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St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
2100 16<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Austin, MN 55912-1749

Pastor Ted Barthels  
Sermon preached on  
June 1, 2014  
Sunday after Ascension

Scripture Lessons: Psalm 110 Luke 24:50-53  
Hymns: 213; 212; 216; 221:1,2 (344 –Gloria)

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and  
our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: John 14:1-6

“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God,  
believe also in Me. 2 In My Father's house are many  
mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to  
prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place  
for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that  
where I am, there you may be also. 4 And where I go you  
know, and the way you know.”

5 Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where  
You are going, and how can we know the way?”

6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.  
No one comes to the Father except through Me.

(NKJV)

This is the Word of God!

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is  
truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, our Risen and Ascended Lord, dear fellow Redeemed.

INTRO: Jesus' ascension is one of the big events in the life and mission of Jesus.

When we start listing the big events in the life and ministry of Jesus we will undoubtedly begin with the Savior's incarnation and birth. We almost automatically envision the choirs of angels in the hills of Bethlehem rejoicing together at Jesus' birth. Other events that quickly come to mind are the Lord's sufferings and death on the cross of Calvary. And then His resurrection.

If we ask for more, individual's may suggest certain of Jesus' miracles, the raising of Lazarus for example, or some of Jesus' teaching -- the Sermon on the Mount may come to mind. We may well think of these events before we recall the event which we are highlighting today, Jesus' Ascension. This event has great significance on many different levels. For our Lord it marked the completion of His redemptive mission on earth. He returned to His native heaven "**leading captivity captive**"(Ps.110). Jesus had destroyed the power of the devil and removed the sting of death and He was taking this victory over sin, death, and devil with Him to heaven as our Conquering King. Meditating upon the significance of this event the Holy Spirit leads us to see that –

**THEME: Jesus' Ascension Grants Us Great Assurance  
of Faith.**

For this meditation we return to the words of our Lord which He spoke to His disciples the night before He died. What He said to them then also enlightens us concerning the purpose of His ascension –

### **I. He Prepares a Place for Us.**

Jesus knew that the disciples were about to face some difficult trials for their faith. He spoke these words of our text to help them, and comfort them in their time of distress.

**John 14:1-2** Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

We also face many trials in life. We face bold attacks on our faith by the lies and false philosophy of this world. When we stand up for the truth of God's Word we may well be ridiculed, or be on the receiving end of a "rant" with someone accusing us being unloving, intolerant, and bigoted. We live in troubling times when many temptations are present before us in this world. That too can be very distressing, especially if we find ourselves failing to resist temptation, and falling into sin. Our consciences may be tormented. We may wonder, "Can God love a wretch like me? Can God forgive a repeat sinner like me?"

And then of course there are all those troubles that enter into everyone's life. The challenges of health, or work, or unemployment, or the grief of losing a loved one.

All these things trouble our hearts. But we have a Risen and Ascended Lord! Our Ever-living Lord says to us,

**“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me!”**

Because Jesus is our Lord and Savior we can believe in Him just as surely and confidently as we believe in God the Father. In fact unless we believe that Jesus is our Redeemer who lived and died and rose again, all for us and our salvation, we cannot believe in the Father, for this was the mission God the Father gave to His only-begotten Son, that we might have life through faith in His name.

Jesus would calm our troubled hearts with the same truth with which He calmed the disciples’ hearts on that night before He died. He was going to prepare a place for them in heaven among the many mansions of God! To do this it was necessary for Jesus to complete His redemptive mission by offering His life as a ransom for us to God. Jesus paid the price of our sin. Jesus’ resurrection declares that God accepted this sacrifice upon the cross as a fully satisfactory payment for the sins of the world. In all this Jesus was preparing that place for His disciples, not just the twelve, but His disciples of all ages. He has prepared a place for you!

