

Daily Reading & Meditation

The Lord Jesus Was Taken up into Heaven

SUNDAY 16 MAY 2021 /

GOSPEL READING: Mark 16:15-20

15 And he said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. 16 He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. 17 And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; 18 they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover." 19 So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. 20 And they went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that attended it. Amen.

SCRIPTURE READING: Acts 1:1-11

1 In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, 2 until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commandment through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. 3 To them he presented himself alive after his passion by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days, and speaking of the kingdom of God. 4 And while staying with them he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me, 5 for John baptized with water, but before many days you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit." 6 So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" 7 He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority. 8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth." 9 And when he had said this, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. 10 And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, 11 and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

Meditation: Why did Jesus leave his disciples forty days after his resurrection? Forty is a significant number in the scriptures. Moses went to the mountain to seek the face of God for forty days in prayer and fasting. The people of Israel were in the wilderness for forty years in preparation for their entry into the promised land. Elijah fasted for forty days as he journeyed in the wilderness to the mountain of God. For forty days after his resurrection Jesus appeared numerous times to his disciples to assure them that he had risen indeed and to prepare them for the task of carrying on the work which he began during his earthly ministry.

The Risen Lord Jesus is with us always to the end of time

Jesus' departure and ascension was both an end and a beginning for his disciples. While it was the end of Jesus' physical presence with his beloved disciples, it marked the beginning of Jesus' presence with them in a new way. Jesus promised that he would be with them always to the end of time (Matthew 28:20). Now as the glorified and risen Lord and Saviour, ascended to the right hand of the Father in heaven, Jesus promised to send them the Holy Spirit who would anoint them with power on the Feast of Pentecost, just as Jesus was anointed for his ministry at the River Jordan. When the Lord Jesus departed physically from the apostles, they were not left in sorrow or grief. Instead, they were filled with joy and with great anticipation for the coming of the Holy Spirit.

The Risen Lord empowers us to carry on his work

Jesus' last words to his apostles point to his saving mission and to their mission to be witnesses of his saving death and his glorious resurrection and to proclaim the good news of salvation to all the world. Their task is to proclaim the Gospel - the good news of salvation - not only to the people of Israel, but to all the nations as well. God's love and

gift of salvation is not reserved for a few or for one nation alone, but it is for the whole world - for all who will accept it. The Gospel is the power of God, the power to release people from their burden of guilt, sin, and oppression, and the power to heal, restore, and make us whole. Do you believe in the power of the Gospel?

We are ambassadors for Jesus Christ

This is the great commission which the risen Christ gives to the whole church. All believers have been given a share in this task - to be heralds of the good news and ambassadors for Jesus Christ, the only saviour of the world. We have not been left alone in this task, for the risen Lord works in and through us by the power of his Holy Spirit. Today we witness a new Pentecost as the Lord pours out his Holy Spirit upon his people to renew and strengthen the body of Christ and to equip it for effective ministry and mission world-wide. Do you witness to others the joy of the Gospel and the hope of the resurrection?

Daily Quote from the Early Church Fathers: *Jesus ascends to heaven in his body - divine and human nature*, by Augustine of Hippo, 354-430 A.D.

"You heard what came to our ears just now from the Gospel: 'Lifting up his hands, he blessed them. And it happened, while he was blessing them he withdrew from them, and was carried up to heaven.' Who was carried up to heaven? The Lord Christ was. Who is the Lord Christ? He is the Lord Jesus. What is this? Are you going to separate the human from the divine and make one person of God, another of the man, so that there is no longer a trinity of three but a quaternary of four? Just as you, a human being, are soul and body, so the Lord Christ is Word, soul and body. The Word did not depart from the Father. He both came to us and did not forsake the Father. He both took flesh in the womb and continued to govern the universe. What was lifted up into heaven, if not what had been taken from earth? That is to say, the very flesh, the very body, about which he was speaking when he said to the disciples, 'Feel, and see that a spirit does not have bones and flesh, as you can see that I have' (Luke 24:39). Let us believe this, brothers and sisters, and if we have difficulty in meeting the arguments of the philosophers, let us hold on to what was demonstrated in the Lord's case without any difficulty of faith. Let them chatter, but let us believe." (excerpt from *Sermon 242,6*)

OPENING PRAYER Lord Jesus, through the gift of your Holy Spirit, you fill us with an indomitable spirit of praise and joy which no earthly trial can subdue. Fill me with your resurrection joy and help me to live a life of praise and thanksgiving for your glory. May I witness to those around me the joy of the Gospel and the reality of your great victory over sin and death. **Amen.**

CLOSING PRAYER:- World and Covet19. Lord, Look upon the victims of Covet19 throughout the world with eyes of mercy, may your healing hands rest upon them , may your life giving powers flow into every cell of their bodies and into the depths of their souls, cleansing, purifying, restoring them to wholeness and strength for service in your Kingdom. **Amen.**