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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 2, 2019  
Sunday after Ascension

Scripture Lessons: Acts 1:1-11, Ephesians 1:16-23  
Hymns: 212:1-5; 213; 223; 212:7 (344)

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

Sermon Text: Luke 24: 44-53

<sup>44</sup>Then He said to them, "These *are* the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and *the* Prophets and *the* Psalms concerning Me." <sup>45</sup>And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.

<sup>46</sup>Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, <sup>47</sup>and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup>And you are witnesses of these things. <sup>49</sup>Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high."

<sup>50</sup>And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. <sup>51</sup>Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven. <sup>52</sup>And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, <sup>53</sup>and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God. Amen.

(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: Picture the scene of Jesus' Ascension --

Recently I was visiting a CLC church for victory service for a retired CLC pastor, and saw once again the painting they had on the side wall of their sanctuary depicting Jesus in the midst of His ascension. I appreciate the artist's depiction of Jesus as the clouds are receiving Him, and His hands remain outstretched in blessing with the nail prints clearly visible in Jesus' hands. The nail prints are so significant for a proper understanding of the glory of our Savior, of the glory that is His alone as our Redeemer, as well as an understanding of the wondrous nature of the blessing which Jesus as our Ascended Lord bestows upon us His Church.

The description of Jesus' ascension as well as a summary statement of what it was that preceded Jesus' ascension is presented for us by the Holy Spirit in our text. It is with joy in our hearts to the Lord that we consider --

### **THEME: The Blessings of Jesus' Ascension.**

When Jesus appeared to the disciples after His resurrection those visits were important times of instruction. One of the Lord's principal objectives was to show the disciples that in Him the -

#### **I. Scriptures Are Fulfilled.**

**Luke 24:44-45** Then He said to them, "These *are* the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and *the* Prophets and *the* Psalms concerning

Me.” <sup>45</sup> And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.

What is described in our text began right away on Easter evening as Jesus walked with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. In spite of hearing reports of Jesus’ resurrection they were confused and disappointed. They were disappointed because they were looking for the wrong kind of Messiah. They had a false image of exactly what the Christ was to accomplish. Their religious instruction had been polluted with political and ethnic nonsense. That was true for all the disciples as our Scripture lesson from Acts illustrates. During this forty day period between Jesus’ resurrection and ascension they asked Jesus; “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6)

It takes instruction from the Lord, and a very special blessing from the Lord for disciples then and now to comprehend the Scriptures. And that is exactly what Jesus was doing as He visited with them, and as He blessed them. What a blessing; “*He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.*” (v.45) With that blessing the disciples were able to see Jesus and His great lovingkindness and grace in the Old Testament Scriptures. As we review the gospel accounts of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection we read the Evangelists time and again asserting that the Scriptures were fulfilled.

For Jesus to be the Christ, for our salvation to be assured it was necessary that the words of the prophets find their fulfillment, their complete fulfillment in Jesus, our crucified and risen and exalted Lord! That assurance was given to the apostles even as Jesus blessed them.

Later, following Pentecost, we are shown the difference between an educated man reading the Scriptures and one who is blessed by the Lord with spiritual wisdom from on high. Recall how the Ethiopian Eunuch was reading from Isaiah 53 and wondered if Isaiah was writing about

himself as the suffering Servant of the Lord, or of another. With the Lord's blessing of spiritual comprehension Philip starting with those words of the Prophet Isaiah, told the Ethiopian about Jesus.

Maybe there are times when we still struggle with portions of the Old or New Testament Scriptures (I know I do) and it is then that we turn to Jesus and seek that blessing that comes to us from Him as our Ascended Lord, the blessing of the Holy Spirit opening our understanding. It is a blessing that continues to grow as long as we keep searching the Scriptures during this earthly pilgrimage.

The next blessing transmitted by our Lord in His Ascension is the assurance of

## **II. Jesus' Redemptive Mission Being Fulfilled.**

Hear again the words of our Lord: *"Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day."* (v.46)

We already considered that it all happened as it had been foretold by the prophets, but now let us consider the mission of our Lord in light of these words. It was necessary for Jesus to suffer and die as the all atoning sacrifice for sin. The disciples had struggled with that message even though Jesus had clearly and repeatedly taught them that this was what lay before Him. They struggled with the mission that had been given to Jesus by His Father in heaven.

