

# “He Was Taken Up”

Acts 1:1-11

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Today is a very special day in the life of the Church: We gather and celebrate Ascension Day. Churches throughout the world are taking time to recognize and celebrate the Ascension of our Lord. In Germany, and in other European countries, this is historically a national day of rest. In our culture, if the European stock markets were not closed because of it, Ascension Day would not even get mentioned on the news.

But we gather and celebrate the best news. In the presence of His disciples, Christ ascended into heaven 40 days after His resurrection. But that is not the most newsworthy part of what we celebrate this day. Certainly, witnessing Jesus ascend into the heavens was a spectacular event. But even more spectacular for the disciples was that He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures – that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all nations.

That is the best news for us this day. We are a part of “all nations”.

Jesus could have died 1000 times and He could have ascended into heaven 1000 times and it would be of no benefit to you or to me if those apostles did not share that news.

This is also a special day in the Church because once again we will partake of the incomprehensible blessings found in the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. He comes to us in spectacular fashion. I know what you are thinking, “What do you mean He comes in ‘spectacular fashion?’” We eat the bread and drink the wine all the time. But think about it, Christ comes to you and presents His flesh and His blood in the miracle of the Sacrament for you to eat and drink. When is a miracle not spectacular?

All of what we do and celebrate today is a confirmation of the truth of what we read in Act 1:1 – “In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when he was taken up.”

The Book of Acts was, of course, written by Luke, the author of the Gospel of Luke. Both books are addressed to Theophilus, a person who was most likely a Roman Christian, but is someone that we know very little about. The Book of Acts is, sort of, Volume 2 of the Gospel of Luke.

In that first verse of the Book of Acts, the key word is “began.” Luke tells us that in his first book, he wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven. Christ’s work

and His interaction with the lives of His people did not end on Ascension Day.

Christ dying on the cross to pay the ransom price for all of our sins, and then rising again on Easter morning is certainly the most important event in Christ's ministry. However, if that was the end of His ministry, we would be in a great deal of trouble.

As Martin Luther said, which I borrowed from earlier, Christ could have died 1000 times and it would be of no avail to us (it would not mean a thing) if we had never heard the Good News that He did this to save us from the punishment that we deserve for breaking God's Law.

Christ's ministry on earth and His death and resurrection are certainly a highpoint. However, it would have all been for naught had that wonderful message not been preached to and taught to future generations. The Good News must be told. It cannot be lost in the noise of the day.

Christ continued His work after His ascension, and He continues it today. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, which proceeds from Christ the Son (as we have already confessed once this evening in the words of the Nicene Creed), the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son brings you to the knowledge of God, brings you to faith, nourishes you through God's Word, and gives you the strength to persevere in your faith.

Christ's ministry to His people is very much like the life of a baptized Christian. Christ's death and resurrection was the focal point of His ministry. Without that happening, His ministry would have no meaning.

Your baptism is the focal point of your life. Without Baptism, you would not be washed clean of your sins. Without Baptism, you would remain dead in your sins. You have been washed clean and made alive in Christ.

However, just as Christ's work only began with His three years of ministry, death and resurrection. So also, Christ's work in your life only began when you were brought to faith and baptized. Just as Christ dying on the cross 1000 times would have no meaning in our lives if we never heard about it, so too, you could be baptized 1000 times and would have little or no meaning in your life if no one ever shared the Good News, if you were never taught God's Word from that day forward.

Christ was taken up to heaven. Christ will return in similar manner some day. Christ continues to come to you. He comes in His Word; He comes in flesh and blood. Share the Good News. Do not let the noise of the day drown it out. Christ continues the work He began many years ago. You are the result of His work. You are here because you have heard the Good News of all that He began to do and teach. Share the Good News, and watch, for Christ will come from the heavens once again. Amen. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!