

*Order of Worship*  
*Seventh Sunday of Easter/ Ascension Day*  
*May 24, 2020*

(Read the prayers and scripture readings and recite the Creed aloud, even if you are by yourself, in order to hear with the ears each one. Sing or read the final hymn aloud.)

Prepare for worship: Sit in silence or with soft music for a few moments.

Call to Worship: *Sanctuary (TFWS 2164)*  
Lord, prepare me to be a sanctuary, pure and holy, tried and true.  
With thanksgiving, I'll be a living sanctuary for you.

Opening Prayer:

Holy God, we celebrate your presence this day. For the gift of resurrection, we give you thanks and praise. For the gift of your ongoing presence in our lives, we rejoice. Overwhelm us with your presence here and wherever we may be, that we might be overwhelmed with joy. In joyous gratitude we pray. Amen

Affirmation of Faith: Apostle's Creed

Prayer:

Everlasting God, your eternal Christ once dwelt on earth, confined by time and space. Give us faith to discern in every time and place the presence among us of you who are head over all things and fills all, even Jesus Christ our ascended Lord who taught us to pray.

The Lord's Prayer

Prayer of Illumination:

Open our ears that we may hear and our hearts and minds that we may receive your word  
O Lord our rock and redeemer.

(After each reading take two to three minutes to reflect upon the meaning of the passage to you today.)

Epistle Reading	Ephesians 1:15-23
Psalm 47	
New Testament Reading	Acts 1:1-11
Special Music	John Zeigler
Gospel Reading	Luke 24:44-53
Sermon	Waiting for Power to Witness

Hymn            *Standing on the Promises (UMH 374)*

1. Standing on the promises of Christ my King,  
through eternal ages let his praises ring;  
glory in the highest, I will shout and sing,  
standing on the promises of God.

Refrain:

Standing, standing,  
standing on the promises of Christ my Savior;  
standing, standing,  
I'm standing on the promises of God.

2. Standing on the promises that cannot fail,  
when the howling storms of doubt and fear assail,  
by the living Word of God I shall prevail,  
standing on the promises of God.

(Refrain)

3. Standing on the promises of Christ the Lord,  
bound to him eternally by love's strong cord,  
overcoming daily with the Spirit's sword,  
standing on the promises of God.

(Refrain)

4. Standing on the promises I cannot fall,  
listening every moment to the Spirit's call,  
resting in my Savior as my all in all,  
standing on the promises of God.

(Refrain)

Benediction:

Go forth with the presence of the ascended Christ who though ascended remains with us.  
Amen

Response        *God Be With You till We Meet Again*

God be with you till we meet again;  
by his counsels guide, uphold you,  
with his sheep securely fold you;  
God be with you till we meet again.

***Waiting for Power to Witness***  
***5/24/2020***

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

The ascension of Jesus after the resurrection is one of the main tenets of our Christian faith. The two traditional creeds of the Church, the Nicene and Apostles', both affirm the Ascension. Both creeds say, with slightly different wording, that Jesus suffered, was crucified, died, was buried, rose on the third day and ascended into heaven. We believe that Jesus did not rise from the dead only to die again a natural death but that Jesus was taken up to heaven while in bodily form to sit at the right hand of the Father.

The only Biblical accounts of the Ascension of Jesus are found in Luke/Acts, the passages we read today. While there are discrepancies in the two accounts, we must remember that the Gospels, including Acts, were written to tell the theological story, not the historical story as we view history today.

In Luke, the Ascension is the end of the story. The passage we read today was the last part of the story of Jesus' post resurrection appearance to the disciples. The disciples are gathered. Cleopas and the other disciple rush in from Emmaus and hear that Jesus appeared to Simon and they tell their story of their encounter on the road. Suddenly, Jesus appears in their midst. Jesus tells them to look at his nail scarred hands and feet and touch him. He asks for something to eat and he eats a piece of fish. This is evidence that this is flesh and bone Jesus, not some spirit, apparition or hallucination. This is Jesus, bodily resurrected from the dead, proof that there is resurrection.

Jesus takes them as far as Bethany, which is across the Kidron Valley from Jerusalem on the other side of the Mount of Olives. There Jesus turns, blesses them and is carried up to Heaven. This is the end of Jesus ministry on earth. It is the end of Jesus' physical presence on earth.

