

Ascension Day is one of those Church festivals which is neglected by the large majority of believers and Christian groups in this country. We all know the story of the Ascension, but may fail to grasp the significance of it.

Growing up in a (basically) Baptist context, the only two events I celebrated with my family were Christmas and Easter. Advent began to come onto my radar when I was young, but it was merely a way of counting down days to Christmas; it lacked theological significance on its own. We knew what Good Friday was, but we rarely had a church service to meditate on the sufferings of our Lord. Given the fact that a deeper understanding of the traditional Christian calendar was sorely lacking, it is no wonder that the Feast of the Ascension of Christ was completely absent from my thinking.

As Anglican Christians, part of the catholic Church that comes from the British Isles, we enter into such feast days with joy because we understand that the Salvation won for us by Jesus results from His entire ministry. This includes His pre-incarnate ministry (the Angel of the Lord), His Incarnation, His Circumcision, Baptism, Fasting, and Temptation. It includes His ministry of proclaiming the Kingdom of God, or healing, and of teaching. It includes His institution of the Lord's Supper, His arrest, His suffering and passion, His death, and His Resurrection and post-resurrection appearances. And it includes the establishment of the Kingdom and the regeneration of the followers of the Kingdom by the

sending and indwelling of the Holy Ghost. And of course it also includes the end of all things, when Christ shall return to establish His Kingdom physically, when we shall be given glorified bodies, and enter into our eternal rest. The catholic view of salvation is much broader and more glorious than an internalized, spiritualized, individualized, experience now followed by going to heaven one day.

For us, here at Christ the King Anglican Church, this is our patronal feast day as well. Why? Because in the Ascension, Jesus Christ, the Son of Man, ascends to God the Father, the Ancient of Days as He is called in the book of the Prophet Daniel, and takes up His throne to rule the world. The Feast of the Ascension is the Feast of the enthronement of Jesus Christ as King. We see this directly in the first lesson from Daniel 7, verses 13 and 14, today's morning prayer service:

I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.

And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

This vision represents our present reality. Jesus now reigns in heaven and on earth from the Throne at the right hand of God. “But preacher,” you may say, “I look around at the state of the world today, and it does not look like Jesus reigns, because the world looks like a mess to me.” To this I would make a couple of replies.

First, no king does the work of building or expanding the kingdom himself. The same could be said for any organization. Effective leaders give instructions to trusted followers who then execute the instructions. This is how the Kingdom of God is administered upon the earth from Christ's heavenly throne. We are the trusted followers of Jesus, who receive our instructions through the Holy Scripture, through the Holy Church, interpreted to us by the Spirit of God who dwells in us. We then go out “to do all such good works as [He has] prepared for us to walk in.” We are means whereby the Kingdom of God is maintained and is increased.

In the Ascension, Christ takes His throne as King and sends the Holy Spirit to guide us into righteousness and godly obedience. Let us not forget, however, that Jesus is no lazy monarch. He does not give instructions and then ignore us. He is not a dead monarch either. Christ is living and active and loving. He takes an active role in our lives, He rejoices in our devoted service to Him, and He mourns with us in our struggles and failures. He is not far away and disconnected, but He is powerfully imminent. He is at hand. In fact, the

sacrament of communion models this reality. He in us, and we in Him. In Christ, we are one with Christ.

The question set before us on this our patronal feast day, is not whether or not these ideas accurately reflect reality. They do. The question for us is whether or not we will live into this reality. Are we going to fixate upon the disaster of the world around us or are we going to understand that Christ working in us, is the fix for the broken world?

Each one of you must answer that question for himself. But let it be known that Christ the King Anglican Church is dedicated to incarnating this reality in our community. We have work to do. Our King commands us to go into all the world making disciples and baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. I'm pretty sure that "all the world" includes the five cities area.

May God forgive us when we neglect our mission, when we get discouraged, and when we choose to follow our own desires instead of following into the path of sacrifice following the example of Christ Himself. And may we redouble our commitment to be a worshipping parish, a loving and caring parish, an evangelistic parish, and a parish that lives in the reality of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Now may we prepare for the Holy Communion. Be fed at the King's table. Be strengthened to obey the King's commands. AMEN.