

From the PASTOR'S DESK

He Ascended into Heaven

The phrase He ascended into heaven rolls right off the tongue as we say the Creed. But we don't talk about it much. The Crucifixion, the Resurrection of Our Lord, and the subsequent coming of the Holy Spirit, we talk about a great deal, not just during Lent, Easter, and Pentecost. The Ascension is much less mentioned.

Luke tells us that the disciples worshipped Jesus at the Ascension. John's Gospel for the Second Sunday of Easter tells us that Thomas worshipped Jesus, when Jesus showed him His wounds. For both evangelists, the risen Jesus is not just a human being who has been raised from the dead. Their faith and our faith hold that all human beings will be raised from the dead at the end of time. But both Luke and John record that the disciples worshipped Jesus. He is God.

The Ascension completes the cycle begun at the Incarnation. The eternal Word became flesh in Mary's womb. Now, that same Savior in the manger departs and is carried up to heaven. The disciples worship Him and return to Jerusalem with great joy.

Luke's Gospel gives us joy at the beginning in the Nativity and joy at the end at the Ascension. Joy should be characteristic of our lives, of our living out of the gospel. Joy involves celebrating what is good in the present and having hope for what is good in the future. The opposite of joy is being miserable.

When we are miserable, we concentrate on what is bad currently and do not have hope for the future. If deep down we are joyful though, we will be glad for whatever good remains in any situation. Deep down, we trust in God's mercy and love, and in the goodness of creation. Our response to the Ascension is to know that this earth-bound reality is not all.

Joy is liberating. It gives us the possibility of dreaming about what a fully human life might be like, what it is like not to fear. Joy involves hope.

We have hope because Jesus is ascended into heaven, and where He has gone, we hope to follow. We have hope in the ultimate goodness of life and the assurance of perfect, eternal life.

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