

24 May 2017  
Eve of the Ascension of Our Lord

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church  
Vienna, VA

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“The Coronation of Our King”

Text: Luke 24:44-53; Ephesians 1:15-23; Acts 1:1-11

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

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

***While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy.***

Usually when someone leaves us - either moving away from us or maybe by death - especially if they were a close friend, we do not rejoice, we mourn. We are sad. And when you're torn apart from someone, a piece of you goes with them.

Yet when Jesus ascends into heaven, the disciples aren't sad, but filled with great joy! It doesn't seem to make sense. But it does if you know *why* Jesus is leaving - that His ascension into heaven *is His coronation*. This man born so humbly as Jesus of Nazareth is now sitting on the throne of heaven as King of kings and Lord of lords. As the Son of God He always was and that is His rightful place. But now He is also as a man, as the crucified and risen one, as our brother. God had promised David that one of his sons would sit on the throne forever (2 Samuel 7:16), and now that promise has been fulfilled. He is crowned no longer with thorns, but as King of all.

Maybe we don't think that way so much today because we don't have coronations in our country, and most of us are not old enough to remember the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II 65 years ago. Here we *inaugurate* presidents. It's not the same.

But they are the same in this way - both are *beginnings*. The beginning of a reign or a term of office. We get confused, I think, with Jesus' ascension because it seems like the end of His work. And in a way, it is; but it also is not. Jesus' ascension, His coronation, is the beginning of His reign, His ruling all things for us and for the good of His Church, at the Father's right hand. Jesus the crucified is now Jesus the King.

The King who in Scripture is also called Lord God *Sabaoth* - which means: *Lord God of hosts*, leader of the army of angels. Our King is not resting on His throne, but leading and commanding the army of angels who fight for us against the old evil foe. For that's what kings and presidents do. And the images are often vivid. A king on the front lines, a

raised sword in hand. Or, with our presidents - Roosevelt standing before both houses of Congress after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Reagan by the Berlin wall. Bush near the heap of rubble that once was the World Trade Center.

So it is with Jesus. The one who promised Adam and Eve victory after they fell in battle, after they fell into sin, entered the battle for us here as a man. He entered battlefield earth, going into the wilderness, battling against sin and evil, against death and the grave, and He won. Our King risen from the dead - a victory no earthly king or president could ever achieve.

And a victory that continues still today as His Word is proclaimed to all nations. His Word that is not an empty word or just information, but His Word which does and gives what it says. His Word of repentance and forgiveness that snatches those fallen in battle, fallen into sin and death, and gives them life again. And so as He ascends, Jesus charges His disciples-now-apostles, followers-now-sent ones, to proclaim and publish His victory - ***that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations***. And they did. And so do we. The victory won every time we repent and confess to one another; and every time we forgive those who sin against us.

So what does the old evil foe do in return? He tries to snatch this victory away from us, or us away from it. How? By convincing us we don't need to repent; we don't need forgiveness. You and your sin really aren't so bad. Don't worry about it! Or by convincing us not to forgive, to hold onto that grudge for they don't deserve your forgiveness. Or maybe this attack: God's Word is old fashioned; we need something newer, better, more relevant. And then there's this: don't preach repentance but acceptance. Don't proclaim forgiveness but a better life. Don't focus on the weapons of the King, where His forgiveness and victory are, His Word and Sacraments, but on music, on programs, on vision, on anything but those. And when we listen, when we do those things, we are slain and fall in battle.

So the Lord God Sabaoth fights for us; fights for His Church still. That His Word be proclaimed in truth and His gifts rightly given. And with these His victory be ours. That we know, and all people know, as St. Paul said today, three things: (i.) that we know ***what is the hope to which he has called you***; (ii.) ***what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints***; and (iii.) ***what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe***.

And so first: *that we never be without hope* - that we never be despairing, downcast, and defeated in this world and life. For our King is sitting on the throne and ruling all things for our good, and so we have a sure and confident hope; a sure and certain future.

And then second: *that we know the riches of His glorious inheritance* - that we know that what we see and have here and now is not all there is; there is much more waiting for us.

And that it is glorious. As glorious as the One who sits on the throne, and His kingdom that He has for us. So we don't have to hang onto the things of this world and life, onto grudges or power - these things that drag us down and rob us of life.

And third: *that we know the immeasurable greatness of His power toward us* - His power in ruling, yes; but even more, the power of His Word, the power of His water, the power of His Body and Blood, the power of His forgiveness. That in these things that here look so poor and weak and low - like He did in His manger - that in these things there is His victory for us. That these things are the power of God for us who believe.

And now, with His ascension, these things, this power and victory is here for us, and every place the Word of God is. They are not just where Jesus happens to be walking on this earth, but in all the world. For Jesus, in His ascension, *fills all in all*. He fills every pulpit, every font, every altar, and every word of forgiveness. That all may have life in Him and His kingdom.

But one more thing about this coronation that we celebrate this day, that makes it greater than any other: earthly coronations are the beginning of a reign, but a reign that will eventually come to and end in death. Queen Elizabeth, who has reigned for so long, will not reign forever. The day of her death is coming. But our King, now coronated, got that done first! He died already, and now risen from the dead has begun a reign that will never end. Another reason for joy.

So tonight we do so: *rejoice!* With the disciples. In Jesus' coronation. For as we've been singing in the liturgy during this Lenten season: *the Lamb who was slain has begun His reign*. A reign that is merciful and gracious. A reign that is eternal, and **for you**. For in His ascension, a little piece of you has gone with Him. Until all of you go with Him, when you too will rise and ascend with Him, to live with Him forever.

And you will, for Christ is ascended! [*He is ascended indeed! Alleluia!*]

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