

**THE ASCENSION
OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST**
A Service of the Word
*May 17, 2020**



ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH
85 E. Brandt Boulevard
Landisville, PA

*United in Christ,
we are called to love and serve.*

**[*Service may be viewed on Zion's Restricted YouTube or
Zion's Website (zionhempfield.net)]**

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(ELW refers to the red *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* Book)

INTRODUCTION TO TODAY'S SERVICE

P: Alleluia, Christ is risen and ascended.
He is risen and ascended indeed.
Alleluia! Amen.

In the name of Christ, welcome to worship. Today we celebrate the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is on this day that Christ departs from his earthly home and enters into the heavenly presence of God and is seated at the right hand of God the Father.

During the reading of the Gospel, the Paschal candle will be extinguished as a symbol that Christ has ascended.

PRELUDE

Alleluia! Sing to Jesus

P. Manz

† **THE GATHERING** †

*The Holy Spirit gathers us in unity on the first day of the week,
the day of Christ's resurrection.*

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

P: Lord God, too often we are hesitant to proclaim your word and our faith to the world; too often we are half-hearted in our service and reluctant to stand out from the crowd on your behalf. We live wholly dependent on our own resources, relying on our perceived skills and insights. We look to the clouds for our inspiration in vain hope of finding you there. Forgive our shabby efforts and the frailty of our faith; open our hearts and minds to the presence of our risen, loving, and ascended Lord Jesus Christ.

Brief silence.

Gracious God, we hear the Good News that Jesus Christ has ascended into heaven and not sits at your right hand. As his presence fills the universe, we hear the words that we are not abandoned. By his wounds we are healed and have been reshaped into his image. In Christ, we are forgiven. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Lord, I lift you name on high; Lord I love to sing your praises.
I'm so glad you're in my life, I'm so glad you came to save us.
You came from heaven to earth to show the way, from the earth
To the cross, my debt to pay, from the cross to the grave,
From the grave to the sky; Lord, I lift your name on high.
(Repeat 1 time.)

GREETING

P: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: Let us pray. Almighty God, only Son was taken into the heavens and in your presence intercedes for us. Receive us and our prayers for all the world, and in the end bring everything into your glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

† THE WORD †

God speaks to us in Scriptures read, sung, and preached.

FIRST READING

Acts 1:1-11

A: A reading from Acts 1.

[Paul writes:] In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning until the day when he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. After his suffering he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them for forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. While staying with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. "This," he said, "is what you have heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

So, when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" He replied, "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their

sight. While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. They said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”

A: The Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

SECOND READING

Ephesians 1:15-23

A: A reading from Ephesians.

[The Apostle Paul writes to the Ephesians:] I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, 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 age to come. And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

A: The Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL READING

Luke 24:44-53

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the 24th chapter.
Glory to you, O Lord.

Then [Jesus said to his disciples], “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, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and they were continually in the temple blessing God. (*The Paschal candle is extinguished.*)

This is the Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

Pastor Barbara Caruana

P: *In the name of the Risen and Ascended Christ.
Amen.*

5, 4, 3, 2, 1...lift off!" I've always thought it would be so cool to watch a rocket being launched into space. As the rocket would struggle to escape earth's grip, I would suspect the sound would be deafening and the ground would shake under your feet. But as exciting as it would be to watch a rocket blast off from its pad, it's not a thrill that would last very long. After a couple of minutes you would lose sight of the ship, leaving you no reason to hang around the launch pad - unless, of course, you were one of the scientists who had an experiment on board that rocket. For you and other scientists, the launch of the rocket is only the beginning of your excitement. The real fun comes when the rocket reaches its orbit and the astronauts begin conducting experiments and send data back to earth.

Although there were no deafening sounds of explosive rocket engines, Jesus' ascension into heaven was as impressive. The disciples celebrated the event and continued to do so even after they returned from the launch pad outside Jerusalem. Like scientists who rejoice when the rocket reaches orbit because it can now do what it has been sent to do, the disciples rejoiced at Jesus' ascension because they knew his ascent to the right hand of God would impact their lives in positive ways and continues to impact us positively even today. How? Let's find out so we can keep on celebrating the Lord's ascension like those early disciples did.

