

are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist..." (Colossians 1:16-17).

And the "all" that is subject to Christ includes the powers of darkness. The devil and his demonic hosts, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience — he and all his angels and all his wicked servants among mankind are subject to Jesus who is at the right hand of the Father.

If then nothing happens except by Jesus' providential guidance and His all-pervasive direction, how do we explain the horrors of violence, war, and countless other horrible atrocities, tragedies, and maladies on planet Earth — including the current international scourge of COVID-19 which may claim the lives even of Christian believers? How do we reconcile all this with the gracious providential care of a loving God and Savior?

One Bible-based answer is God does not condone these things, but He does permit them. In the process though He sees to it that none of His elect among the victims are lost forever, for "all things work together for good to them that love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28).

Thus for comfort and strength in every circumstance we turn to our loving Savior on heaven's high throne, knowing "He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses" (Matthew 8:17).

*Alleluia! Not as orphans Are we left in sorrow now;
Alleluia! He is near us; Faith believes, nor questions how.
Though the cloud from sight received Him
When the forty days were o'er,
Never shall we lose his promise: "I am with you evermore!"*

(Worship Supplement 2000, 738:3)

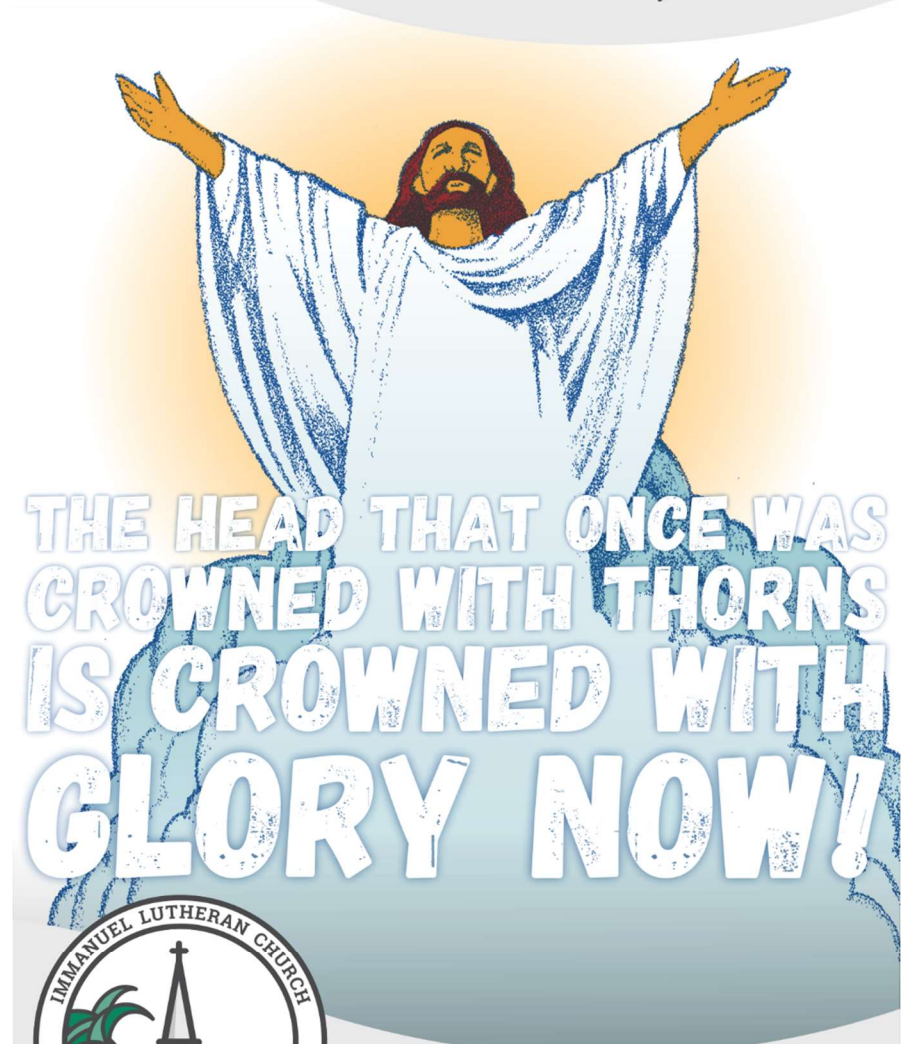
May 24, 2020

Ascension

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PRE-SERVICE MEDITATION

Ps. 110

¹ "The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool." ² The LORD sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter. Rule in the midst of your enemies! ³ Your people will offer themselves freely on the day of your power, in holy garments; from the womb of the morning, the dew of your youth will be yours. ⁴ The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, "You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." ⁵ The Lord is at your right hand; he will shatter kings on the day of his wrath. ⁶ He will execute judgment among the nations, filling them with corpses; he will shatter chiefs over the wide earth. ⁷ He will drink from the brook by the way; therefore he will lift up his head.

✠ Order of Divine Worship ✠

OPENING PRAYER

HYMN: TLH #212:1,4,7 "A Hymn of Glory Let Us Sing"

- P** In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
C Amen.

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION:

We come before God recognizing that we are sinful and daily need His forgiveness.

- P** We have come into the presence of God, who created us to love and serve Him as His dear children. But we have disobeyed Him and deserve only His wrath and punishment. Therefore, let us confess our sins to Him and plead for His mercy.
- C Merciful Father in heaven, I am altogether sinful from conception. In countless ways I have sinned against You and do not deserve to be called Your child. But trusting in Jesus, my Savior, I pray: Have mercy on me according to Your unfailing love. Cleanse me from my sin and take away my guilt.**
