



***At Home Worship for Faith and Hope***

***Seventh Sunday of Easter***

May 16, 2021

*“After saying this, he was taken up into a cloud while they were watching, and they could no longer see him. As they strained to see him rising into heaven, two white-robed men suddenly stood among them. “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why are you standing here staring into heaven? Jesus has been taken from you into heaven, but someday he will return from heaven in the same way you saw him go!” Acts 1:9-11 (NLT)*

\*Call to Worship

*You have heard what was written about Jesus in Scripture—  
**how he would suffer and die**  
**and then rise from the dead on the third day;**  
how the same power that raised Jesus from the dead  
raised Him to heaven and seated Him at the right hand of God,  
where he now lives to intercede on our behalf.  
**So let us come before God with confidence,**  
**through the loving intercession of our risen Lord,**  
**Jesus Christ!***

\*Opening Prayer

*Almighty God, as we prepare to worship today, we ask that you will stretch our imaginations to sense the majesty and mystery of your ascension. Help us perceive how Jesus' presence in heaven can give us confidence in our praying and hope for the future. In Jesus, Name. Amen.*

Share How You Can Present Your Offering to God

Make your offering personal...through a donation or an act of service...bring to God an offering of praise and gratitude!

Sing the Doxology Together

*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; praise him, all creatures here below; praise him above, ye heavenly host; praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.*

A Prayer of Confession for Ascension Sunday

*Almighty God,  
we confess that we have our eyes set in the clouds  
instead of on the earth You have given us.  
We desire heavenly treasure  
but we keep believing that worldly means will help us attain it.  
Forgive us for our short sightedness.  
Draw us away from the temptations  
to seek worldly power and measures of success,  
and call us to the down-to-earth message of Your love,  
to care for the needs of those around us,  
especially the oppressed and marginalized.  
You have called us through scripture  
to care for the widows and orphans among us;  
help us to see all those who are left out by society and are in need.  
Help us to break down the dividing walls that we have placed,  
so that we may truly be one,  
as You and Christ are one.  
For it is in Christ's name we pray. Amen.*

## The Lord's Prayer

*Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.*

God's Word

Luke 24:50-53 (NLT)

(see below)

*The Word of God for the people of God...Thanks be to God!*

Message

***"Living an Ascension-Shaped Life"***

Pastor Clark

Luke 24:50-53 (NLT)

*"Then Jesus led them to Bethany, and lifting his hands to heaven, he blessed them. While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up to heaven. So they worshiped him and then returned to Jerusalem filled with great joy. And they spent all of their time in the Temple, praising God."*

### ***Introduction***

(I am indebted to Stephen Seamands in his book ***The Unseen Real*** and Kevin Miller in his ***Mission Accomplished*** on the Ascension for key ideas for today's message.)

Oswald Chambers, in his book ***Prayer: A Holy Occupation***, once posed this provocative thought:

*"Suppose Jesus suddenly lifted the veil from our eyes and let you see angels ministering to us, His own presence with us, the Holy Spirit in us, and the Father around us—how amazing that would be! We have, however, lived in the muddle of things instead of in the middle of things. Faith gets us into the middle of things, which is God and God's purpose."*

We have reduced life to what we can experience through our senses and as a result we live in the muddle of things: our failures, our fragile faith, frustrating circumstances, external pressures and opposition, internal fears, the constant stress of the daily grind, our preoccupation with the cares of this world. All of those combine to challenge and deplete our faith.

What if I told you there was a way out of the muddle of things and into the middle of things? Would you be inclined to search and discover and explore? Well, I am here today to announce that there is indeed a way...a way Jesus opened to us. With our worship centered around the theme of Jesus' Ascension it isn't hard to detect where I am heading with this. Yet by discovering and embracing Jesus' Ascension, we have stumbled upon the secret to unlocking all those things that Oswald Chambers mentioned!

Interestingly, out of the key movements of Jesus' life—birth/incarnation, life and ministry, suffering and death, and resurrection, and ascension—it is Jesus' ascension that is almost totally ignored in current church life. Since we don't see it as relevant to our lives, we have basically muted it out of our lives...our Christian lives. You can find a card at Hallmark for Christmas, baptisms, even Holy Week or Good Friday, and certainly Easter, but you will never find an Ascension Day card! One good thing,

though, it that **Ascension Day is really the perfect church holiday because the world can't steal it.** The culture around us has quite ruined Christmas and Easter, but it cannot steal the Ascension!

Well, I hope you leave here today with the heightened awareness that Jesus' ascension is central to the Christian faith—to your Christian life—and will help rescue you from the muddle of things and deliver you to the middle of things. Timothy Keller tells us that the Ascension activates all the other gifts Jesus gives to us in His life, death, and resurrection. I was surprised when I encountered a most unique word he used to describe this. Keller declared that Jesus' ascension "**detonates**" all the other gifts Jesus provided for us...causes them to become active and alive. What a graphic word picture!