His ascension not only assures us that this redemptive mission from God was successfully completed, but also leads us to comprehend that Jesus is still active, a power for us and our salvation. He sits at the right hand of God. God has given all authority to the Son. Jesus, the God/Man rules all things for the good of His people and the advancement of His kingdom! He lives and REIGNS in heaven above until God the Father makes Jesus’ enemies His footstool. The last enemy to be defeated for evermore is death! In the end Jesus will raise all the dead.

Then we shall comprehend the full extent of Jesus' preparation of our place in heaven. Right here in our text --

## **II. Jesus Announces the Hope of Our Ascension.**

**John 14:3** And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.

Our hope in Christ is not for this life only! That is not to say that we do not have hope for the problems of this life in our faith in Christ, but that hope is derived from understanding the wonder of our eternal salvation! He who loved us so much that He would suffer and die for us, will love us in all our ways, in all our needs. The greatness of His love for us incentivized the Savior's redemptive work so that we might spend all eternity with Him in heavenly bliss and glory.

Right now life doesn't always lead us to think, "**Bliss and glory.**" Now we suffer, indeed we also grow old and die. And that is the most blessed of us! We return to the ground, to the dust from which we were taken. But with Jesus as our Ascended Lord that is not the end of the story! That is not the end of the story of our lives! We read of this in --

**1 Thessalonians 4:14-17** For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. 15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will

rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

That is how it will happen! That is how the promise of our text will be fulfilled! Jesus, who was raised from this earth until a cloud received Him out of sight, will come visibly, gloriously just as Paul tells us in this wondrous passage. Our spirits will accompany Jesus as He returns, and He will call our bodies forth from the grave, and we will meet the Lord in the air! And so shall we ALWAYS be with the Lord! That is the truth that comes to us because Jesus is our Ascended Lord!

I want this! I really want this! How can I know for sure that I am on the right track, the way that leads to heaven? Because --

### **III. Jesus Reveals the Way to Heaven.**

**John 14:4-6** And where I go you know, and the way you know.” 5 Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?” 6 Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

Thomas’ question not only shows the weakness of the disciples, even after spending three years and more of personal instruction. It shows how spiritually dense **we all are** by nature. On our own we do not know the way to God. On our own we cannot know the way to God. However, Jesus refocuses our sight on Him. Jesus reveals that when we know and believe in Him as our Redeemer, as our Savior, as our **God**, then we do know the way to

the Father. Then we know where Jesus was going, and where Jesus has gone!

Our faith in Jesus informs us of where we too shall be. It reveals to us the way of life. Life comes to us through the truth of the gospel. Jesus' righteousness has been credited to us. His blood has cleansed us of all our sin. Jesus has taken our sins away, He has taken them upon Himself that having been covered by His righteousness, the way to God has been opened for us. We shall be received by our glorified and ascended Lord. He shall invite us to enter into His glory, and to live, **LIVE ETERNALLY**, with Him in the presence of God the Father. That is the assurance of faith that comes to us **through Jesus' ascension!**

But know this, and know it well – this can only happen, and the Lord means it when He says “**ONLY**,” through faith in Christ Jesus. No one can come to the Father in any other way. Jesus isn't the best way, or the easiest way, or the preferred way to come to God and eternal life. Jesus is the **only** way to come to God. Our Ascended Lord sits at the right hand of God the Father and paves the way for us to enter heaven. He smooths out all the rough spots made by our sins, and He keeps us in true faith until we are summoned to come before the throne of God.

Then it will be even as Jesus' promised. Of that we not only may, but indeed **must** have **full assurance** of faith! He who promised is **faithful!** We have life in His name!

On this Ascension Sunday we are blessed in our faith. Never again need we let our hearts be troubled: not by the worries of this world, not by the sins that would afflict

our conscience, not by the devil's lying accusations; not by impending death or the grave. Christ our ascended Lord has prepared a place for us and will come again to receive us to Himself. Our hope is that of which we shall sing in our next hymn. **“On Christ's ascension *we* now build the hope of *our* ascension!”** (TLH 216:1). So Jesus has promised, and by His ascension we know, **so it shall be!**

**AMEN.**

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.