

May 5th, 2013 Ascension Sunday

Introduction to the Day

In today's gospel the risen Christ ascends into heaven and his followers are assured that the Spirit will empower them to be witnesses throughout the earth. The disciples were told to not gaze up into heaven to look for Jesus; we find his presence among us as we proclaim the word and share the Easter feast. We too long for the Spirit to enliven our faith and invigorate our mission.

After a moment of silent meditation to prepare ourselves for worship, we will begin the liturgy.

Prayers of the People

Rejoicing with all the witnesses of the resurrection, let us pray in confidence for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

A brief silence.

Open our minds to the scriptures, filling your church with understanding and hope. Fill our mouths with your praise and the proclamation of the gospel. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Restore the glory of creation, healing the earth where we have caused destruction. Grant favorable weather, that spring planting may result in abundant harvest. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Enlighten the hearts of the leaders of nations, inspiring them in your ways of peace and justice. Stop oppression and bring an end to war. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Comfort and strengthen those who are bowed down in suffering, bringing healing and wholeness. Move us to compassion and make us instruments of your love. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Strengthen the witness of this congregation, filling us with songs of praise and hope. Send us into the world to reveal your grace by our lives. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Arouse in us the joy of everlasting life, comforting us as we mourn. Inspire us to give

thanks when we remember the gifts of the faithful. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

In resurrection hope we commend to you all for whom we pray, trusting in the promise of new life; through Jesus Christ, our risen Savior.

Amen.

Lector: Please read the introduction, then the citation (i.e. "The First Reading is from the.... chapter of ..." - then read the text.)

FIRST READING – *Before he is lifted into heaven, Jesus promises that the missionary work of the disciples will spread out from Jerusalem to all the world. His words provide an outline of the book of Acts.*

Acts 1:1–11

In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning until the day when he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. After his suffering he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. While staying with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. "This," he said, "is what you have heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" He replied, "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. They said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM Psalm 47

Clap your hands, all you peoples;
shout to God with a joyful sound.

For the LORD Most High is to be feared:

a great king over all the earth,
who subdues the peoples under us,
and the nations under our feet;
who chooses our inheritance for us,
the pride of Jacob, whom God loves.
God has gone up with a shout,
the LORD with the sound of the ram's horn.

Sing praises to God, sing praises;
sing praises to our king, sing praises.

For God is king of all the earth;
sing praises with a song.

God reigns over the nations;
God is enthroned on high.

The nobles of the peoples have gathered as the people
of the God of Abraham.

The rulers of the earth belong to God, who is highly exalted.

SECOND READING – *The risen and exalted Christ reigns over the entire universe. The author of Ephesians prays that we would be given the wisdom to comprehend this and display it through love toward others.*

Ephesians 1:15–23

I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL READING – *On the day of his ascension, Jesus leaves his disciples with a commission, a blessing, and a promise of the Holy Spirit.*

Luke 24:44–53

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, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and they were continually in the temple blessing God.

Gospel of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.