

**SERMON TEXT FOR THE ASCENSION Observed 2018**

Luke 24: 44-53.

**HYMNS: 107, 169, 114, 221, 295, 113.**

**INTROIT: Psalm 47:1-9**

**P** Clap your hands, all peoples! Shout to God with loud songs of joy!

**C** **For the Lord, the Most High, is to be feared, a great king over all the earth.**

**P** He subdued peoples under us, and nations under our feet.

**C** **He chose our heritage for us, the pride of Jacob whom he loves.**

**P** God has gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet.

**C** **Sing praises to God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises!**

**P** For God is the King of all the earth; sing praises with a psalm!

**C** **God reigns over the nations; God sits on his holy throne.**

**P** The princes of the peoples gather as the people of the God of Abraham.

**All:** **For the shields of the earth belong to God; he is highly exalted!**

**COLLECT:** Almighty God, as Your only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, ascended into the Heavens, so may we also ascend in heart and mind and continually dwell there with Him, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

**READINGS:**

**1<sup>st</sup>: Acts 1 : 1-11.**

**Epistle: Eph 1:15-23.**

**Gospel: Luke 24 : 44-53.**

The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God, and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, AMEN.

The text for our sermon for today Ascension day observed is written in the book of St, Luke 24 : 44-53. which was read in the gospel reading before.

**44 He told them, "These are the very words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, namely, that everything written about Me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled."**

**45 Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. 46 He told them, "This is what Scripture has said: 'The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day; 47 and on the basis of His name, repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.'**

**48 You will testify to these things.**

**49 "I am sending you what My Father has promised. Wait here in the city until you are armed with power from above!"**

**50 He led them out to where Bethany lay ahead of them. Then He raised His hands and blessed them.**

**51 While He was blessing them, He left them, and was taken up to heaven.**

**52 They knelt in worship of Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. 53 They stayed continually at the temple, praising God.**

**[44] Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled."**

Lord God heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth Your Word is truth. **AMEN**  
Dear friends in Christ.

In lots of churches around the world they observe a simple tradition today after the reading of the gospel. As they hear how Jesus blessed His disciples as He was taken up into heaven, they extinguish the Christ candle, - a tradition we don't observe here. They light the candle for services through the Easter season, and on today they would extinguish it for the rest of the year to remind them that our Lord has ascended into heaven to bless us all from there.

Now as we know good byes are always hard when you love the person who's going away. We've all shed tears when we've said farewell to someone we won't be seeing for a while. I remember when our family left England so many years ago my mother was a mess for days after saying good bye to her mother

and sisters not knowing if she would see them again. Being an 11 year old macho guy, I was surprised that as we left as I sat in the train carriage, I started to cry too. I hadn't felt such strong feelings for anyone since childhood except for the time I married my wife, and at the birth of my children.

I was surprised by my emotions once again at another goodbye. My mother had been ill for a few years and one day on a shopping day she fell out of the taxi and broke her arm and her hip. She died under anaesthetic during her operation we were told to expect this could happen, so we were sort of prepared. I was doing okay, realizing that God had taken my mother to heaven. But several days later when we arrived at the funeral parlour for the visitation and I saw my mother's lifeless body in the casket, I was overcome with tears. "Why am I crying?" I said to myself. "I'm really happy for her. God has rescued her from terrible illness and infirmity." Goodbyes can bring emotional surprises.

It was surprising for the disciples as well when Jesus' last days on earth came. Yes, he told them ahead of time that He was going to be delivered into the hands of rulers, crucified, die, and rise on the third day. But when it happened they were surprised and afraid. Emotions got the best of them, and even the brave ones, like Peter, ran away and denied knowing the Lord.

When they saw Him alive, and several appearances are noted in the holy gospels, their faith was restored. The book of Acts says "**After His suffering, Jesus also showed these men, through many convincing proofs, that He was alive. He was seen by them during a period of forty days, and spoke about the kingdom of God.**" (Acts 1:3) One time He appeared to more than five hundred people. During these meetings they put their trust in Him again and He forgave their doubts and unbelief. In the last chapter of Matthew it says when the disciples got to the mountain and saw Jesus, they worshiped Him, but some still doubted that He was God.

Even on the day He ascended to heaven, Jesus was still teaching His followers. Our text says "**Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.**" He gave them the ability to understand the Bible, that what Moses and the prophets wrote about the Messiah in the Old Testament times had now come, and been fulfilled by Jesus in His work on earth. Nothing more needed to be accomplished. Salvation for the world was complete. From then on, any person who asked God for forgiveness in the name of Jesus would get it. Nothing more can be added to what Jesus had done.

Jesus' work was finished, but the disciples work was just about to begin. They were to wait in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit came to them. Then they were called upon to preach the message of repentance and forgiveness in His name to all nations.

In Reformation times the people were quick to welcome the theology of Luther and the other reformers. For the past 500 years the Lutherans have been very faithful to the gospel that we are saved by God's grace alone that comes to us by faith in Jesus, and not from our good works.

But in recent years a dark clouds have fallen over the Lutheran Church. Although allot of the people that are baptized as Lutherans when they are born, - fewer and fewer enter the church again until they are buried. The church and the world are so enmeshed that the church is rethinking their stance on things and practice some unbiblical principles just so they can get people in the door.

