

LIFT HIM UP

Acts 1:1-11

The Ascension of Our Lord has always been a festival in the Church of JC. Lately, it has not been much of a festival. Services are poorly attended. That is due to the fact that we have lost sight of what the ascension means. Xmas is clear, with the baby and the wise men and the shepherds. It is fun. Easter is also clear. The resurrection is one of the fundamental doctrines of the xian faith, and it is filled with drama and the appearing of Jesus and the amazed disciples. But the ascension is just one of those days that people do not quite get [understand].

It is filled with its own drama of its own - disciples gathered around Jesus and Jesus rising up in to the clouds, and angels

talking and making promises about Jesus' returning in the clouds. What is the meaning of all of this to us who did not see it? To some of us, it is just another day for the church, like advent, Christmas, Epiphany. There are no cards to send. There is no television special, no sales there is nothing for the world to take notice of. It is just a day for us Xians to dig the meaning out of for ourselves. **What does the Ascension Mean?**

That was the last day anyone saw Jesus on earth. Paul was caught into heaven and saw Jesus - whether in the body or out of the body he could not say. John the revelator saw him in all his glory in a vision. No one has seen Jesus on earth since that day he ascended into heaven.

So what does it mean? Many Christians assume that it means that Jesus is gone and up in heaven now. The Ascension does not mean that Jesus is gone, but that he is with us - and with us always, just as he promised. He is not gone, just his visible presence is not with us. Because he is truly God. He does anything and so he can be present with us. Right here even though we cannot see him. And according to his promise, he is! **Wherever two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.**

Jesus is here, this morning. He attends all our worship services. He comes to our Congregational Mtgs..... Remember that song about Santa Claus, "*he sees you when you're sleeping. He knows when you are awake. He knows if you've been bad or good.*" It is true about Jesus.

He promised it, **Behold, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.**

Not seeing Jesus does not mean that he is not here. We have to decide the matter on the basis of His promise and our faith. We know that he is here in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper for our blessing and forgiveness and strengthening. We are a people who walk by faith and not by sight.

He is present in the spoken word. If the pastor proclaims the Word of God in purity and honesty. Then the voice you hear is not the voice of the pastor alone. It is the voice of Jesus. It is the voice here among you, speaking His holy and saving Word to you. It was a moment of triumph for the Son of God...

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When Jesus was about to leave, he told the disciples the when he goes he will not only make room for them but that he will ask the father to send another comforter in the person of the holy Spirit. The Ascension tells us about the coming of the Holy Spirit. It is by the Holy Spirit that Jesus calls, gathers, enlightens and sanctifies his holy people. It is by the Holy Spirit that we are empowered with the power to do His works and preach His word and to be his witnesses throughout the entire world - it means right here and now where we live as well. Sometimes in our words and deeds we do not witness for him. We sin, we hurt one another and we leave a witness, which does not speak of His love and mercy. Some one here this morning will have the

opportunity to witness the forgiveness of God when you confess your sins, repent and come to Him for pardon. God is good; even though we sin he shows us goodness grace and love.

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The Ascension also means that Jesus is coming again. He will be coming in the clouds. He is coming visibly, and with great joy - just as the disciples watched him go. The angel promised them that they would see him return just as they witnessed him depart. Of course, that means that the Ascension also means that we will rise from the grave at the end. Jesus is coming again, and it is not a secret - to rapture a few away, but suddenly, visibly and with great joy, and all humankind will stand before him and see it happen and will

glorify God. What a promise we shall return.

Let me be clear on this - all those who trust Jesus Christ will be rejoicing that day. Catholics, Methodists. Baptist, Pentecostals, even a few United church. All of those who place their hope and trust in JC alone will stand before Christ and in glory and receive everlasting life....

And that is what the Ascension means. It means that Jesus is not gone, but among us. It means that we can look for Him in the sacrament, and listen for His voice in the voice of the shepherd. It means that He is listening to every prayer. It means that he is at work through his Holy Spirit through Word and Sacrament. And finally, it means that he is coming again and we are going

to rise from our graves to that salvation longed promised, prepared on the cross and at the empty tomb, and proclaim here today.

Where are you today on this Ascension Sunday. Are you ready for his return in Glory?.....

AMEN

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