Just like there must be many late nights of worry for scientists preparing an experiment for a space mission and great disappointment if the mission is a flop, the hours that followed Jesus' crucifixion were filled with disappointment for the disciples. They had dedicated three years of their lives to following the one they thought could make a difference for Israel. But now he was dead and those who had killed Jesus would probably come after them too, so the disciples huddled

together behind locked doors. Had they been part of a failed “mission”? Jesus had died, yes, but he would come back to life and the disciples should have known that. When the resurrected Jesus appeared to them he said: “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms. This is what is written: Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day”.

It’s a shame how Christians suffer needlessly when they don’t take God’s word to heart! Those hours after Jesus’ crucifixion should have been ones of anticipation, not disappointment and fear. The disciples should have camped out at Jesus’ tomb to catch the resurrection spectacle, the way concertgoers camp out at a ticket window so they can snap up the good tickets. The disciples must have kicked themselves later for not being there to witness the angel wrenching open the empty tomb.

What part of God’s Word do we ignore and suffer as a result? For example God invites us to cast all of our anxieties on him, but do we instead bottle up our concerns until we’ve managed to concoct a mean brew of apprehension that’s just as sinful and hazardous to our health as a night of excessive drinking?

So, what’s the remedy? How can we learn to trust God’s Word better? Well, after chastising the disciples for not having believed God’s Word about his resurrection, Luke tells us what Jesus did. “[Jesus] opened their minds so they could understand the Scripture”, and he promised that, after he went to heaven, he would also send the Holy Spirit who would open their minds to understand Scripture. You see, we need the Holy Spirit because without the Spirit we can’t accept the things that come from the Spirit of God. Even if you are the smartest person in the world, without the Spirit of God you still wouldn’t be able to understand or accept God’s Word. It would be like trying to read a newspaper in a language you don’t understand.

So, this is one thing that makes Jesus’ ascension worth celebrating. At his ascension, Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit so that we can understand and believe God’s Word. And the Good News is that believing God’s promises leads to a worry-free life (and who wouldn’t want that?).

But the Holy Spirit does more than give us knowledge; he gives us power. Listen to what Jesus told his disciples. “I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.” Jesus wasn’t going to leave his disciples with a picture of himself, a lock of his hair, or a relic from his cross; he gave them something better – divine power through the

gift of the Holy Spirit. Notice how Jesus said that we would be clothed with Holy Spirit, not just get plugged into him from time to time like a light bulb on the fritz – although that’s how we sometimes act because of our faulty connection to the Word.

So, what were the disciples to do with this power? Jesus told them to preach repentance and forgiveness of sins to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. After, all they were witnesses of these things.” While the disciples at first thought of themselves as members of a witness *protection* program hiding behind locked rooms, Jesus’ ascension and the promise of the Holy Spirit made them aware that they were to be a part of the witness *proclamation* program. And proclaim they did! When the disciples returned to Jerusalem after Jesus’ lift off, they didn’t go back into hiding; they went to the temple courts everyday where they praised God for all to see. And what made the difference? Jesus’ ascension made the difference. It gave the disciples a power-filled life through the Holy Spirit.

So, what kind of witnesses are we? If we’re keeping low profiles as Christians as if we were part of some witness protection program, it may be because we don’t understand Jesus’ ascension. Jesus’ ascension wasn’t his retirement; it was his re-coronation as King of the universe. How would you feel if a close friend of yours became Prime Minister? You’d probably feel pretty important and would expect to receive a few perks, wouldn’t you? Well we have it even better than that with Jesus. He doesn’t just give us a *few* perks but everything we need. Paul said, “God placed all things under [Jesus’] feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church.” With Jesus ruling all things, there’s no need for us to be timid. Instead we can be bold witnesses for Christ.

