

Australian Evangelical Lutheran Church
BETHLEHEM TOOWOOMBA, OUR SAVIOUR LOWOOD, ST JOHN'S AUBIGNY,
ST PAUL'S GREENWOOD, TRINITY MARBURG, TRINITY OAKEY
9th May Ascension Day

HYMNS: 110 169 771 410 291 106

INTROIT: Psalm 47

All you peoples, clap your hands! Shout to God with the sound of joyful shouting!

For the LORD Most High is awesome; He is the great King over all the earth.

May He subjugate peoples under us, and nations under our feet.

He chooses our inheritance for us, the pride of Jacob, whom He has loved.

God has gone up with a joyful shout, the LORD, with the sound of a ram's horn.

Sing praise to God, sing praise! Sing praise to our King, sing praise!

For God is the King of all the earth; sing a psalm of praise!

God has been reigning over the nations; God has been sitting on His holy throne.

The nobles of the peoples have gathered together as the people of the God of Abraham. For the shields of the earth belong to God. He is greatly exalted.

COLLECT: 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 for ever. Amen.

READINGS

Acts 1:1-11 Jesus' ascension, promise, and commission.

Ephesians 1:15-23 Christ the supreme Lord over all things.

Luke 24:44-53 Jesus commissions and blesses the disciples.

Welcome to all worshipping with us!

Pastor Ziebell can be contacted via phone/text at 0407 583922.

Please notify pastor of anyone who is unwell or in need of a visit.

Email him at paziebell@gmail.com or to the church office at ddaelc@gmail.com.

Pastor is usually in his office Tuesday-Wednesday for anyone who would like to call in. Other days of the week are set aside for visits.

Acts 1:1-11

¹ In my former book, Theophilus, I have written about everything that Jesus began to do and to teach ² until the day when He was taken up to heaven, after He had given Instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom He had chosen.

³ After His suffering, Jesus also showed these men, through many convincing proofs, that He was alive. He was seen by them during a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. ⁴ While He was eating with them, He ordered them not to leave Jerusalem but to wait for what the Father had promised. He said, “You have heard about this from Me. ⁵ For John baptised with water, but not many days from now you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit.”

⁶ Therefore, when they met together, they asked Him, “Lord, are You at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”

⁷ He told them, “It is not for you to know the times or events that the Father has set by His own authority. ⁸ However, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria and to the farthest parts of the world.”

⁹ After He had said this and while they were watching Him, He was lifted up and a cloud took Him away from their sight. ¹⁰ While they were gazing into the sky as He was going, suddenly two men in white clothes stood beside them.

¹¹ They asked, “Men of Galilee, why are you standing and looking up into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come back in the same way as you have seen Him go into heaven.”

Ephesians 1:15-23

¹⁵ For this reason, since I heard about the faith that you have in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God’s holy people, ¹⁶ I do not stop thanking God for you as I remember you in my prayers. ¹⁷ I ask the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, to give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, that you may know Him better. ¹⁸ I pray that the eyes of your minds will be enlightened, that you may know the hope to which He has called you, how rich His glorious **inheritance** is among **His holy people**, ¹⁹ and how incomparably great His power is for us, who believe according to the working of His mighty power. ²⁰ He worked with that same power in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and **seated Him at His right hand** in the heavenly realms, ²¹ far above all rule, authority, power, dominion and every other name that can be mentioned, not

only in this age but also in the one to come. ²² **He also put everything under His feet** and appointed Him as the Head of everything, for the benefit of the church, ²³ which is His body, filled completely by Him who fills everything in every way.

Luke 24:44-53

⁴⁴ He told them, “These are the very words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, namely, that everything written about Me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.”

⁴⁵ Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ He told them, “This is what Scripture has said: ‘The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and, based on His name, repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.’ ⁴⁸ You will testify to these things.

⁴⁹ “I am sending you what My Father has promised. Wait here in the city until you are armed with power from above!”

⁵⁰ He led them out to where Bethany lay ahead of them. Then He raised His hands and blessed them. ⁵¹ While He was blessing them, He left them and was taken up to heaven.

⁵² They knelt in worship of Him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy.

⁵³ They stayed continually at the Temple, praising God.

CHRIST’S ASCENSION AND HIS RETURN

Sermon for Ascension Day 2024

Acts 1:1-11

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is the First Reading from before Acts 1:1-11:

In my former book, Theophilus, I have written about everything that Jesus began to do and to teach ² until the day when He was taken up to heaven, after He had given Instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom He had chosen.

³ After His suffering, Jesus also showed these men, through many convincing proofs, that He was alive. He was seen by them during a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. ⁴ While He was eating with them, He ordered them not to leave Jerusalem but to wait for what the Father had promised. He said, “You have heard about this from Me. ⁵ For John baptised with water, but not many days from now you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit.”

