

**JUNE 1, 2025**  
**THE SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER**  
**LUKE 24:44-53 | “OPENED MINDS”**



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\*Please stand if comfortably able.  
Respond with words in bold print

**ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRAYER CONCERNS:**

**THE BELL IS RUNG:**

**PRELUDE: “Come, Christians, Join to Sing”**

**Penny Rodriguez**

**PENNIES FOR MISSION:**

**\*RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP:**

One: Creator, today we give you thanks

**ALL: for believing we can live anew again.**

One: Creator, today we give you thanks

**ALL: for the diversity of which all of Your creation is birthed.**

One: Creator, today we give you thanks

**ALL: for the knowledge that we aren’t always right and for the capability to change.**

One: Creator, today we give you thanks

**ALL: for the desire to change structures and institutions that tell us community is less valuable than the individual.**

One: Creator, today we give you thanks

**ALL: for the positivity, resistance, and beauty in this some times ugly world.**

**\*INVOCATION:**

Creator, be with us as we live into all that is possible. You sent us a human to show us the value and dignity and

beauty of all people. You created the change of seasons as a reminder of the beauty of our planet. We were not made sinful by design as so many interpretations go – You created us in Your image with the capabilities of loving so vastly and so greatly that healing and reconciliation are possible. Amen.

**\*OPENING HYMN: 473 “Blessed Assurance”**

**\*PRAYER FOR TRANSFORMATION AND NEW LIFE:**

**Creator, we have been led astray by the systems that promote individuality, greed, absolutism, and patriarchy. We know that you forgive us because You invite us into new birth again and again. You invite us to embody new understandings of collectivity and new ways of acting in and towards the world – to be witness to the evils of patriarchy and supremacy and the politics of people and ask us instead, to give gratitude and love. Be with us as we change to become more of what You ask us to be – joyful in the journey towards reparations and true Grace.**

**\*WORDS OF GRACE:**

We are indeed capable of opening our minds and our hearts and then to move in the world to live like Jesus had. We are looking up and looking out so that we may love, repent, and forgive one another for we do indeed

sense the image of You sprinkled throughout all of Creation.

**\*GLORIA: Glory to the Creator, and the Christ and the Spirit so near. As it was from the start so it shall be forever, One God always here. (repeat twice)  
(end) One God always here. One God always here.**

**SCRIPTURE LESSONS: Acts 1:1-11**

**The risen Jesus with his disciples**

1 Theophilus, the first scroll I wrote concerned everything Jesus did and taught from the beginning, <sup>2</sup> right up to the day when he was taken up into heaven. Before he was taken up, working in the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus instructed the apostles he had chosen. <sup>3</sup> After his suffering, he showed them that he was alive with many convincing proofs. He appeared to them over a period of forty days, speaking to them about God’s kingdom. <sup>4</sup> While they were eating together, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem but to wait for what the Father had promised. He said, “This is what you heard from me: <sup>5</sup> John baptized with water, but in only a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

<sup>6</sup> As a result, those who had gathered together asked Jesus, “Lord, are you going to restore the kingdom to Israel now?”

<sup>7</sup> Jesus replied, “It isn’t for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has set by his own authority. <sup>8</sup> Rather, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

<sup>9</sup> After Jesus said these things, as they were watching, he was lifted up and a cloud took him out of their sight. <sup>10</sup> While he was going away and as they were staring toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood next to them. <sup>11</sup> They said, “Galileans, why are you standing here, looking toward heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way that you saw him go into heaven.”

#### **RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Psalm 47 Page 653**

#### **READING FROM THE EPISTLE OF Ephesians 1:15-23** **Paul’s prayer for the Ephesians**

<sup>15</sup> Since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God’s people, this is the reason that <sup>16</sup> I don’t stop giving thanks to God for you when I remember you in my prayers. <sup>17</sup> I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, will give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation that makes God known to you. <sup>18</sup> I pray that the eyes of your heart will have enough light to see what is the hope of God’s call, what

is the richness of God’s glorious inheritance among believers, <sup>19</sup> and what is the overwhelming greatness of God’s power that is working among us believers. This power is conferred by the energy of God’s powerful strength. <sup>20</sup> God’s power was at work in Christ when God raised him from the dead and sat him at God’s right side in the heavens, <sup>21</sup> far above every ruler and authority and power and angelic power, any power that might be named not only now but in the future. <sup>22</sup> God put everything under Christ’s feet and made him head of everything in the church, <sup>23</sup> which is his body. His body, the church, is the fullness of Christ, who fills everything in every way.