And exactly how are we to do that? We’re to share God’s Word: the law and the gospel. Jesus said that, first of all, repentance should be preached. Do we do that? With a tear in our eye because we’re really concerned about our unbelieving neighbors, do we tell them that they are going to hell? And you may say, “Oh, I could never do that!” And I say, “Why not?” If we don’t point out the seriousness of their sin now, God will on Judgment Day, and it will be too late for that person to turn to Jesus for forgiveness. If you noticed that your child filled out his homework incorrectly, I don’t think you would think twice about helping him see his mistakes. If you won’t, his teacher will, and his grade will reflect that.

Of course, preaching repentance is only the half of it. The other half is to point people to Jesus for forgiveness. We know that we have forgiveness through Jesus

because the ascension guarantees it. Had Jesus not conquered sin and death, he would not have been welcomed back into heaven as a conquering king. Since Jesus ascended to the right hand of the Father, we can be certain that his mission to wash us clean of all sin was accomplished. But Jesus didn't just forgive those of us who are here. He forgives the baby-killer. He forgives the alcoholic, the drug addict, the housewife addicted to materialism, the dad who thinks work is the most important thing in his life, and children who disobey their parents and disrespect their classmates. Jesus forgives us all!

Do you see the excitement here? Because we have forgiveness, we have eternal life! We can be certain of this because of Jesus' ascension. So, just as a scientist's excitement grows after a rocket ship has lifted off, so our excitement grows with Jesus' lift off from the Mt. of Olives ... all because our Lord ascends for our benefit. And even though he has ascended to heaven he hasn't left us because we're told that he now fills the universe with his presence. And as if that's not enough, he clothes us with the Holy Spirit who gives us understanding of his Word which leads to a worry-free and power-filled life. Wow! We need to keep on celebrating our Lord's ascension.

And to that I say, "Let's get to it." Amen.

HYMN

Crown Him with Many Crowns

WOV 855

Crown him with many crowns, the Lamb upon his throne;
Hard, now the heav'n-ly anthem drowns all music but its own.
Awake, my soul, and sing of him who died for thee,
And hail him as thy matchless king through all eternity.

Crown him the virgin's Son, the God incarnate born,
Whose arm those crimson trophies won which now his brow adorn.
Fruit of the mystic rose, yet of that rose the stem,
The root whence mercy ever flows, the babe of Bethlehem.

Corn him the Lord of love – behold his hand and side,
Rich wounds, yet visible above, in beauty glorified.
No angels in the sky can fully bear that sight,
But downward bend their burning eyes at mysteries so bright.

Continued next page.

Crown him the Lord of life, who triumphed o'er the grave
And rose victorious in the strife for those he came to save.
His glories now we sing, who died and rose on high,
Who died, eternal life to bring, and lives that death maty die.

Crown him the Lord of years, the potentate of time,
Creator of the rolling spheres, ineffably sublime.
All hail, Redeemer, hail! For thou hast died for me;
Thy praise and glory shall not fail throughout eternity.

NICENE CREED

P: We profess our faith together.

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven; by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYERS

A: Let us pray.

Brief silence.

Lord God, we are looking up into heaven today. Our eyes are straining to see Jesus!

The struggle between faith and doubt is smoldering within our hearts and souls, and we are looking for assurance and answers from you.

But the truth is, clouds obstruct our view. Mystery and majesty surround our full understanding of how Christ ascended into heaven to claim his seat next to his Father. Scientifically, it just doesn't seem possible. In reality, though, it doesn't really matter, does it? Help us to focus on the promises Christ made to us: the promise that we will not be abandoned and that Christ's presence will be replaced by the Holy Spirit who will dwell deep within the hearts of all who believe.

May the events of this day challenge us in ways that allow us to sing praises with hearts filled with love and to pray unceasingly as we look beyond the visible and place our trust in the one who gave his life for us.

We know, Lord, that you accept us when we find it hard to accept ourselves, each other, and the things we don't understand. We pray you will strengthen us in ways only you can and help us be your faithful witnesses.

