

Ascension – 2022

Picture, if you will, your Home. What does that simple word mean to you, “Home?” Maybe some picture where you are living now; maybe others look back to years ago, to a place no longer the same. For many, the perception of home probably changed somewhat in the past couple of years. Ideally, home is the place we belong, where we are free to be ourselves, where we can relax when work is done, where the things most precious to us are found. The importance of home is also seen in the suffering of those who are homeless, or far away from home – in the military, as refugees, perhaps in long-term care, or those whose homes have been destroyed by natural disaster or war or the breakup of family. Today, we remember the people of Ukraine and Uvalde, whose homes will never be the same. But even these losses can teach us that we are meant for something greater than this world with its troubles and fragile joys; we need a home that is beyond all the limitations and sorrows we know here.

The idea of home can give us insight into the Ascension of Jesus. It is not that Jesus has gone home to His Father in heaven ... as though the Ascension is simply about Jesus going from one place to another, leaving us here to return from where He came. ***Instead, this conclusion to Jesus’ earthly ministry means something very different:*** NOT that Jesus is gone from us and inaccessible, but rather that He even MORE accessible to us. ***In rising from death, Jesus has passed beyond the boundaries we know as space and time, and the Ascension means He has brought our human nature into the permanent presence of God. Now, every heart and every home, across any place and time, can be a home for the Lord.*** The Ascension is our assurance that Jesus is with us always, as He promised, until the end of time itself. The Apostles no longer saw Jesus, but that lack of a physical presence opened their eyes to the meaning of the obscure promise made at the Last Supper: ***“In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places ... I am going to prepare a place for you, and then I shall come back to take you to myself, so that where I am, you also may be.”***

Jesus promises a home, a place to belong at the end of our journey, when our life's work is done, where we will be fully ourselves, where all that is truly worthy of being precious to us will again be found, and enjoyed forever. We will know ourselves as loved, *at home with the Lord*. All the restlessness of spirit we experience in our pilgrimage of life will be over, and *we will find our rest in God*. This is why Luke tells us the Apostles returned to Jerusalem in joy – not in sadness because Jesus was now gone, but full of joy because their future was now clear, to make their way through whatever time might hold into the home with God that awaited them.

Living with the risen Jesus, every place can now be Home for the Gospel, and every home is a place where the Gospel is to be lived. We need to look up, at least spiritually, on a regular basis, lest we become discouraged by the troubles and labors of life. But we need to look at the world as it is, troubles and all, so we can bring something of God's truth and peace to that world, *precisely where it is needed as a witness to hope and mercy*. Like the Apostles, we come to spend time with the Lord and then are sent with the Gospel wherever we go ... even if it is those familiar spaces of our homes and all the routines so familiar to us.

When you get home today, take a minute to look around with new eyes at the familiar things and places and people, and know that Jesus is also present there, making every place His home in a redeemed world. *And, pick out one thing in your home that you can donate to another home in need*. That combination of looking up and looking out is a great way to honor the Ascension. Today, we do not simply remember that Jesus once WAS, but that Jesus now IS – walking with us on our way Home.