

On this blessed day we take heart in the everlasting promises of our ascended and ruling Lord Jesus recorded for us in the gospel according to Saint Luke, chapter 24, verses 44 to 53. Let us pray. Lord Jesus, increase our faith and understanding in you as you continue to work for your Church. Amen. Dear friends in Christ,

Spring is the one time of the year when we look forward to the preparations that the tidal wave of change outdoors brings with it. We are not nearly as excited about putting the yard and everything outside “to bed” for the winter. But in the spring, we love tuning up the lawn mower, planting the garden, cleaning up the garage and everything that goes along with getting ready for summer. Spring preparations bring a sense of excitement and fulfillment in the growing season and more time spent outdoors to come. For us as Christians, Ascension Day brings the same sense of excitement and fulfillment. **Find fulfillment in Ascension Day because Jesus has kept his Word and because Jesus will always keep his Word!**

**Find fulfillment in Ascension Day because Jesus has kept his Word!** For forty days, the risen Christ appeared to his disciples to increase their understanding of the eternal significance which the work he had completed to forgive all sins and to grant eternal life in heaven had for the world. Now those forty days had ended. It was time for Jesus to entrust the proclamation of that message to his disciples (students) by making them apostles (those sent with the gospel to the whole world). At his ascension, Jesus gave his disciples that great commission, which the church will continue to carry out until our Lord returns the same way he left on Ascension Day. “Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Jesus could say this to his disciples because he had fulfilled every aspect of God’s Word concerning our salvation. “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.” Not one prophecy or requirement of the Savior’s work was left unfulfilled by Jesus. He has done everything to rescue us from sin, from death and from the clutches of Satan’s traps. That glorious Ascension Day gospel message of, “My mission is fully accomplished for you,” from Jesus himself is our dearest treasure and our greatest confidence.

But do we always treat it that way? Ascension Day can raise up its fair share of doubts in our hearts, leading us at times to doubt and falter in holding the promises of Jesus as our dearest treasure. When we hurt or worry, Jesus’ visible departure from this world can seem confusing. Jesus, why couldn’t you have just stayed here with us? We would be so comforted by being able to hug you or look you in the eye and see the warm love there for us, in spite of our sins. What a shot in the arm for our faith it would be to reach out and touch the nail marks in your hands and feet. And let’s not forget the fact that we would be seeing you alive after death. However, we live by faith and not by sight. And Jesus has promised us that living like that brings eternal blessings.

Jesus has done everything to keep us in the Word he fulfilled for us. The Lord proclaims it to us himself. "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." He sends us the Holy Spirit to bring us the comfort and counsel our souls need. The Bible will never disappear, no matter how much the forces of evil try to undermine or destroy it. Jesus draws near to us in the miracles of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion. In these blessed sacraments, Jesus makes us his own dearly beloved. He keeps us in the one true faith. And our risen Christ promises to sustain us through these means of grace until we reach the finish line of faith, our home at his right hand in the glories of heaven.

Find fulfillment in the Word of God Jesus has fulfilled for you on Ascension Day! Jesus beyond a shadow of a doubt has kept every part of Scripture, declaring himself with power to be the Son of God. Our Ascended Christ, through his death on the accursed tree of the cross, has vanquished Satan. Jesus has totally forgiven all of our sins. Because our Redeemer lives after death, we too shall live. And not only from his heavenly throne, but also from within our hearts, Jesus continues to assure us that all of this is most certainly true. What a great fulfillment of our whole faith Ascension really is!

Nothing we have in this life will last forever. As much as we might like to have the gardens and fields continue to bear crops all year, we know they will be gone by the middle of November. Some products we buy claim to have a lifetime guarantee on them, but even that is usually limited to certain parts or the suggested lifespan of the product. Craftsmen hand tools come guaranteed forever, but how will they stand behind that promise when their parent company no longer exists? The promises of Jesus and the work he does as our ascended Lord are different. They are guaranteed forever, and Jesus will always stand behind them. Because of that, we can **find fulfillment in Ascension Day because Jesus will always keep his Word!**

The unknown of what the future will bring and the unchangeable nature of the past are two of the greatest fears many people have. We have said or thought some pretty awful things since last Sunday, haven't we? Others have said or done some pretty awful things to us. Are you feeling neglected, lonely or sad today? Who of us is secretly hurting? The burdens we carry in life can at times seem to be too much for us to bear. We feel we are doing it all alone. Where are you Jesus, when I am hurting? Our lives sometimes feel like they are spiraling out of control. And we can control so little of what happens to us in life, why should we even try sometimes? Precisely because he knows we feel all of those things in our hearts at times, Jesus has given us the comfort of his ascension for our troubled hearts and minds.

But our ascended Christ has removed those fears with his never-ending love. We can be certain Jesus will always keep his word because of his presence, his place and his power. We have that assurance direct from the Lord today. "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." Nothing, not even the gates of hell, can stop the spread of the church in the world for the rest of time.

Jesus has blessed us with his everlasting presence. As he told his first disciples, so he also tells us. "And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age." He will never leave us or forsake us in our times of need. When we feel unworthy, unloved or underappreciated by those around us, we can run to Jesus for comfort. When the weight of our sins becomes too much, Jesus comes to us with his presence in a special way in his Holy Supper to assure us of forgiveness with his own body and blood.

Jesus has left us, not to abandon us, but for our blessing. "When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven." Jesus returned to heaven, not to glory in his own accomplishments, but to make our forever home ready for the day of our arrival. As he said to his disciples before his death, "I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am." Jesus left us here on earth to make sure we have a permanent home prepared for us in heaven.

Most importantly, Jesus has left us with his power. Just as he did for the first disciples, Jesus still sends the Holy Spirit to strengthen us today. "I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high." That power changed the hearts of his first disciples to see the joy in his departure, and it still changes our hearts the same way today. After the ascension, the disciples worshipped Jesus and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. They continually praised God and shared Jesus with others. Take a hint from the disciples. Let Ascension Day fuel your joy in Jesus this summer. Ascension brings fulfillment to our Christian faith in the unique way only Jesus can. Follow Jesus ever more closely. You have witnessed his saving work and seen its completion guaranteed today. Find fulfillment in Jesus because our Savior has kept his Word and because Jesus will always keep it for you. Amen.