- P** God, our heavenly Father, has forgiven all your sins. By the perfect life and innocent death of our Lord Jesus Christ, He has removed your guilt forever. You are His own dear child. May God give you strength to live according to His will!
- C Amen!**

would be jaw-dropping to say the least. I don't blame or mock the disciples who stood gazing up into the heavens where Jesus had just disappeared from sight. But like a child in front of a TV, it's no wonder the two angels had to appear in their line of sight and say, "**Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.**" The disciples were "caught watching the paint dry" so to speak. Jesus had just given them the command to get out into the world and share His "**word of reconciliation**" (**2 Corinthians 5:18-21**), beginning in Jerusalem.

It's easy for us to be caught up with the things of this world. It's easy to "space out" and forget that we are here to keep busy in the work of our risen Savior's kingdom by sharing His message of repentance and forgiveness with all people! The Apostle Paul encourages, "**But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry**" (**2 Timothy 4:5**).

1 Peter 3:22 Jesus Christ ... has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him.

Our Ascended Lord Has Authority Over Powers

This Scripture makes clear reference to "powers" which are subject to Jesus Christ as He is seated at the right hand of God.

The unbelieving world likes to speak about "acts of God" — the ways a supreme being appears to operate in the vastness and minuteness of this incredibly large universe. On our part, we believers take comfort knowing such "acts" are all in Jesus' hands. Yes, all! All atomic, laser, and quasar technology — life in all its forms — operates under the control of Christ, as the apostle Paul writes: "By Him all things were created that are in heaven and that

OFFERTORY

WS p.16

In this prayer we OFFER God our hearts, asking Him for that best of all gifts, the Holy Spirit.

- C** *♩* Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Your presence. Take not Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation. Uphold with Your Spirit free.

HYMN: TLH #216

"On Christ's Ascension I Now Build"

PRAYER, LORD'S PRAYER, and BENEDICTION

- P** The LORD bless you and keep you; The LORD make His face shine upon you and be gracious unto you; The LORD lift up His countenance upon you and give you His peace.
- C** Amen!

HYMN: TLH #218:1,2,5,6

"See, the Conqueror Mounts..."

Acts 1:11 (NKJV) *"Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."*

Caught Watching the Paint Dry

We've all seen it happen. We've all done it ourselves. My children are good at "spacing out" while they are suppose to be cleaning their room or picking up around the house. They are easily "caught watching the paint dry" when distracted by something else. I can't be too hard on them though. I myself often struggle with distraction when working on a project around the house or on the computer. Quite literally, being "caught watching the paint dry" means not doing what you ought to be doing.