Indeed it was a difficult mission for the Lord Jesus to fulfill, a difficult burden for Jesus bear. It was necessary for Jesus because only Jesus could bear our sins in His own body. Only Jesus, whose blood was the holy and priceless blood of the Son of God, could serve as a sufficient sacrifice to atone for the sins of the world. With great love and determination Jesus set His face for Jerusalem, where He was taken by His enemies and falsely accused of all sorts of sins and transgressions. Bearing the

guilt of the world Jesus was handed over to the Gentiles, and Pontius Pilate finally gave in to the demands of the Jews and condemned Jesus to be crucified. There upon the cross Jesus endured the curse of God for our sins, and finally was able to declare, "*It is finished,*" (John 19:30) and having said this He gave Himself over to death. Jesus, the Son of God and the Son of Man, died and was buried. But the grave could not hold Him. God the Father would not allow His Holy One to see corruption! (Psalm 16:10) Jesus was raised from the dead on the third day, according to the Scriptures. By Jesus' resurrection God the Father declared the world to be reconciled to Him. God accepted the sacrifice Jesus offered upon the cross as full payment for the sins of the world.

This is the ultimate message of Jesus' ascension into heaven! God sent His Son down to earth with a mission of redemption and salvation for a sinful mankind. The Father receiving Jesus at His right hand is a clear declaration that the Jesus' mission of redemption was successfully completed.

But the work of salvation continues. There is something that still needs to be done, and the Lord Jesus lays this out for us in our text.

### **III. Our Mission and Purpose is Defined.**

**Luke 24:47-49** "Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup>And you are witnesses of these things. <sup>49</sup>Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high."

What still needs to be done is the continued proclamation of the message of the gospel. This gospel needs to be shared. It starts with the message of repentance. In this verse of Scripture we have the message divided into two parts, first repentance and then the message of the

remission of sins. Calling people to repent of their sins was the mission of John the Baptist. He called for people to turn away from their worldly and sinful ways. John called for them to stop sinning. Time and again when different groups asked John what they should do, he made it clear that repentance included stopping the abusive and sinful behavior that is so common in this world.

So the apostles, and now Christians alive today are here to serve as such a preserving salt in this world. We identify sin as being SIN! We daren't sugar coat it. We must first identify sin in our own lives, and then as it encroaches into the lives of our brothers and sisters in Christ, and then in the world. But the Lord has not sent us to condemn the world any more than Jesus was sent into the world to condemn the world. As Jesus came that through Him the world might be saved. (John 3:17) So Jesus sends us forth with the message of the remission of sins. Jesus came to take our sins away. And Jesus did just that! And God declared us to be holy and righteous in His sight. As we proclaim the message of the Lord Jesus people are called by the Holy Spirit to believe in Jesus for the remission of their sins.

Think of it this way. One of the most difficult things a doctor has to do is tell a patient that they have an incurable cancer. So we as messengers of Christ have to tell people that sin is a cancer that will absolutely destroy one's soul and take one's life, both their temporal and eternal life. People need to know that. To fail to tell someone that is horrible, for then they will most certainly die in their sin.

But then the most wonderful moment in a doctor's life is when he can tell a patient that the cancer is gone. And you know how they state it, "Your cancer is in remission, we can't find a single trace of cancer anywhere in your body!" And that is the message Jesus has entrusted to you to share with others. We have the message of the remission of sins. We get to tell people that through faith in Jesus

they receive full and free remission of sins. God exams them for any trace of sin, and **God** in heaven above declares that they are free of any and all sin. This remission comes to us through Jesus, and Jesus' ascension declares this message to be true, and a continuing truth.

We need this to be a continuing truth because we know and confess that we daily sin much, MUCH, and that we deserve nothing but punishment. However, Jesus who has ascended to the right hand of God is there making intercession for us before the throne of God. Jesus defends us by continually reminding the Father that we are adorned in the robes of Jesus' righteousness. What a blessing! What a blessing!

If a doctor is thrilled at the news of someone's cancer being in remission, the patient is **jubilant!** So we should be **jubilant** each and every day of our lives that **we** have the remission of our sins in Jesus Christ our Lord!

This news changes lives. This truth changes hearts. But this doesn't happen by our power. It is a by the power of the Holy Spirit. We live in the age of the Holy Spirit. Next Sunday we will dwell at length on this blessing. Today let it suffice to say that the blessing of Jesus' ascension opened the door to a new era of grace and power as God works for the salvation of souls.

It all comes to us in this splendid, glorious event of Jesus' ascension into heaven. Ascension Day was actually last Thursday. Many of you perhaps forgot that it was a special day of remembrance. It is a day for us to rejoice in the grace of God our Savior and remember always the joy and blessing of salvation that has come us through our Lord Jesus Christ, our Crucified, Risen, and Ascended Lord!

**AMEN.**

"Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." Amen. (Romans15:13)