

Sunday, May 17, 2026

The Ascension of Our Lord (Observed)

Ephesians 1:15-23

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

My friends,

Every Sunday,

we confess together:

"He ascended into heaven."

But what does it really mean for us?

Is it just a neat little factoid

on the life of Jesus?

No.

Everything that Jesus did,

He did for you.

Jesus ascended into heaven

for you.

The disciples watched Jesus rise

into the clouds.

It looked like He was leaving.

Yet the angels' message

and St. Paul's prayer

teach the opposite.

Jesus was not leaving.

Nor was Jesus withdrawing from the world.

Jesus was filling the world.

Instead of leaving,

Jesus now fills the world

with His presence,

power,

and grace

for His people.

Ephesians 4:10 says:

*"...[Jesus] ascended far above all the heavens,
that He might fill all things." (Ephesians 4:10)*

Jesus is not absent.

He is ruling.

Jesus has taken His place

"as head over all things to the church,

which is His body,

the fullness of Him

who fills all in all." (Ephesians 1:22b–23)

The disciples asked,
"Lord,
will you at this time restore the kingdom
to Israel?" (Acts 1:7).
 That question is not wrong.
 It's just too small.
 Jesus' Ascension does more
 than restore a mere political nation.
 Jesus' Ascension restores
 all creation
 to Himself and His people.
 The Kingdom is where the King is.
 And now the King reigns over all things
 in His Church.

"God has gone up with a shout,
the Lord with the sound of a trumpet...
God reigns over the nations;
God sits on His holy throne.
The princes of the peoples gather
as the people
of the God of Abraham.
For the shields of the earth belong to God;
He is highly exalted!" (Psalm 47:5, 8–9)

I.

My friends,
 Christ's Ascension
 to the right hand of God
 is good news.
 Good news
 that we need to hear.
 Often,
 earthly powers feel overwhelming.
 Our hearts are tempted
 to fear that evil is winning.
 But the Ascension tells us
 that Christ has triumphed.
 Your Brother, Jesus,
 reigns over every power.
 Therefore,
 nothing can overrule His saving purpose
 for you.

"...[*God the Father*] raised [*Christ*]
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 one to come." (Ephesians 1:20–21).

Jesus reigns **supreme**.

Jesus is seated
 at the right hand
 of the Father.

God's right hand is not a location
 in heaven.

It's not a place
 in the sky.

God's right hand is God's omnipotent reign put
 into action.

It is the enactment
 of God's divine rule and authority.

The Psalmists sing:

"Now I know
that the Lord saves His anointed;
He will answer him
from His holy heaven
*with **the saving might***
***of His right hand.**"* (Psalm 20:6)

"The right hand of the Lord exalts,
the right hand of the Lord does valiantly!" (Psalm 118:16)

Jesus rules

*"far above all rule
and authority
and power
and dominion."*

No enemy can reach Him.
No enemy can unseat Him.
No enemy can overrule Him.
You are safe in His hand.

Politicians cannot thwart His plans for you.

Sickness, suffering, and death
cannot stop Him
from rescuing you.

Sin, demons and spiritual powers
cannot wreck His work
in you and for you.

You can sing with King David:

*"Though I walk in the midst of trouble,
You preserve my life;
You stretch out Your hand
against the wrath
of my enemies,
and Your **right hand** delivers me."* (Psalm 138:7).

The King of kings is your Brother.

Jesus reigns in His human nature
—in our human nature.

Our flesh is seated
at God's right hand.

Humanity is exalted with Christ.
Because you are baptized into Him,
your life is hidden
with Him
in glory.

You are the apple of His eye.
You are secure in Christ.

When troubles seem overwhelming,
remember your Brother Jesus
reigns over every power.

Nothing can overrule
His saving purpose for you!

II.

My friends,
 The Ascended Christ intercedes
 for
 and blesses His people.
*"...And lifting up His hands,
 He blessed them.
 While He blessed them,
 He parted from them
 and was carried up into heaven."* (Luke 24:50–51).
 Jesus ascended
 with His hands raised in blessing.
 His last visible act was blessing His disciples.
 He ascended while blessing
 —and He has never stopped.

Jesus sits before God the Father for you.
 He lifts up all His holy obedience
 as an offering
 for you.
*"For Christ has entered,
 not into holy places made with hands,
 which are copies of the true things,
 but into heaven itself,
 now to appear
 in the presence of God
on our behalf."* (Hebrews 9:24)
 There,
 He has given His shed blood
 for the forgiveness of your sins.
 At the throne of God,
 His wounds declare mercy for you.
 Christ intercedes for you,
 as your eternal,
 once-and-for-all forgiveness.
 And through Him,
 your every prayer is brought
 to God's right hand.

