

Sermon for Ascension 2026 A

Acts 1: 1-11, Ephesians 1: 15-23, Luke 24: 44-end

Let us pray: May I speak in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

As I thought about this evening I remembered an advert from many years ago which had the slogan “because change happenz”, with a ‘Z’.

This evenings service could also use that catch phrase because that is what the Ascension is about – change.

Personally, I feel that many Christians do not place enough significance on the Ascension of Christ, they seem to skip from Easter Sunday to Pentecost. It’s almost a ‘take it or leave it’ view to the Ascension when in fact it is the culmination of all that happened from Good Friday onwards. Without the Ascension, Pentecost would not have happened.

It is the earthly end of Christ’ ministry and the beginning of His heavenly ministry and the beginning of every person ministry here on earth.

As was prophesied in the Old Testament Christ’ final act of his resurrection would be to ascend to the Father to be seated at his right hand; Psalm 110 v 1 has *“the Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool”*

In the Gospel reading Luke writes *“then he (Jesus) 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”*.

Notice the line “opened their minds to understand scriptures”.

We too can look into scripture and open our minds. We have in scripture Jesus own words about his Ascension. After his resurrection, when he appeared to Mary in the garden Jesus said to her *“do not hold onto me, because I have not ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God”*.

During the forty days from that glorious Easter morn to his ascension he was again with his disciples bodily, not as a spirit, a ‘will-o –wisp’. Think about Thomas - Christ said to him *“reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe”*.

He appeared to them on the beach at the Sea of Tiberias, he sat and ate fish with them. His was physically alive.

This is verified by Luke in the Acts reading *“after his suffering he presented himself **alive** to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over the course of forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God”*.

Back to this evening – the Ascension - the Gospel reading has *“then he led them out as far as Bethany”*, Acts has *“so when they had come together”*.

Christ was together with his disciples and while blessing them he withdrew, was lifted up, out of their sight. In Acts, we read *“men of Galilee why do you stand looking up to heaven”*, his disciples witnessed his live return to the Father. As with his birth, his ascension was witnessed by ordinary people, the ones God chose, the ones he knew would proclaim to the world the truth of his Son.

Again, as at his birth, without large crowds, no fanfares; notice that Jesus *“led them out as far as Bethany”*. He went out from Jerusalem, away from the crowds to be alone with his disciples, to encourage and reassure them. Having given them their final instructions, his work on earth completed he returned to his rightful place at God’s right hand.

We acknowledge this at most Eucharistic services as we say the Apostles creed, you know the section;

*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.*

Why then was the Ascension important to the disciples and why is it just as important for us today?

Jesus had been with them teaching them about the scriptures and the kingdom of his father. He died and rose again and although the disciples had gone back to their old life Jesus sought them and continued to help them understand all he had been saying. He continued to hold them until they could go it alone.

He had once told them that he was to go away and he would send ‘the Advocate’ to be with them.

In John's Gospel we read *"it is to your advantage that I go away for if I do not go away the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go I will send him to you"*.

If Jesus had stayed then the disciples would have relied on him and never gone out and spread the good news.

If Jesus had stayed then the Holy Spirit, the Advocate would not have come to them ten days later and changed their lives and the world.

He needed to leave,

he needed his disciples to see him leave,

he needed to let them see he left alive so that they and we now can say he is alive.

For Jesus to have stayed would have grounded him and his message to the same area as it had been before his death. He would have remained a physical presence on earth and not spiritually present everywhere, he would have been with the few, but now he is with each of us, with all nations.

He now sits at the right hand of the Father and intercedes on our behalf.

The ascension was witnessed by the disciples to have happened,

it is the truth that Jesus is alive,

it is what we believe.

Let us therefore do as those disciples did – have great joy and praise God.

Amen