#### **\*GOSPEL LESSON: Luke 24:44-53**

<sup>44</sup> Jesus said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the Law from Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” <sup>45</sup> Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures. <sup>46</sup> He said to them, “This is what is written: the Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, <sup>47</sup> and a change of heart and life for the forgiveness of sins must be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup> You are witnesses of these things. <sup>49</sup> Look, I’m sending to you what my Father promised, but you are to stay in the city until you have been furnished with heavenly power.”

## **Ascension of Jesus**

<sup>50</sup> He led them out as far as Bethany, where he lifted his hands and blessed them. <sup>51</sup> As he blessed them, he left them and was taken up to heaven. <sup>52</sup> They worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem overwhelmed with joy. <sup>53</sup> And they were continuously in the temple praising God.

### **MESSAGE: “No Balloons or Brass Bands”**

The custom of celebrating the Ascension of Christ forty days after Easter, or on the Sixth Thursday during the fifth-day period from Easter to Pentecost, is largely attributable to the mention of “forty days” in today’s first lesson. Since we don’t have worship on the sixth Thursday, perhaps that’s why I don’t remember talking about it that much.

At the outset, we should note that quite often the New Testament does NOT clearly distinguish Jesus’ ascension from his resurrection. Rather, we are often told simply that after his death, he was “exalted,” or “taken up”, as if his resurrection is itself his ascension. This is noted in 7 different places in the New Testament; Romans twice, Philippians 2:9, Ephesians 4:8-10, 1 Peter 3:22; Hebrews 4:14 and 7:26.

By contrast, the author of the gospel of Luke sees the resurrection of Jesus and his ascension into heaven as two separate events, separated in time by forty days.

(As you know, the author of the gospel of Luke is the same author of the book of Acts. So today we heard two versions of the ascension from the same writer.)

There are several features of today’s Acts 1:1-11 text that are worth noting in the context of our celebration of Ascension. First, it is a time of recollection. We are told in verse 3 that during the forty days, the risen Lord presented himself to the disciples as alive and spoke to them concerning the kingdom of God. Not only had this been one of the major themes of the preaching of John the Baptist but of Jesus as well. This involved the announcement that the sovereign reign of God had now set in – a time of hope for the poor, the captive, the sick, and the oppressed as written in Luke 4:18-19.

But in spite of the abundant teaching of Jesus concerning the kingdom of God, especially through the form of parables, confusion still abounded. Those who heard his preaching found it next to impossible to disentangle God’s promise of a new era of divine sovereignty from their own options of nationalism. How can we believe a kingdom that we can’t see and we don’t know when it’s coming? We are told not to ask; just to wait?

Secondly, this celebration of the ascension is a time of anticipation. The disciples are instructed to “wait there for the promise of the Father” (verse 4). The time when the Holy Spirit would be poured out in abundance is not

far off, and when it occurs it would be a great outburst of power. In fact, the Spirit and power are closely linked as stated in 8 places in the New Testament. The Book of Acts provides thorough documentation of the powerful energy unleashed by the Spirit beginning with the Day of Pentecost (which we will celebrate next Sunday). Be sure to glue your toupee and wigs on tight.

The conversation next points to the ultimate return of Christ. The disciples are assured that his coming will be in the manner similar to that of his departure. (verse 11) In both cases, the cast of the eye is forward.

The disciples are now with the risen Lord, but their attention is directed toward a time when he will no longer be with them in the same way. He will be absent but present with them through the Spirit. The power they now feel in his presence they will experience even when he is absent. They are thus instructed to stop gazing into heaven and be about the business at hand – waiting for the renewal that will begin in Jerusalem.

It is precisely this tension between recollection and anticipation that is felt in the celebration of Ascension. On the one hand, we want to hold on to Easter and the risen Lord, Yet we are being beckoned to let go and look to the coming Spirit as the One who will lead us into the future.

**SPECIAL MUSIC: “Path to Peace”**

**Flute (Stacie)/Piano (Sharon) duet**

### **PASTORAL PRAYER:**

God of the present and the future we are not very good at waiting. We want things right now. We want to see Jesus right now. We forget he is always with us; right now and forever. So you sent us the Holy Spirit, thinking we would depend on that instead of whining. Unfortunately, many of us don’t sit still or be quiet long enough to truly feel the presence we long for. Have mercy on us.