Lord, comfort all who are overcome with grief, pain, sadness, and fear ... especially the family and friends of those who have been overcome by COVID-19. Give leaders around the world wisdom to make wise decisions as countries struggle to balance the life of individuals with the lessening of restrictions that help spread of the coronavirus. Help the world move from despair to hope.

We remember, with aching hearts, all who have died due to COVID-19. Lead them to the place that you have prepared for them and welcome them into your heavenly arms.

And now, O God, accept these prayers that we offer to you in the name of Jesus, our Lord and Savior, who taught us to pray together saying ...

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 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.

Shine, Jesus, shine, fill this land with the Father's glory;
 Blaze, Spirit, blaze, set our hearts on fire.
 Flow, river flow, flood the nations with grace and mercy;
 Send forth your Word, Lord and let there be light!

Lord, the light of your love is shining, in the midst of the
 Darkness, shining; Jesus, light of the world, shine upon us,
 Set us free by the truth you now bring us.
 Shine on me, shine on me:

Shine, Jesus, shine, fill this land with the Father's glory;
 Blaze, Spirit, blaze, set our hearts on fire.
 Flow, river flow, flood the nations with grace and mercy;
 Send forth your Word, Lord and let there be light!

As we gaze on your kingly brightness, so our faces display
 Your likeness, ever changing from glory to glory,
 Mirrored here, may our lives tell your story.
 Shine on me, shine on me:

Shine, Jesus, shine, fill this land with the Father's glory;
 Blaze, Spirit, blaze, set our hearts on fire.
 Flow, river flow, flood the nations with grace and mercy;
 Send forth your Word, Lord and let there be light!

† **THE SENDING** †

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

A CLOSING ASCENSION SUNDAY PRAYER

P: Dear Lord Jesus Christ, right before your Ascension into heaven you told your apostles to be his witnesses to the ends of the earth upon receiving the Holy Spirit. May we be similarly inspired to spread your Gospel message joyfully in word and deed with your help, to listen to your guidance, and to humbly accept your grace! And remembering this glorious event, help us to look upward toward the heavens where you are seated at the right hand of God the Father, especially as we live in a world that changing at lightning speed each day. Amen.

BLESSING

P: May the Lord bless you and keep you;
May the Lord make his face shine on you with grace and mercy;
May the Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace.
In the the name of the Father, and of the † Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

P: And now, go ...
Live in the light of Christ.
Alleluia! Amen!

POSTLUDE

Great is the Lord

M. Smith/D. Smith



May 17, 2020

PRAYER LIST

FOR HEALING

Megan Landis
Joe Adams
Thelma Pearson
Judie Ingersoll
Lucy Davis
Bill Grove
Mary Grzybowski
Kay Crawford
Holly Hoover
Betty Stoner
Don Heartter
Janet & Harry Musselman
Ron Sahn (Friend of Dave Wise)
Wilson Pipkin (Father of Wilson Pipkin)
Jessica Graham (Granddaughter of Janet & Harry Musselman)
Loma Slike (Mother of Sue Wise)
Mike LaFatta (Son-in-law of Bill & Julia Grove)

FOR COMFORT, PEACE, STRENGTH, & SAFETY

Residents and Staff of the Phoenixville Care & Rehabilitation Center
Charlotte & George Potts
Marlin Zimmerman
Arlene Miller
Deb McCartney
Bette Geibel
Jennifer Thompson
Ted Symonds & Family
Arlene Wise (Sister-in-law of Dave Wise)
Vaun Hile (Father of Lynda Sherwood)
Jennifer Kready (Daughter of Dave & Donna Dumeyer)

FOR PROTECTION FOR MILITARY & FIRST RESPONDERS

Christopher Wright	Jonathan Hoover
Thom Whitesel	Ryan Stitzel
Doug Kautter	Justin Gorlaski
Chris Andrew	Corey Landis (Nephew of Jesse & Pat Landis)



Never Underestimate the power of prayer.