

# The Ascension of Our Lord

## Luke 24:44-53

May 26, 2022

While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven.  
Luke 24:51

### Under His Hands

Grace to you and peace from God our Father

and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.



“God has gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet. Sing praises to God, sing praises! For God is the King of all the earth<sup>1</sup>...God reigns over the nations; God sits on his holy throne.”<sup>2</sup> These words from Psalm 45 are said of God’s presence. He is the King of all, He reigns, He sits on His throne, all belongs to Him and all is known to Him. A Christian can read these words in the light of the Ascension of Our Lord: God is with us in the person of Jesus Christ, who now sits at the right hand of God, not because He has decided to take His presence away from us but because of exactly the opposite, to be with us always. The words of St. Luke who tells us of the Ascension emphasize this: “lifting up his hands he blessed them. While he blessed them, he parted from them.”<sup>3</sup> The last thing they saw were the outstretched hands of the Lord raised in a blessing over them. They were left under those hands. They would live under

---

<sup>1</sup> Ps 47:5–7.

<sup>2</sup> Ps 47:8.

<sup>3</sup> Lk 24:51.

those hands. And not only those who were there that day but all who would come to faith. How does one live under these hands of blessings, the hands of Jesus? Here are four lessons from our Gospel text.

First, **whoever receives the promise of the Spirit is clothed with power from on high.** So it was with the disciples, for the promise was from Christ Himself: “And 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.”<sup>4</sup> They were alone, and yet not alone. They had received a promise, and yet they had something to wait for. Therefore they could calmly remain there in the city those ten days before Pentecost. The Father would send what He promised, for He does not lie. He would put His hand on them and help them and equip them with power from on high. The promise of the Holy Spirit clothes in power. So it is with us. You too have received a promise. You too are not alone. You too have something to expect, something to wait for, because you live under those same hands of blessing, the hands of Jesus. Those same hands were nailed to a cross, where He suffered and died to take away your sins. Those same hands reached down to you in Baptism. You were taken up in His hands out of those waters and you were clothed in the power of His righteousness. You were blessed and you were not left alone, for you now live under those hands, a child of God, a new creation.

And this now means you shall remain and wait in that blessing. This is the

---

<sup>4</sup> Lk 24:49.

power of the Holy Spirit. He works faith in you, which is the power of God unto salvation. To be sure there are some days where you might not feel like there is any power in your life, in fact quite the opposite. But the power of God is something we grasp by faith, not by sight. Now you are waiting for the fulfillment of the promise, for our Lord has promised that He shall return and gather all that belongs to Him. So throughout these earthly days of Christian pilgrimage you shall be blessed with the promise, even as you hope for the final, eternal blessing yet to come. We know that some have not stayed in that blessing and instead just walk away. They do not remain clothed with the power from on high, they are not certain of the blessing. But the one who remains, perhaps after confirmation, perhaps after leaving the Church and then coming back, has experienced this. At first it doesn't seem like anything much, certainly not like power, but more like weakness and defeat, like powerlessness. But even this is the work of the Holy Spirit. A day comes also where there is such certainty of the forgiveness of sins won for you on the cross of Christ that it would be unthinkable to live without it. It would be unthinkable to walk away from those hands of blessing. In your Baptism you live under the blessed hands of Jesus, an accomplished sinner, but more importantly a saint, counted righteous for His sake, saved by grace through faith.