So right now we are sitting quietly and listening. We hear the cries of those who were affected by the tornado a few weeks ago. We hear the cries of those who are sick, lonely, feeling abandoned, in need of food, water, shelter. They need our help. Come, Holy Spirit, and push us into action.

Help us to continue to pray, day after day, hour after hour, minute by minute as we reach for the hand of our neighbor and pray the prayer of Jesus . . .

### **THE LORD’S PRAYER:**

**PRAYER RESPONSE: Three-fold Amen**

### **INVITATION TO GENEROSITY:**

The ways in which we can give of ourselves are as vast as Creation on Mother Earth. You’re now invited to give accordingly – to give knowing that what we do here matters in the bigger picture of the blessings that the Creator has accorded us.

**OFFERTORY: Meditation on “O Store Gud” Lani Smith**

**\*DOXOLOGY:**

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise God, all creatures here below;  
Praise God for all that love has done;  
Creator, Christ, and Spirit One. Amen.**

**\*PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING AND DEDICATION:**

**We give thanks to you creator, for the invitation to be  
alive in a world full of possibility with open minds and  
open hearts to live with great joy until we meet again.**

**\*COMMUNION:**

All the parts of this shared meal together come from the Earth.

The seeds of grain grew with patience, tenderness and love.

They were then gathered and milled into a loaf to be shared communally.

The grapes used on this cup we also grown with patience, tenderness and love.

They were gathered by the hands of migrant workers and pressed into juice to be shared communally.

We were reminded at the start of Lent this year that we, too, are from the Earth and that with patience, tenderness, and love we find ourselves here collectively

willing to partake of elements that are meant to spark a new type of living in the world.

One: Creator be with us all.

**Many: We remember the land from which we came**

One: Lift up your hearts

**Many: We remember the patience and tenderness needed**

One: Lift up our hearts

**Many: We remember the sacrifice You made to help us believe. Lift up our hearts.**

**On the night Jesus was betrayed, he took the bread and asked the disciples to imagine it as both whole and broken, for in both states, it is a symbol of what was and yet still to come. Take, eat, and remember.**

**He then took the cup asking the disciples to imagine what it feels like to be both empty and then full, for in both states, he shared that God is indeed with us. Take, eat, and remember.**

**READER #1:**

Praise to you Creator. For the gifts of Creation,

-the beauty of nature,

-the rains,

-the songs of the pollinating birds,

-the winds that carry the seeds.

**READER #2:** Praise to you Creator.  
For the gifts of our human existence,  
through the hard and the good,  
through the times we were wrong and the times we  
were right, you never stop trying to heal us and  
demonstrate hope when it is needed most.

**READER #3:** Praise to you Creator.  
For the ability to believe in the finite and the infinite.  
through our brokenness you invite us to be collected  
again. And so, here at this table, we remember.

## **ELEMENTS ARE BLESSED AND SHARED**

### **\*PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING:**

Holy Creator, we find ourselves in this moment alongside  
others but really, it is just you and me – help me to live  
out the life Your son called me live – to be in embodied  
communion with you and one another. I give you my  
glory and honor for they are Yours Almighty Creator, now  
and forever. Amen.

**\*CLOSING HYMN: 257 “Alleluia! Gracious Jesus!”**

### **\*UNISON SENDING:**

Through these shared rituals, we are shown what it is  
to be both whole and broken, and empty and full in  
order for us to embody the hope of abundant life in the

presence of death and that we are not in this alone –  
that God came to help us better know what it is to be a  
healing community and a healed community. Amen.

### **BENEDICTION:**

“Even a wounded world is feeding us. Even a wounded  
world holds us, giving us moments of wonder and joy. I  
choose joy over despair. Not because I have my head in  
the sand, but because joy is what the earth gives me  
daily and I must return the gift,” — (Written by **Robin Wall  
Kimmerer**, [Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific  
Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants](#))

And so it is Beloveds, move forward this week knowing  
the many ways we are fed begin first with understanding  
that your breath is my breath and that your actions  
dictate my actions – tu eres mi otro yo – you are the  
other me. Amen, Ashe, and Ajo.

**BENEDICTION RESPONSE: “Let There be Peace on  
Earth”**

**THE BELL IS RUNG:**

**POSTLUDE: “Be Thou Exalted” Chester Nordman**