

Jesu Juva

“Even More, Even Greater”

Text: Acts 1:1-11; Luke 24:44-53

Alleluia! Christ is *ascended!* [*He is ascended indeed! Alleluia!*] Alleluia!

Leo the Great, an early church theologian who lived in the fifth century, said that in Jesus and all His work for us, we have gained greater things than we had lost through the devil’s malice. That’s quite a statement. For sin has cost us greatly. We lost Paradise. We lost harmony with one another. We lost our fellowship with God. We lost our life. We lost the peace of a sinless world and now live in a world where hate, discord, and destruction are the norm. We live in a world where sadness and pain limit our joy and where things are so bad that many do not even believe there is a God at all. For if there were a God, why is the world like this?

But it is not God’s fault. It is our fault. The fault of Adam, whose sin plunged the world from perfection and life into brokenness and death, and the fault of us, whose sin daily adds to all that. The discord, separation, pain, and sadness we sow, either through our actions or our failure to act. There is a God, but we did not want Him. We thought we knew better, could do better, would be better, and this is what we got. We have truly lost a lot.

And then there is your own life. Who among us has not personally experienced loss? Of health, of a loved one, of a friendship, of that which gives us joy.

But God did not sit idly by. Our pain pains Him - this is not how He created things to be for you. He loves you. And so He sent His Son to clean up our mess, and in all He did, He gave where there was loss. He gave sight, He gave hearing, He gave cleansing, He gave strength, He gave hope, He gave forgiveness. And then when the world rejected Him again, crucifying Him on the cross, He gave life. He rose from the dead as we have been celebrating this whole Easter season, that even this greatest loss of ours be reversed. That we who die might live again.

And if He had stopped there, we could rightly say that Jesus had restored all that we lost. He had undone all that we did - all that was left now was to give this gift to all and abolish sin, death, and the devil to hell forever.

But Jesus did more than that: ***He ascended into heaven.*** And not just as the Son of God He was when He came down from heaven, but also as a man. For that’s who Jesus is: true God and true man. Always both. Not one or the other. He did not leave His human nature behind, which He used for a while but was now done with it. No, our human nature ascends with Him into heaven, restored not just to an earthly paradise, but given even

more: a heavenly one. Ascending above and beyond the angels' ranks and the archangels' heights to the very right hand of the Father. That just as He came down from the heights to our depths, to be with us where we are, so in the same way we may rise with Him from the depths to be with Him where He is. To a glory far greater than Adam's; far greater than we can imagine.

And that's what we sang in the hymns today. *On Christ's ascension I now build the hope of my ascension. . . . That where the Head is, there as well I know His members are to dwell* (LSB #492 v. 1). And then we sang this too: *He has raised our human nature on the clouds to God's right hand; there we sit in heavenly places, there with Him in glory stand. Jesus reigns, adored by angels; man with God is on the throne. By our mighty Lord's ascension we by faith behold our own* (LSB #494 v. 5).

That's why the disciples were filled with joy when Jesus ascended. They knew *this*. When Jesus died they were sad. When He rose they were at first confused and scared. But over the course of the next forty days, He taught them all this. **He opened their minds to understand**. He opened their minds, cleaned out all the junk, and then filled them with the truth. And they were filled with joy. For as He ascended, they knew He was not leaving them - He had promised to send them the Holy Spirit, and that through His Spirit He would continue to be with them. But also they knew they were going with Him. That as He ascended, so were they, and so would they. He was paving the way and preparing the place for them (John 14).

And so from then on, they went out and proclaimed Jesus, proclaimed His forgiveness, proclaimed His life. And though they were arrested for it, beaten for it, and then killed for it, none of that mattered. They had already been given the victory in Jesus. They saw Him ascend, and they knew they were too. Whatever they lost, whatever this world could take away, Jesus had even more for them.

And so it is for you as well. That's all true for all who have been baptized into Jesus' death, resurrection, **and ascension**. Where you go He goes, and where He goes you go. For Jesus' ascension means not that He is gone, but exactly the opposite - that He is with you. For now reigning from the throne of God, far above and transcending all time and space, He is not just in Jerusalem or Galilee, but here with you, and in every place His Word and Sacrament are. Still providing for every loss, forgiving every sin, and comforting in every trouble and sadness. Until that day when, as we sang, we depart *in* joy and peace (LSB #492 v. 3) *to the* joy and peace of His presence in heaven. When what we now believe we will then see.

And so a hymn of glory (LSB #493) we will sing at the end of our service tonight. Practice for later.

For Christ is *ascended!* [*He is ascended indeed! Alleluia!*]

And in Him, so are we.

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.