⁶ Therefore, when they met together, they asked Him, “Lord, are You at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”

⁷ He told them, “It is not for you to know the times or events that the Father has set by His own authority. ⁸ However, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria and to the farthest parts of the world.”

⁹ After He had said this and while they were watching Him, He was lifted up and a cloud took Him away from their sight. ¹⁰ While they were gazing into the sky as He was going, suddenly two men in white clothes stood beside them. ¹¹ They asked, “Men of Galilee, why are you standing and looking up into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come back in the same way as you have seen Him go into heaven.”

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Just as Jesus ascended into heaven on Ascension Day, so too will He come down from heaven when He returns in glory on the Last Day. This is the assurance Christ’s ascension gives us. Jesus is coming again. Those two men in white clothes whom Luke mentions were angels, and they said to the disciples, “**This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come back in the same way as you have seen Him go into heaven.**” Just as Christ’s death and resurrection go together, so do these two, *Christ’s ascension and His return*. They are inseparable. Jesus, who has died and risen for us - this Jesus, who has promised, “*I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am, you will be also*” (John 14:3) - this same Jesus *is coming back for us*, and this is what I wish to preach to you on this day, reinforcing our faith and belief in His return.

Luke addressed his Letter to Theophilus. Theophilus means “one who loves God” and was a very common Greek name. We do not know who exactly Theophilus was. Some have suggested he was a prominent Christian in the early church and may have paid for the parchment on which Luke wrote, but it doesn’t matter. Luke’s Gospel, his “**former book,**” which was also addressed to Theophilus,¹ ended with a summary of the risen Lord’s instruction to His disciples, His promise of the Holy Spirit, and His Ascension. Now, in Acts, Luke begins with a similar summary and sets the stage for the events that are recorded.

Luke writes, “**After His suffering, Jesus also showed these men, through many convincing proofs, that He was alive. He was seen by them during a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.**”

Christ’s ascension happened forty days after His rising from the dead. During those forty days, the risen Lord appeared to His disciples and spoke about the kingdom of God. Then, at the end of that time, Jesus led His disciples out to the area of Bethany, just outside Jerusalem.²

The resurrection of Jesus demonstrated beyond a doubt that He was the LORD’s Anointed. His Father had tasked Him to die on the cross to pay for our trespasses. The Father then raised Him, showing that full payment for our sins was accepted. But many people had a different idea of what the LORD’s Anointed would do. A popular hope among the Jewish people was that the Messiah would bring back the days of David and Solomon when the kingdom of Israel was at its greatest. They hoped that Israel would not only be free from Roman domination but would also be a world power. Even the select group of apostles still needed instruction about the Messiah’s purpose and the nature of God’s kingdom, so they asked: “**Lord, are You at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?**”

If we stop and think about it, maybe we would like to ask the same sort of questions: “*Lord, when will it be? Tomorrow? Next week? Next year? A thousand years from now? How long, O Lord, how long? How long will we have to face the evil surrounding us in this sinful world? How long will we have to put up with our own weakness and sin? How long will You keep us in suspense? Can’t You give us a timetable, a schedule, a specific date?*”

¹ Luke 1:3

² Luke 24:50

But Jesus says to us what He said to those with Him at that time, **“It is not for you to know the times or events that the Father has set by His own authority.”** God has not given us that information for the simple reason that we do not need to know the exact time of Christ’s return; neither can we know it. It could be this year, but it could be a hundred years from now. The words of Jesus at His ascension still stand: **“It is not for you to know the times or events.”**

“But there is something I do want you to know,” Jesus says to His disciples. **“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria and to the farthest parts of the world.”** “As My church, that will be your mission: To proclaim the good news of My death and resurrection and explain what that means for all people. Preach repentance and forgiveness of sins in My name. Tell everyone what I have done to rescue them from death and hell and to bring them into life forevermore. I shall empower you for that mission.”

Leaving them with that promise, **“and while they were watching Him, He was lifted up and a cloud took Him away from their sight.”** But then a couple of angels appear and say to the disciples: **“Men of Galilee, why are you standing and looking up into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come back in the same way as you have seen Him go into heaven.”**

“This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come back in the same way as you have seen Him go into heaven.” Whenever we think about Jesus’ ascension, we should also think about His return. We must keep in mind that our ascended Lord is coming back. Just as the disciples saw Jesus go into heaven in majesty and power, so will all people see His glorious return from heaven.

This is the message we get from the last chapter of the Bible, Revelation 22. Jesus is coming back, and He’s coming for us! And what’s more, Jesus says, **“See! I am coming soon”** (v. 12). And so that we would have this promise ringing in our ears as we close the Bible, our Lord says the same thing again a few verses later: **“Yes, I am coming soon”** (v. 20). Apparently, Jesus really wants us to know this and take hold of His promise.

