

Acts 1:1-11

Psalm 47

Ephesians 1:15-23

Luke 24:44-53

Sermon May 12th Ascension Sunday

Jesus Affirms Our Value and Sends Us Forth to Serve

In our gospel, the resurrected Christ has appeared to his followers on more than one occasion to reassure them that the Empire has been unsuccessful in stopping the proclamation of God's kingdom come. The Empire has been unsuccessful at stopping Jesus' movement from challenging this very Empire. The Empire has been unsuccessful at preventing this movement from changing the world. This movement will continue through his followers, through the early church. And now, it is time for the resurrected Christ to ascend into heaven and be seated at the right hand of the father. And let his followers continue proclaiming this message without him by their side.

Every year we reflect on this story where the resurrected Christ says goodbye to his disciples. Before going up to heaven.

In this story, in his goodbye speech to his followers, we see that the resurrected Christ, Jesus, reassures his followers that they have learned and grown from his teachings over the past three years. Kind of like your grade twelve teacher who reassures you that you have learned and grown in your three years at whatever high school you attended, and are now ready to embark on the world, whether that is attending a university or trades school, or going directly into the work force. You are ready to embark on the world.

Likewise, the disciples have the tools and the knowledge, thus are ready to continue Jesus' movement (**Image One**). He goes on to commission them, to empower them, to go and keep proclaiming the good news, the grace and love God has to offer not only to the people in Jerusalem, but to all the people to the ends of the earth.

"Take what you have learned in high school and do something great with it." How many speeches did we hear from fellow students who were chosen to represent us at our graduation ceremonies. Telling us this message?

The resurrected Christ, Jesus, then reassures them that they will receive help in the gift of the Holy Spirit. Even though Jesus is leaving them today, his Spirit will be arriving shortly to help them continue proclaiming the good news.

Likewise, you are not alone when you get out into the world. If you go to university you will continue to have teachers, mentors, helping you a long the way. For many of you, your parents will continue to be a big part of your lives. Today is Mother's Day where

we remember the importance of having a loving and supportive parent when adjusting to young adulthood.

And of course, those friendships we value so much will continue to walk with us into the future.

Likewise, the disciples will have not only the gift of the Holy Spirit helping them, but also, each other.

Then Jesus affirms their value as children of God, and blesses them. "Some of you might be doubting, but I see greatness in all of you." Says Jesus.

For many of us who transition well in young adulthood we can say that someone whether it is God alone, or others in our life shows us that we are valued.

In a couple of weeks, I will be leaving you. I will be heading to the Eastern part of the country to serve in a community there. And like any teacher you have had before, like Jesus with his disciples, I reassure you that I have seen you learn and grow through the ministries we have participated in together over the past eight years. I too have learned and grown from these ministries over the past eight years. You are ready to keep participating in God's ministries for this community during the vacancy. As Luther says, you are called to be part of the priesthood of all believers.

And even though it will feel like you are in this alone without the presence of a pastor, you have all received the gift of the Holy Spirit who dwells in and among you. Empowering you to care for one another. Empowering you to care for this community. In my absence.

And remember, you are all valued children of God. Everyone of you in this community has value, and has gifts to share in keeping the ministries of this church going.

May God bless you in this work, and may God bless your community as you prepare yourselves for this upcoming vacancy, and for your future spiritual teacher and leader.

Let us pray, gracious God, we give thanks for our relationship over the past eight years, and for all the learning and growing we did together. May you empower us to continue to do your work during the vacancy, and may you give us wisdom and patience as we discern are next spiritual teacher and leader. **Amen.**

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