I want to show today how Jesus' ascension detonates and activates these other gifts. I want us to begin to live ascension-shaped lives. Along the way we will search passages throughout the Old and New Testaments that will illuminate and inspire your hearts. The Ascension was obviously on God's mind and heart, central to His plans.

### **#1 Ignites Our Worship of Our Now and Forever King**

And when Jesus Christ accomplished his mission of love and redemption, when he went through the cloud and landed on heaven's shores, **all of heaven broke out in celebration! He had done it! Jesus had just completed the most dangerous and most important mission of all time.** The prophet Daniel was given a spiritual glimpse into that moment. [Daniel 7:13-14](#) says,

*I saw in the night visions,  
and behold, with the clouds of heaven  
there came one like a son of man,  
and he came to the Ancient of Days  
and was presented before him.  
And to him was given dominion  
and glory and a kingdom,  
that all peoples, nations, and languages  
should serve him;  
his dominion is an everlasting dominion,  
which shall not pass away,  
and his kingdom is one  
that shall not be destroyed.*

And so today we celebrate the triumphal return of Jesus Christ to heaven, his enthronement at the right hand of God, and the celebration that his mission was successfully accomplished. Our worship is part of that celebration!

Jesus is King! Not just one day out in the future when He returns. Jesus is King of All now! Here are a few Scriptures that resound with that reality:

*"Open up, ancient gates! Open up, ancient doors, and let the King of glory enter. °Who is the King of glory? The Lord, strong and mighty; the Lord, invincible in battle. °Open up, ancient gates! Open up, ancient doors, and let the King of glory enter. °Who is the King of glory? The Lord of Heaven's armies—he is the King of glory." Psalm 24:7-10*

*This is the same mighty power <sup>20</sup>that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms. <sup>21</sup>Now he is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else—not only in this world but also in the world to come. <sup>22</sup>God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made him head over all things for the benefit of the church. <sup>23</sup>And the church is his body; it is made full and complete by Christ, who fills all things everywhere with himself.*

Ephesians 1:20-23

In an interview shortly before his death, **Dallas Willard**, a philosophy professor who wrote widely on spiritual formation in the church, was asked about the challenges facing the church. Dr. Willard spent much of his life addressing the problem of why the church isn't raising up more people who look and act like Jesus. At the end of that two-hour interview, Willard was asked this pointed question: **"When you look at how off track the church is, do you ever just throw up your hands in despair?"**

Willard smiled and said, **"Never."** **"But how can you not?"** the interviewer asked. **"Because,"** he said, **"I know Christ is the head of his church and he knows what he's doing."**

## **#2 Encourages Us that We Have Power Over Sin, Death, and the Evil**

Kevin Miller reminds us that the first benefit that we have as a result of Christ's ascension is power over sin, death, and the devil. Without the mission of Jesus Christ, there is not a lot of hope for you when **temptation** comes your way. You may be a person of unusual willpower, but even you don't have much hope.

But Jesus has come and has shown us that it is possible to be tempted and not give in. He was hated, but he didn't retaliate. Instead, he responded to his enemies in love and truth. He was tempted in every way as we are, yet he overcame sin. He accomplished his mission to defeat sin, and he has given us the power of God. His power resides within us so that we can overcome sin. We share Christ's power, and this is a new reality because of Christ's successful mission.

**What about death?** People are freaked out by death; they try not to think about it. It's a terror to human existence. But Jesus has come and said, ***I am the Resurrection and the Life.*** When I broke out of death, I trampled down death. My mission is accomplished. I have overcome death; you don't need to fear it. ***Death is not the period at the end of a sentence, it's a comma.***

**What about the devil?** Have you ever experienced the palpable presence of evil in a situation or in a person? You do not need to live in fear of that. Jesus stared down the devil in the wilderness. He overcame him at every turn and he ultimately threw him down and broke his back at the Cross and at the Resurrection. Jesus has ascended in triumph. His mission is accomplished, and he shares his power with you and me. [1 John 4:4](#) is correct: ***"He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world."*** You don't need to fear the devil.

## **#3 Inspires the Hope that We Are Destined for Glory**

As a result of Christ's ascension, our lowly bodies are now destined for glory. Everyone I know is disappointed with his or her body to some extent. Some of us want to lose some weight. Some people want a smaller nose or more hair. Others are fighting illnesses.

Right now, your body is weak, but one day, like the ascended Christ, it will be strong. Right now, your body is disappointing, but someday it will be dynamic. Right now, your body is passing away, but in heaven, like the ascended Christ, it will live forever.

*But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed steadily into heaven and saw the glory of God, and he saw Jesus standing in the place of honor at God's right hand. "And he told them, "Look, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing in the place of honor at God's right hand!" Act 7:55-56*

Because Jesus is ascended, humanity has been exalted and brought into the life of God. Jesus, as glorified humanity, is exalted in God's presence. This is a humanity we share with Jesus. Because of what Jesus' ascension unleashed, we now have the hope that we too have a place in God's presence.