“See! I am coming soon.” The word “soon” here adds a note of urgency to our expectation. Jesus could come at any time, so we are not to grow complacent as we wait for His return. Rather, ***we must always be ready for that glorious day.***

When Jesus comes, that day will be a day of judgment. That's what we confess in the Creed. "He will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead." And that's what Jesus tells us, "*See! I am coming soon, and My reward is with Me, to repay everyone according to what he has done.*" For those who have done evil, in keeping with their persistent impenitence and unbelief - they will be barred from God's presence forever: "*Outside are the dogs, the people who practise witchcraft, sin sexually, murder and worship idols and everyone who loves and practises falsehood*" (22:12, 15). Their judgment will be swift, certain, and severe.

But the judgment will be sweet, certain, and serene for us. Christ will have a gracious reward for those who have done good. This does not mean that salvation is by works. Jesus used language like this in His parable of the sheep and the goats.³ On the Last Day, Jesus will point to our good works *to demonstrate the faith we held in our hearts* freely given by the Holy Spirit. And that's us, fellow baptised believers in Christ, saved by His grace. That day will be sweet, certain, and serene. We shall enter into the full enjoyment of God's presence forever: "*Blessed are those who wash their robes that they may have the right to the tree of life and may enter through the gates into the city!*" John writes (22:14).

What a blessed hope we have! Entrance into the holy city, the new Jerusalem, that beautiful, shining city where God will dwell with His people. A city full of life, where death and mourning, crying and pain, will be no more. A city of joy, where God will wipe away every tear from our eyes. What a blessed hope we have! Access to the tree of life. Paradise restored. Healing and wholeness, eternal life in a place of perpetual fruitfulness and vitality. This is the blessed home that is waiting for us when Jesus returns, and this is our blessed hope.

Such blessedness is promised to us because of the gift of Christ's righteousness. "*Blessed are those who wash their robes.*" Our sinful robes have been washed clean and pure in the waters of Holy Baptism. By faith, we have washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. His holy, precious blood cleanses us from all our sins. ***His cross is our tree of life.***

³ Matthew 25:31-46

Eternal life in Christ is a free gift. You don't deserve it; you can't earn it, but it is yours, entirely by grace. Refreshed and yet still longing for her Lord's return, the church cries out, "Come!" With eager expectation, the bride of Christ looks forward to the Bridegroom's arrival. Every Christian who knows his need and knows his Lord likewise cries out, "Come!" Come and rescue us from this world of sorrow, sin, pain, and sadness. Come and save us, Lord, as you have promised. Come and take us home, where we belong!

This is what you can bank your whole life on! On the Last Day, when our Lord Jesus Christ comes again, you and I shall be raised up with restored, glorified bodies, and we shall see our Saviour face to face. This great hope is ours because of Christ's sure promise, "*See! I am coming soon.*" Although, for the moment, He has been taken from our sight, this same Jesus will come back in heavenly glory and will restore all things, and we shall see His face.

"*See! I am coming soon,*" our risen and ascended Lord says to us today. Hold on, hold close to Christ, hold tight, it won't be long now. He who ascended into heaven will come again from heaven to take us home to Himself. Until that day, then, hold on to His promise, "*See! I am coming soon.*" Come, Lord Jesus! Amen.

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

The Lord's Supper has always been seen as a sign of unity between those who commune together at the Lord's table (1 Cor. 10:17). When Christians partake of the Lord's Supper in a church body that has a confession of faith, they thereby declare that they believe that they are one in faith with those who commune with them. Since people cannot honestly hold two differing confessions at the same time, they cannot honestly commune with those whose confession is in conflict with their own. If any do this nevertheless, they deny their own confession, and so deny Christ Himself (2 Cor. 6:14-18). **We ask visitors who are communicant members in a church not in fellowship with the AELC, or are not familiar with the *AELC Statement of Faith*, to refrain from communing today. If you have questions, please speak with the pastor after service.**

PRAYER FOR ASCENSION DAY

Lord God, heavenly Father, You are our strength and our song. We praise You that You have prepared salvation for us in Jesus, Your Son. We praise You for His life on earth as a human being like us, full of grace and truth. We praise You that You have revealed Yourself and Your love in Him. We thank You for Jesus' death and resurrection. We praise You that our Lord, who has offered Himself as a perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world, is now at Your right hand. Give us Your Spirit's power to believe all that He has taught us, and to do all that He has commanded us. Accept our thanks for His miracles and deeds of mercy.

By Your Spirit, help us to claim His sacrifice for our salvation, and to trust in Him for the gift of eternal life. As we now celebrate His ascension to Your right hand, give us constant joy. Enable us to centre our devotion on our living Lord on heaven's throne, ruling all things for the good of His Church and His children. Lift our minds to heaven where our Lord Jesus lives to pray for us. Give us confidence in His compassion, and in His power to bless.

