

Today we celebrate the Ascension of Christ, forty days after Easter according to Acts chapter 1 verse 3. The narratives are fairly consistent between Luke and Acts for Luke wrote both of these books. Mark 16:19 refers to the Ascension in even briefer terms, "So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God." Christ with the disciples went out of the city toward Bethany. The texts don't say that Christ was on a mountain top, but in our collective imagination, that is the setting Christians have envisioned through time.

It might not be obvious to us at first what Christ did once He entered into the spiritual realm. We read in Genesis, that God rested on the seventh day. This isn't because He was tired – God doesn't get tired. Likewise, we see in various places in scripture that Christ sits at the right hand of God – again, this isn't because He is tired. The right hand is the hand of action and skill. It represent the position of authority. And Christ is seated upon a throne from which He exercises the authority of God. Christ is seated at the right hand of God because it is from there that He rules. It is from there that He is engaged in conquering the world. It is from there that He dispatches His emissaries to carry the gospel throughout the world, who conquer it through the power of the love of Christ.

Our parish is named Christ the King in recognition that Christ is, now, in actual fact, the King of all. Unfortunately, there are many Christians who don't really understand this. They are waiting for an earthly, millennial, kingdom before they admit that Christ reigns. In fact, they are of the same opinion as the disciples in the epistle lesson who are looking for the kingdom to come in by force. They focus upon all those outside of the Kingdom as evidence that Christ is not yet King. But just because not all have submitted to Christ does not mean that Christ doesn't rule. His Kingdom advances by love and therefore progressively grows over time as individuals are won over. Interpreting the bible through the newspapers, through the lens of current events, cannot capture the increase of the Kingdom over time. Such an

interpretation is not able to see the advancement that the Kingdom of God has made since the ministry of Jesus, since His redemption of the world, and since His enthronement in heaven. Taking the long view, considering the entire history of the church, establishes the fact that Jesus Christ reigns.

We read this morning that Christ commissioned the Apostles, and through them all believers, to go into the world with the gospel, so that the Kingdom of God comes to all the earth, so that the heavenly kingdom becomes an earthly one as well. In other words, each one of us here today bears the commissioning of Christ to bring the nations into the fold. Will the advancement of the Kingdom eliminate all pain and sorrow from humanity? Probably not, for that is reserved for the second coming of Christ, when the resurrection of the dead happens and when we who believe in Christ will have our sinful natures removed. For us, here and now in this world, this existence, we will always have work to do. We will always have challenges of faith to overcome, and many opportunities to grow in Christlikeness. We will always encounter individuals who need to know about the love of Christ, and that is our job as ambassadors of Christ.

However, if we don't understand this, if we don't really think that Christ has ascended and is reigning as king right now and is empowering us and guiding us with His Holy Spirit, then we won't even attempt the mission, let alone succeed in it. This is the great challenge and the great blessing of our parish's name. If we believe that Christ is King, as our very existence claims, then we must be about the business of the King. Our Challenge therefore, as Sons and Daughter of the King, is to live what we profess. It is to conduct ourselves in this world knowing that the living Christ reigns and that all things are in His hand, and this allows us to live with the confidence of Christ.

Does this mean that the tasks that we are called to undertake are easy? Not at all. Kingdom

missions are dangerous, they are fraught, they demand complete commitment to the King. And yet, have no doubt, that service for our King brings a joy and peace in this world that is simply beyond comprehension for those outside Christ's Kingdom. Over time, as our faith is tested by the trials, the victories, and even the failures, maybe especially the failures, our trust in Christ will grow.

So may we be encouraged this morning to focus our eyes on the heavenly reality, to live as loving subjects in the heavenly realm. May we ardently hold fast to the King. May we give our complete service to Him, like the disciples who returned from witnessing the Ascension with great joy and were given to continually worshiping and praising God. And may the grace of Jesus Christ always go before us and behind us in our mission until it finally bring us everlastingly into His presence.

In The Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. AMEN.