselves! That is why we are here!
- Our whereabouts today have very much to do with Jesus sending out His disciples. It had astronomical historical repercussions. The course of history radically changed because of what happened in our passage. That nobody can deny! In fact we still count our years AD and BC. Some try to replace this with

“common era” which is a-historical in the first place!

- In the church we follow the principle Jesus used in our passage, namely reminding His disciples of what He did and taught during His earthly ministry. When we come to the end we begin anew with the beginning, growing into Christ. We grow in repentance and in faith, in deeper and deeper acknowledging our own sinfulness and complete dependence on Jesus’ person and ministry! We grow in realising and seeing more clearly who Jesus really is, how much He truly loves us and how close His presence is.
- We learn to worship Him appropriately, namely to receive His blessing with faith and thankfulness and to bless Him, to praise Him with joy in our hearts. We praise him with joy in our hearts, because we realise, in Christ eternity is a reality. Here in Christ’s Body we don’t need to count time any-more. When we are assembled here, the number of our age is irrelevant, because here, in His midst, united to Him and participating of Him, this Life will not end. No need to count your years since Baptism. What never ends, doesn’t need to be counted.
- This is where we come to receive the blessing of the ascended Christ to be a blessing for those on the outside of the Body of Life. So, that many of those poor, lost, stressed souls may be joined to the new community which blesses God in His temple!
- For this, we need to go outside, we need to leave our comfort zones, our cosy Jerusalem’s. Not necessarily geographically, more probable, most likely, we need to break through the barrier of being ashamed of the Gospel, of being ashamed of the Sacraments, the means of God’s Grace, of feeling embarrassed to admit that this mission lies at the centre of my being and purpose on this earth.
- And for this we very much need the power of our dear Lord, we need His nearness, we need Him to be with us, to open our lips and our hearts and to give us courage not to be afraid of people, of what others will say. To steadfastly and faithfully tell them what we know and to invite them, unashamedly, to the ancient liturgy of the church which closely follows the Ways of the Lord Jesus Himself.

- There is no better news, or better invitation to invite people to Life Himself. Death and troubles in the world cannot take that away from us. Jesus ascended into heaven blessing His disciples. That is, He is present here, today, and blessing you and me, through the mouth of His servant.

- Glory be to the Father, Glory be to the Son and Glory be to the Holy Spirit!
Amen.

- **"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." *Amen.* [2 Cor 13, 14].**