

# Ascension Sunday – May 17, 2026

*Luke 24:44-53 & Acts 1:1-11*

So, we actually read our lessons in the wrong order today. As we are here celebrating Ascension Sunday, we heard two accounts. One in our first reading from Acts. And then our gospel Luke. Except in our knowledge of the bible, we know Acts and Luke were written by the same person. Acts is chapter 2 of Luke's story. So, we get an abbreviated version of Jesus' ascension in our gospel today. But then we need to look to Acts to get a few more details. The same perspective. But a fuller story. We hear in Acts more than Jesus was blessing them and ascended. We hear more of how the disciples reacted. That they didn't just immediately go into the temple in Jerusalem and continually blessed God. But rather they stood there for a bit.

So long in fact that two angelic figures came and had to be like, "guys, why are you still looking up?" You have to wonder what's going through their minds. In our timeline, Easter was just 40 days ago for them. So, in a period of just over a month, the disciples have been through the ringer. Jesus was betrayed by one of their own. Taken, tried, tortured, and killed. They mourned over the sabbath. Then Easter morning. The women find the empty tomb. Jesus appears to the disciples. Thomas questions. They see the holes in his hands. They dine with him.

And now he's leaving again. This time on his own terms. But I still wonder how the disciples were feeling there. We heard that their minds had been opened to the scriptures. So, did it all make sense to them? Or was the reason for their staring into the heavens after Jesus because they didn't know what came next? Were they afraid? Confused? Grieving in a new way? I mean, they did just essentially lose their friend and leader again. I can empathize with some uncertainty. Maybe hoping and waiting for a little more clarity. Jesus is ascended, now what.

Before he floated away on this glorious cloud, the disciples were asking him some important questions. Mainly, is this the time? Are you going to make the new heaven and earth now? Do we get to live into your glorious reign at this time? Here we are still 2000 years later still asking the same question. How often in our faith do we stand looking either literally or figuratively to the heavens? Waiting for God to intervene. Waiting for Jesus' return. Meanwhile, the angels are staring at us asking us, why do we stand looking up to heaven? Jesus told the disciples that it was not for them to know when the hour will be for him to return. But instead, Jesus promised them accompaniment by the Holy Spirit.

Spoiler alert, we're going to hear about that happening next Sunday.

But instead of watching and waiting, staring at the sky, Jesus told the disciples that they were going to go out and be witnesses to his life and the good news of the resurrection and salvation through him. They were going to share the good news throughout all of the land. And they did. But they needed a little nudge from the angels to quit looking up. And to go and do.

We can get stuck in that temptation as well. To sit and be stagnant, looking to God for answers. But we're already equipped with the good news to share.

I needed that reminder last week. On Wednesday's my group of college friends do check in video messages. We record an update of how we're doing, what's happening, things that are going on in our lives. And I had lamented about the state of the world. It was one of those weeks where the news cycle was overwhelming and I was feeling rather helpless and hopeless. And of all the ways I was coping, I felt like I was just throwing my hands up saying, "what can I do?" But in the same video update I talked about how the day before I had made some goulash to take to a couple different people who were dealing with things and could use some comfort food. And my one friend connected my actions as my way of responding. That despite my doubts and frustrations and anxieties, there's still opportunities to show up for people,

That's how we respond as Christ's followers. Even when we are in the midst of uncertainty. When we want to just stare at the clouds and wonder when Jesus is going to return. We know that instead God has given us a calling. We are equipped with the spirit to go and accompany others. Living out the good news in our actions. Living out our faith in the ways we show up for people.

There are things that are not for us to know. And boy, as your pastor, I'd love to give you the answers to those hard questions. But the disciples didn't even know. They just went out, trusting that the spirit was with them. And we do the same. While our faith often wants answers and explanations, we're rather given a calling to go and be witnesses to Jesus' life. We don't need to have it all figured out to go and be with people. Quite often, just our presence is holy in and of itself. That is our mission. We don't have the luxury in the world today to be stagnant and wait for God to solve all our problems. But we do have promise of accompaniment. We are not alone, even if Jesus is not physically here. If the spirit was enough for the disciples to go throughout Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, to the ends of the earth, it will certainly sustain us in our mission to go and do likewise.

Our calling may not be fancy or flashy. It may not have all the answers. But it is certainly a holy mission. One that we tear our eyes from the heavens and look around to all that surrounds us. Jesus is no longer in front of us to watch, but is instead among us, within us, and continually working through us. Amen.