In 2003 the state of Sweden proclaimed that no pastor will be ordained in the Swedish Lutheran church who does not agree to work with women pastors and unrepentant homosexual pastors. The church blesses same sex marriages because the state says it has to. At least here in Australia we have the religious freedom to still refuse according to our doctrinal statements, but I wonder how long it'll be before that becomes law here too. Some pastors have been arrested for preaching that homosexuals must repent of this sin. You see, this happens when we let go of the clear teaching of the Word of God and let the ideas of mankind cloud our vision. We get carried away from the truth, and this is tragic for the people who want to come to God because they are not moved to repent of their sins, but to hold on to their sins and think that God will bless them in their rebellion against His will for them. They do not teach or believe in a Jesus as a Saviour, but as enabler instead!.

Long ago when the church of Sweden was faithful to the Word of God, missionaries were sent out. Some of them went to Africa and preached there. In the country of Kenya the word took root and grew.

There is another man Bishop Walter Obare of Kenya. Over the past hundred years, the word of God brought to his country by the Swedish Lutheran missionaries brought many souls to Jesus. So when the mother church of Sweden would not ordain new pastors who hold the biblical teaching of the office of the ministry and proper use of sexuality, Walter Obare answered the call of God's people to come and help. Six faithful pastors were ordained, and three bishops were consecrated in Sweden. This was a bold but faithful move, so that the true preaching of Christ's word can continue.

At one time the word of God went forth from Europe to other countries. Now Africa is sending missionaries to re-evangelize Europe.

Christ's commission to His disciples continues today. We must continue to repent of our sin and believe the good news that Jesus forgives and restores us to God the Father. There is no area of our life that we can allow to be off limits to God's word. What we think in our personal life, friendships, finances, and sexuality are all touched by the word that gives us life. God's word cannot be altered in our pulpits and classrooms to make it more appealing. We much preach it just as we receive it from the printed page.

We honour Christ when we do two things: First, we open our hearts to what God's Word wants to accomplish in us. Jesus has ascended to heaven, but He's not far, far away from us. He sends us the Holy Spirit through the church's preaching and sacraments. We ask Jesus to open our minds to understand the holy Scriptures as He did for the first disciples. In them we find the meaning we need to guide our lives as servants of God.

Second, we commit ourselves to the ministry of the Gospel. It's God's intention that men should be sent to preach the good news to people of all nations, beginning here where we live. This year it will be my intent to lead us in a biblical study on the Confessions of our Lutheran Church in the Concordia which a number of you already have copies of. We should do all we can to support this challenge from God through our participation, our prayers, and encouragement.

Not only that, but it is vital that we support the our seminary committee and the synod of the AELC that they can assist in the education our future pastors. We owe them much because our children are depending upon them for faithful pastors in the future.

At the ascension of Jesus the church said goodbye to face to face contact with Jesus. Now, through the preaching and sacraments He instituted, the Holy Spirit brings Christ to us in means that are hidden, yet powerful. We are to use this time God has given us to prepare for Jesus' return. There are so many souls to be reached, and so little time. God, give us the strength, the will, and the power to dedicate ourselves to our saving mission.

When you see the altar, remember that not only does Jesus come to us here in His Body and Blood but He is ascended to heaven, where as our heavenly high priest brings our prayers to the Father, and rules over His church with grace and forgiveness. **Amen.**

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

**Amen.**

**3rd Hymn: 114,**

## Prayer of the Church Ascension Day 2018

P Let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.

*Brief Silence*

P Father of Glory, Your Son ascended into Your presence amidst the clouds, and now He reigns over the nations and sits on His holy throne as our victorious Saviour over sin, death, and the devil. Increase in our patient trust as we continue to wait for the fullness of Your glory to be revealed when He returns again in clouds of glory and inaugurates a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. Lord, in Your mercy,

**C hear our prayer.**

P Eternal God, Your Son ascended to sit at Your right hand and rule over all things for the sake of His church. Help us not to doubt His care and concern for our lives. By Your good gifts and Spirit, strengthen us to trust that Jesus lives to silence our fears and to wipe away our tears by His comforting word of forgiveness. Lord, in Your mercy,

**C hear our prayer.**

P Give boldness and confidence, O God, to Your people as they share Christ's steadfast love with the unbelieving and unchurched whom you place in their lives. Send Your Holy Spirit as they talk about Jesus and demonstrate Jesus' compassion through their deeds. Lord, in Your mercy,

**C hear our prayer.**

P Highly exalted are You, O Lord. By Your powerful Word of promise You are present at Your table in the humble elements of bread and wine. In, with and under this bread and wine, You give us Your body and Your blood, as You Yourself declare. Be with us and our confirmation students, Prepare their mouths and hearts to receive You, ever trusting and more firmly believing that You, O Christ, feed and nourish us with everlasting life. Lord, in Your mercy,

**C hear our prayer.**

P Dear Lord we pray for our pastors and their families, that You would give them strength in the faith to continue proclaiming Your words of Your salvation until You come to take us to be with You in heaven, Give honour and favour to all mothers, that we may love those whom You have used to bring us into this world and give us life. We thank You that, through the pain of childbirth and in sacrificing their time and energy, and sometimes their very lives, they have done a good work so that we might have life in Christ. Lord, in Your mercy.

**C Hear our prayer.**

P Heavenly Father, Your Son came from heaven to enact Your plan for our salvation. Perfectly completing this plan to the point of death and burial, He was raised and ascended to You as our Mighty Lord to sit above all rule and authority and power and dominion. Rejoicing in His victorious resurrection from the dead, we draw strength from His ascension before You, where He ever stands for us as our own High Priest. Gather us together from the ends of the earth to celebrate with the angels and archangels and all the faithful at the marriage feast of the Lamb in His kingdom, which has no end. Graciously receive our prayers, deliver and preserve us. To You alone we give all glory, honour, and worship, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**C Amen.**

**4th Hymn : 221,**