*"Since then we have a great high priest
 who has passed through the heavens,
 Jesus, the Son of God,
 let us hold fast our confession."* (Hebrews 4:14)

And from God's right hand,
 Christ pours the Holy Spirit upon you.
 Jesus tells the Disciples:
*"Behold,
 I am sending the promise
 of my Father
 upon you.
 But stay in the city
 until you are clothed
 with power
 from on high."* (Luke 24:49.)
 The coming of the Holy Spirit is the direct result
 of Jesus' Ascension.
 On the day of Pentecost,
 St. Peter proclaims:
*"This Jesus God raised up,
 and of that we all are witnesses.
 Being therefore exalted
 at the right hand of God,
 and having received
 from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit,
 He has poured out this
 that you yourselves are seeing
 and hearing."* (Acts 2:32–33)
 The enthroned Christ,
 having secured our Salvation
 at God's right hand,
 pours out the Holy Spirit.
 Jesus continues to bless us
 with the Holy Spirit,
 pouring Him out
 in the Word and Sacraments.

Sometimes,
 we feel weak.
 We feel alone.
 We feel unheard.
 We pray,
 and feel like no one is listening.

But your Jesus is ascended
 to the right hand of God.
 He is there on your behalf.
 And so God **hears** your prayers.
 And King Jesus blesses you.
 He intercedes for you.
 And He sends the Holy Spirit
 to strengthen
 and sustain your faith.

III.

My friends,
 The Ascended Christ fills all things
 for the benefit
 of His Church.
 From the outside,
 things may look different.
 The pews may appear a little empty.
 The bank account
 and the offering plate might look a little bare.
 The nomination
 and volunteer list may be a bit short.
 But Christ **fills** His Church.

The pews **are** filled
 with **Jesus**.
 The bank account
 and offering plate **are** filled
 with **Jesus**.
 You **are** filled
 with **Christ**.
 There is no shortage
 of **Jesus** here.
 And **Jesus** is all that is necessary.

*"And [the Father] put all things
 under [Christ's] feet
 and gave Him
 as head over all things
 to the church,
 which is His body,
 the fullness
 of Him who fills
 all in all." (Ephesians 1:22–23)*

and

*"From His fullness we have all received,
grace upon grace." (John 1:16).*

Everything is subject to Christ.

Jesus governs all history.

All circumstances.

Jesus is Lord.

And He is given

to the Church.

*"And [the Father] ...gave Him
as head over all things
to the church."*

The Church doesn't just know
about Christ.

The Church **possesses** Christ.

The Church is His Body.

The King Himself is given
to His body.

Therefore,

the Church is His fullness

—*"the fullness of Him who fills all in all."*

Christ is universally present.

Jesus is everywhere.

Jesus is at the right hand of God.

What does Psalm 139 say?

*"If I ascend to heaven,
you are there!*

*If I make my bed in Sheol,
you are there!*

*If I take the wings of the morning
and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
even there your hand shall lead me,
and your **right hand** shall hold me." (Psalm 139:8–10)*

God's right hand is everywhere.

God's right hand is particularly
where He has promised
to save and hold us.

Christ is universally present
and **particularly** present
where He promises to be.

*"Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."
(Matthew 28:20b)*

Jesus comes to you concretely.

Jesus is present for you in Holy Baptism.

Christ is present for you in Holy Absolution.

Jesus is present for you in His preached Word.

Christ is present for you in His true Body and Blood
in the Lord's Supper.

We often imagine God as distant.

Bette Midler sang,

"God is watching us from a distance."

We imagine His rule

as far away

and postponed.

But that is not

what the Ascension says.

Christ reigns now.

And He is not distant.

He is here.

His kingdom comes to you now.

His kingdom comes

to you

with the Holy Spirit.

By the Spirit's grace,

you believe Christ's holy Word.

That's the kingdom.

By the Spirit's grace,

you lead godly lives here in time

and there in eternity.

That's the kingdom.

The Spirit comes and enacts God's will.

That's the kingdom.

He breaks and hinders every evil plan

and purpose

of the devil,

the world,

and our sinful nature,

which do not want us

to hallow God's name

or let His kingdom come.

He strengthens

and keeps us firm

in His Word and faith until we die.

That is Christ's reign in you.

His kingdom come.
The valiant right hand of God.

The ascended Christ sits
on the throne.
And He comes to you here
and now.
He comes with forgiveness, life, and salvation.

*

My friends,
Christ is ascended to God's right hand.
Jesus is Lord,
and the Lord God reigns.

The King is not gone.
He is given to you.
He fills you,
and He fills His Church.

Jesus fills all things,
and in Him
all things hold together.
He fills heaven
and earth
as your intercessor
and as the King
far above every power.

St. Paul prays
that you would know the hope
to which God has called you,
the riches of His glorious inheritance,
and the immeasurable greatness
of His power
toward you who believe.

That power is the ascended Christ.
He reigns for you,
intercedes for you,
blesses you,
and is here for you.
Where Christ gives Himself,
there is His Kingdom.

His Ascension guarantees His promise:

"I am with you always."

Because Jesus is ascended
and sits at the Father's right hand,
all of God's promises are fulfilled
in Him

with a resounding "Yes"

—for you,

today and always.

And through Christ,
your 'Amen' **ascends**
to God for His glory.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord, amen.