#### **#4 Assures We Have Access to Jesus Anytime**

Cell phone companies like to brag about how great their coverage is, don't they? They tend to exaggerate how good their coverage really is. When Jesus was on earth, he had a tightly defined geographical mission. He said he was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. He was called the King of the Jews, and his mission was tightly and geographically focused on the one tiny Roman province of Judea. If you were in Italy, too bad. Jesus' coverage was nothing compared to Verizon. But now, through the Ascension, Jesus has risen up into heaven, and his glory and power extends over the whole world. So, you can be in Chicago and call on the name of Jesus. You can be in Nigeria and call on his power. Wherever you are—in the emergency room, on an airplane, or laid up at night with a sick child—Jesus is there for you.

Even though you forget to pray to him, he prays for you. You might think, *"What is Jesus doing in heaven? Down here he was healing, teaching, and doing miracles. What is he doing up there?"* The Bible says he continually intercedes for us. He is praying for you and for me. You might also be thinking, *"This situation is too big for me. I wish somebody would pray for me."* You've got it! Whatever your need is, Jesus is praying for you.

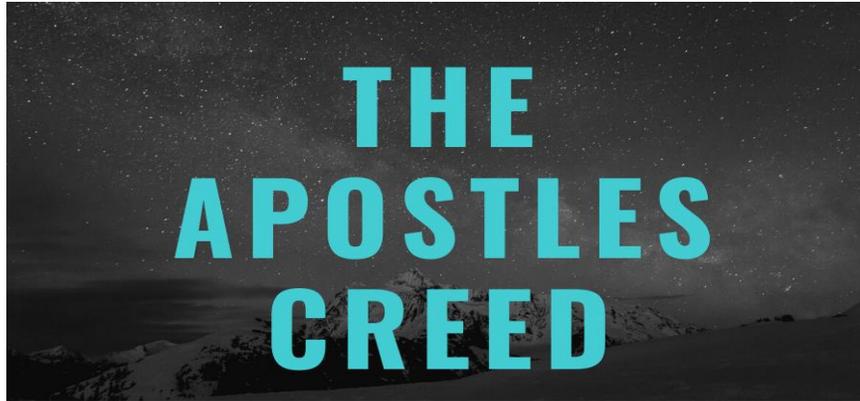
*Who then will condemn us? No one—for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and he is sitting in the place of honor at God's right hand, pleading for us. Romans 8:34*

*Therefore, he is able, once and forever, to save those who come to God through him. He lives forever to intercede with God on their behalf. Hebrews 7:25*

When **Kevin Miller** and his wife were going through a season when their son's life was spiraling out of control, two of the people who helped them the most were friends and spiritual mentor **Sandy Green and his wife Gigi**. They've had a son who has gone through similar things. The Millers didn't even have to explain much because they've been there; they knew what our situation was like. Gigi said something wonderful to Kevin and his wife one day: *"When we were going through all this stuff with our son, there were moments when we were so heartsick that I couldn't pray. Friends prayed for our son when I couldn't. Right now, there may be moments when you cannot pray for your son, but I am praying for you."* They were tremendously comforted by what she said.

And right now, before the very throne of God, **you have someone—you have an Advocate—who knows what you are going through and he's interceding for you.** Anytime, anywhere you have access to Jesus, and he is praying for you. That's amazing.





# THE APOSTLES CREED

*I believe in God, the Father Almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.*

*I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and will come again to judge the living and the dead.*

*I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic church,*

*the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.*

### **All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name**

1. All hail the power of Jesus' name!

Let angels prostrate fall,  
let angels prostrate fall;  
bring forth the royal diadem,  
and crown him, crown him,  
crown him, crown him,  
and crown him Lord of all.

2. Ye chosen seed of Israel's race,  
ye ransomed from the fall,  
ye ransomed from the fall,  
hail him who saves you by his grace,  
and crown him, crown him,  
crown him, crown him,  
and crown him Lord of all.

3. Sinners, whose love can ne'er forget  
the wormwood and the gall,  
the wormwood and the gall,  
go spread your trophies at his feet,  
and crown him, crown him,  
crown him, crown him,  
and crown him Lord of all.

4. Let every kindred, every tribe  
on this terrestrial ball,

on this terrestrial ball,  
to him all majesty ascribe,  
and crown him, crown him,  
crown him, crown him,  
and crown him Lord of all.

5. Crown him, ye martyrs of your God,  
who from his altar call,  
who from his altar call;  
extol the Stem of Jesse's Rod,  
and crown him, crown him,  
crown him, crown him,  
and crown him Lord of all.

6. O that with yonder sacred throng  
we at his feet may fall,  
we at his feet may fall!  
We'll join the everlasting song,  
and crown him, crown him,  
crown him, crown him,  
and crown him Lord of all.