

Ascension of the Lord

May 29, 2025



PROCLAMATION POINTS

The following are some thoughts and questions to be used for a text study on the weekly lessons, or for jump-starting the imagination of the preacher and hearer in preparing for the proclamation event.

As they are gathered together and he is about to depart from them, he tells them how his kingdom is to be entered upon, and how he will accomplish its beginning through them. It shall not be by the help and advice of the officials at Jerusalem, nor with their knowledge. It shall not be with temporal force nor power, but shall be felt solely through the message and commission of the ministry with which he charges them.

—Martin Luther—

(Sermon on Ascension Day)

Acts 1:1–11

This passage in Acts gives us some information that we don't get from other places in scripture. For one, it is the only place that indicates the specific number of days that Jesus walked the earth after being raised from the dead. Second, it tells us the way in which Christ will return at the *parousia* (last day). The angels told the disciples who watched him ascend into heaven that Jesus would return some day in the same manner in which he left. He went up to heaven in the clouds, and he will return in his glory via the clouds. This information gives us the assurance that we won't miss it. We need not worry that others will know about it, like in the "Left Behind" series of books, and others will be unaware. Everyone, everywhere will know when Jesus returns. It will be that obvious to all people.

- *How does this passage help you to clarify in your mind what the return of Christ will be like? What misunderstandings about his return have you heard or perhaps held onto unknowingly?*

Psalms 47

It's easy to see why those who put together the lectionary, paired this psalm with the other ascension texts. In the context of Israel, this psalm was used to praise God for his victory over Israel's enemies.

- *Compare how Luke speaks of the Lord's ascension forty days after the resurrection, and how the psalmist speaks of God's movement between heaven and earth. What is the same? What is different?*

Ephesians 1:15–23

When a person decides to buy a house, she negotiates the price with a real estate agent and put down a sum of money called "earnest money." This payment is a sign of the person's commitment to the process, that they will not back out of the deal. If they decide to back out, they lose the earnest money and the covenant is broken.

Christ's death and resurrection are the "earnest payment" for our future resurrection from the dead. This is the source of our hope, as Paul reminds the Christians in Ephesus. God did not back out on his promise to save us from sin, death, and the devil. We get to hold him to his promise in this life, trusting that we will be with him in death, and then in eternity.

- *How does this earnest payment affect the way you live your life in the here and now?*

St. Paul speaks to the Ephesian Christians about being "enlightened" so they may know the hope to which they have been called. The knowledge they will gain due to the Spirit's enlightenment is an understanding of the inheritance they share with all the saints, the greatness of God's power, and the place of Christ in the heavenly realms.

- *How does our hope rest in our understanding of what Christ has done, as well as where he now resides?*
- *Why is "hope" such an important aspect of the faith? For those who do not have hope, what characterizes their attitude about life?*

Luke 24:44–53

Just as God opened the mind of Lydia in the Acts lesson for today, so the Lord opened the minds of the disciples to be able to comprehend the words of Jesus as he recalled the instruction he had given them while he was still with them. Now the disciples were commissioned to be witnesses to the ends of the earth, beginning in Jerusalem, the holy city. This commissioning will be the way that Christ formally establishes his kingdom on earth – through the Church.

- *What is the purpose of the Church in the world? In what ways do we often mistake the institution of the Church for the "people" of God who are on a mission to share Christ?*

Jesus is very clear about the mission at hand: to proclaim repentance and forgiveness to all who will listen. It seems so simple! And yet, these are the words that human beings long to hear. These are the words of new life and freedom.

- *How does an open mind help sinners to understand the need for repentance?*
- *How does forgiveness follow from a repentant heart? Why is that necessary?*

Jesus told his disciples that he was sending the "promise" of his father (Luke 24:49). This promise is a gift of the Holy Spirit. (See Joel 2:28–32) This promised Spirit will further open the minds and hearts of the disciples and be the power to bring others to faith in Christ.

- *What gifts did the Spirit give to the disciples so that the message would be effective? Could they have done the work needed on their own? Why or why not?*
- *What gifts has the Spirit given to you and your church that enable you to accomplish the mission?*