Lord Jesus, continue to be present with us, as You have promised. Be present with us as You move us to witness to Your saving love to people everywhere, that Your Gospel may be proclaimed to all nations. Establish Your kingdom of grace in every land. Turn the hearts of people in every corner of the world to faith and obedience, so that every knee may bow and every tongue confess that You are both Christ and Lord.

Lord Jesus, with all things under Your feet, keep our land in righteousness and peace. Give us leaders who love and honour You. May Your Spirit hold sway in all schools, and in all institutions of learning and research. Bless all hospitals and places of mercy; and make Your healing touch evident in them. Protect us from war, disease, and every calamity; spare us from greed, rebellion, and lawlessness. Give all in our land a true love of piety and peace.

We pray for all who are suffering in any way, especially for those who are sick. Give them trust in Your love, and teach them to pray in patience and hope.

Lord Jesus, seated at God's right hand, preserve our faith and love during life's little day, and strengthen us to watch and pray for Your return. Make us glad that, when You come again, You will come to receive us to Yourself for ever. We offer these prayers, Christ our Lord, in Your name, which is far above every other name. Amen.

Article: “Christ’s Ascension”

What’s the big deal about Christ’s ascension? Jesus went to heaven. He’s gone. We know that. We can’t see Him. He’s left us the Bible, we can talk about Him, we can pray to Him, and the Holy Spirit is here with us, but Jesus is gone. Isn’t He?

The Bible does not say that. Just before Jesus ascended into heaven, He said to His disciples, “*Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age*” (Matthew 28:20).

St. Paul describes Christ’s ascension into heaven by saying that He “*fills everything in every way*” (Eph. 1:23). Jesus did not ascend into heaven to be absent from us. He ascended into heaven to be present with us.

Jesus is true man and true God. God is present everywhere. Since Jesus is God, He is present everywhere. But is His humanity also present everywhere? By all means! You cannot strip Christ’s humanity away from His deity as if there are two Christs, one who is God and the other who is a man. There is but one Lord Jesus Christ, true God and true man. Since God is present everywhere, and since Jesus is God, Jesus - true God and true man - is present everywhere. Wherever God is, there is the man Jesus.

Heaven isn’t a place up in the sky above the stars where Jesus is stuck, far away from us. Heaven is where God is. Heaven is as close to us as Christ is. Whenever He speaks and we listen; whenever He feeds us with His body and blood in the Sacrament; whenever the church is gathered together by the Holy Spirit to be fed by Christ the Good Shepherd, there heaven and earth meet. Christ’s ascension guarantees His presence with us. His ascension prefigures our own. When this world is destroyed, we won’t be destroyed with it. We shall be taken into the presence of God where we shall enjoy eternal love, peace, and happiness in the new heavens and the new earth.

Children's Message: When I was a child, I loved helium-filled balloons. Have you ever seen what happens when you let a helium-filled balloon go? They fly away! That's why there's usually a string or ribbon on the balloon so that you can tie it to your wrist or attach it to a heavy object. But one of my favourite things to do was to let the balloon go! It was fun watching it fly up into the sky until I couldn't see it anymore. Sometimes if there was very little wind, I could watch it a long time, until it was finally just a speck in the sky way up high. Have you ever done that? For me, watching the balloon fly away was exciting. But I also know that sometimes I would accidentally let go of the balloon, and it would fly away, and I'd almost cry because it was gone forever.



On Ascension Day, we read about how Jesus was taken back into heaven. But before Jesus went back to be with His Father in heaven, He first talked to His disciples to prepare them. He explained to them everything that the Bible said about Him, how He had to go to the cross and die and then be raised again to life on that first Easter so we could all be forgiven of our sins. Jesus also told them that although He was leaving, He would send the Holy Spirit to be with them forever! Wow! Each one of us has the Holy Spirit living in our hearts! Think about it - God lives in our hearts! That's how much God loves us!

Then Jesus raised His hands toward heaven, and He was lifted up - kind of like how I was telling you about the helium balloon. But do you know what's different in Jesus' being lifted into heaven? See, when you let go of a helium-filled balloon, you know you will never see it again. You will never touch it again. It floats away forever. But when Jesus was lifted up, God promised that Jesus would come back again to us someday! This was such good news to His disciples that as Jesus was lifted up, they began to worship Him. And you know what? We're doing the same thing right now! We're here worshipping Jesus who will come again to us someday! We worship Jesus when we read the Bible, when we sing about Him, when we pray, and when the pastor tells us about Him in the sermon. And in His words, Jesus comes to us! That's how much Jesus loves you! *Thank You Jesus for promising to come back. As we await Your return, send Your Holy Spirit to guide, bless, and protect me. Amen.*

WEEKLY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Sunday, 12 May

8.30am OAK LR

9.00am TMBA LR

9.00am GRN LR

9.30am AUB LR