Second, **under the those hands of blessing you can always lift your eyes to heaven in prayer.** This is what the disciples did after the Ascension: "And they

worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy.”<sup>5</sup> Now they knew that He was God’s Son, “sitting at the right hand of God the Father.” We confess that Jesus sits at the right hand of God the Father almighty. And we believe that our prayers can always reach the throne of Grace, wherever and whenever we pray, because Jesus is there bringing our prayers to the Father. So when you pray you are under His hands of blessing, you are under His blessed watch. You can always lift up your eyes to heaven, to where He is. There is your Brother and your Intercessor. If He had not gone it would not be so. You can always lift up your eyes to your Advocate. Have you stopped? There are many who quit. Sometimes it is because of shame, or because of doubt, or because of anger. But even if we do not look up in prayer He is always looking at us, for He is Lord of all. Nothing is hidden just because we have not spoken about it. Sins remain unforgiven, stacked up on a heap of guilt. These things are not swept under the rug, denial is not a river in Egypt. When you hide and run away then you are really only running out from under those hands of blessing. But in that moment that you do not want to hide your sins from God then He will take them from you and they will be hidden from the sight of God, for the sake of Christ, forever. The righteousness of Christ is spread over you in His hands of blessing for your whole life. So we look up to Christ in prayer, in repentance, for He is there for us, every time, always.

The third way we live under those hands of blessing is that **we can go back to**

---

<sup>5</sup> Lk 24:52–53.

**everyday life with great joy.** Again, we start with the example of the disciples. “[They] returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God.”<sup>6</sup> They returned to the place where it all happened, the persecution, the torture, the crucifixion, the burial. They returned to the men who did these things, and the bitter and drab everyday existence. Why would they? How could they? Because they knew that they would go there under the blessing of Christ, that He had promised to be with them. They knew that His hands of blessings outstretched in the Ascension would be with them in the hard realities of everyday life. And again, so it is with us, too. It is true for whoever must return to a daily routine after prayer, after Church, after the Holy Communion. We are here only one, maybe two hours a week, but then it’s back to reality. Back to daily life. And we know how life can be very busy, very challenging, perhaps even tedious and monotonous. Perhaps there are worries about illnesses, or caring for those close to you, or economic worries. You name it. Many go through their routines tired, bored, frustrated. But even during our everyday life, as we work, as we serve our neighbours or our families, we can look to this Ascension for our help. We work under Christ’s hands of blessing. The disciples returned “with great joy.” Why? He wills this. He stretches out His hands to bless this work. God will be near and will help through this work. Even if there is much toil and frustration, physical or emotional, we can return to this: My Lord accompanies me. He understands, He uses me. How wonderful to

---

<sup>6</sup> Lk 24:52–53.

have the blessing hands of Jesus even over us in our daily vocations.

And finally, **under the hands of blessing we can hold fast to the Church**

**and to the Divine Service.** The disciples were continually in the temple

blessing God. It was natural for them. Jesus had instructed there. The Word and the Psalms were heard there, and now they new what Jesus had told them:

“These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.”<sup>7</sup> It’s all about Jesus. Now post-Ascension they lived under the hands of Jesus and they loved to hear the prophetic writings that bore witness to Him, and the Divine Service they had so often celebrated with Him.

And so it is with us. Perhaps it seems hard to hold fast to the church when so many things seek to draw us away. There are so many other things to do on Sunday morning. But to stay away from the gifts our Lord would want us to receive in worship is to put Jesus far away. But St. Paul writes, “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”<sup>8</sup> So we gather on Sunday morning, the Lord’s Day, the day of the resurrection, to put ourselves under the hands of Christ, by the hearing of the Word and the receiving of His Sacraments. Because He is near we should gather, we should not despise what He offers. Why would we? When you are driving to church,

---

<sup>7</sup> Lk 24:44.

<sup>8</sup> Ro 10:8–9.

you are driving to place yourself under those hands. When you reach the doors of the church you enter into the hands of Jesus. We need not fear the accusation of sin. It is good to have lived under the blessings hands of Jesus, and it is good to die under those hands. Such a life is a blessing. So under His hands is where we belong, and in His Ascension this is where He has placed us, just like the disciples. Under His hands of blessing may we never forsake what we have received, and may be always remain under His care. Amen.

And now the peace of God which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Rev. Kirk P. Radford

Christ Lutheran Church, Sarnia, Ont.

✠ Soli Deo Gloria