When Jesus had risen from the dead I imagine He may have encountered many blank stares and gazes. The awe, wonder, and joy of the disciples seeing their recently crucified and buried Teacher face to face speaking, teaching, and even eating with them

INTROIT

Ps. 47:1-2, 5, 8; Acts 1:11

A collection of passages that set the tone for the service.

- P** Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? Alleluia.
- C** This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw Him go into heaven. Alleluia.
- 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** God has gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet.
- C** God reigns over the nations; God sits on His holy throne.

LORD, HAVE MERCY and GLORY TO GOD

C: Lord, have mer - cy on us. Christ, have mer - cy

on us. Lord, have mer - cy on us.

C: 1 Glo - ry to God, we give You thanks and praise;
2 Lord Je - sus Christ, the Fa - ther's on - ly Son,
3 A - lone, O Christ, You on - ly are the Lord,

Of heav'n - ly joy and peace on earth we sing.
You bore for us the load of this world's sin.
At God's right hand in maj - es - ty most high:

We wor - ship You, to You our hearts we raise,
O Lamb of God, Your glo - rious vic - t'ry won,
Who, with the Spir - it wor - shiped and a - dored,

Lord God, al - might - y Fa - ther, heav'n - ly King.
Re - ceive our prayer, grant us Your peace with - in.
With all the heav'n - ly host we glo - ri - fy.

PRAYER OF THE DAY:

P Let us pray. 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.

G Amen.

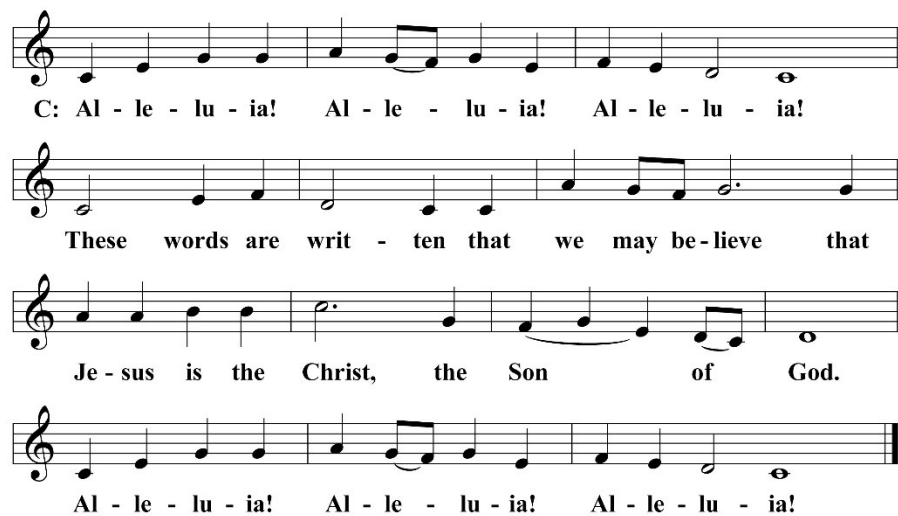
OLD TESTAMENT READING – Isaiah 57:15 For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, With him who has a contrite and humble spirit, To revive the spirit of the humble, And to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

Psalm p.30 "Why do the Nations Rage?"

EPISTLE READING – Colossians 3:1-4 If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³ For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.



P Blessed are they who hear the Word of God and keep it.


C: Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia!
These words are writ - ten that we may be-lieve that
Je - sus is the Christ, the Son of God.
Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia!

CONFESSION OF FAITH

The Apostles' Creed

The Apostles' Creed is a summary of Christian faith as taught by the Apostles.

I believe in God the Father almighty, maker 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 into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From there He will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit; the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

HYMN: WS #737

"Up Through Endless Ranks of Angels"

SERMON – Acts 1:3-11 ³ He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. ⁴ And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me; ⁵ for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." ⁶ So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" ⁷ He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." ⁹ And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰ And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, ¹¹ and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

The Famous Last Words of Ascension Day

- I. The disciples' words reveal their ignorance
- II. The Savior's words reveal their assignment
- III. The angels' words promise His future return