In Acts, the Ascension is the beginning of the story. It begins the story of the continuing action of Jesus in the world through the disciples. It is the beginning of the story of the formation of the Body of Christ, the Church. It is the story of how God is continuing to act to redeem creation through the life of Jesus. In Acts, the Ascension is the beginning of the continuing work of salvation through Jesus.

Thus, there are discrepancies. In Luke it is the end of the story while in Acts it is the beginning of the story.

Even with the discrepancies we can see three very important commonalities in the two stories. These commonalities speak to the disciples and to us today, as the story of the gospel did not end 2000 years ago but is a continuing story that is still ongoing.

The first is that we are to be witnesses. The disciples were to be witnesses to the salvation that comes by repentance, by turning from the world's rule and toward God's rule, and God's forgiveness of sin, that God does not hold sin against us. The disciples were to be witnesses of what they had seen God doing through Jesus to redeem creation. They were to proclaim this story to all nations, including gentiles. They were to be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to all the ends of the earth. They were to be witnesses to Jesus wherever they were and in everything that they did.

Likewise, we are to be witnesses to Jesus. We all have stories of how God has worked in our lives. We heard many last year as we had camp meeting services and you gave your testimony, your witness. It is not just in verbally sharing our stories that we witness, but also, and probably more powerfully, in how we live our lives. It is how we demonstrate the love of God to others.

And this may be in some very simple ways. In my devotional one of the readings for reflection was from a monk who lived with two other brothers. There wasn't much coffee. In his anxiety about not having any, he went into the kitchen before the others and drank all that was left. He pointed out that that was the difference between him and Jesus. Jesus would have left the coffee for the others while he excluded his brothers from the enjoyment of the coffee. In simple acts, such as saving the coffee we so desire for others, we are witnesses to Jesus in every place and time.

But Jesus did not want the disciples to run out immediately and start witnessing. He told them to wait, to stay in Jerusalem and wait. Jesus told them to stay in Jerusalem and wait for the promise of the Father. In a way Jesus was telling them to wait for further instructions, to wait for the promise of the Father.

We want to act. We want to get out there and witness to the wonderful things God has done for us. God has promised us glory. God has promised us strength. God has promised us power. But we want it **now!** We want that answer to prayer **now!** We want God's call for us to come **now** and be clear and easy. But Jesus tells us to wait. Working at DMH, we often said that policy making was made with a ready, fire, aim, mentality. Let's go do it without making a cohesive plan. We don't wait for God.

In this pandemic world in which we live we want to set a date and come back to church the way it was before March 15, which was the last Sunday we met together. But church will not be the way it was before March 15 and we need to wait for the promise of God as to how we are to be the church in this pandemic world. We need to wait for God's promise and God's guidance.

Jesus instructed the disciples to wait so they would receive the promise of the Father. The promise of the Father that they would receive is the power of the Holy Spirit. They would receive the power to be the continuing presence of Jesus in the world. Therefore, they could go and be Jesus' witnesses throughout the world.

The promise of the Holy Spirit is ours to receive. It is the promise of what we are saved **for** now that we are saved from sin. The promise of the Holy Spirit is what guides us to be the continuing presence of Jesus in the world so we can go and be God's witnesses in the world.

So, the disciples went back to Jerusalem and waited. They went back and prayed for God's guidance. They prayed for God's guidance to replace Judas to complete the twelve. They may have been frightened and unsure of themselves. They may have been eager and impatient to get on with their witness. They may have been confused. But they waited for the promise of the Father. Because they waited, they received the promise of the Father and boy was it a promise!

During this time, we may be frightened and unsure. We may be eager and impatient for things to "get back to normal" including church. We may be confused. But if we pray, if we wait, we will receive the promise that the Father has for us. We will receive the Holy Spirit so that we can be witnesses for God's kingdom. We receive God's guidance of how God want us to be and do church here at Trinity. It will be different but we can receive the power to be the church

that God wants us to be. So, for now we may wait until we receive the Father's promise for Trinity to be God's witness in and for our community.



1201 Mohawk Drive  
West Columbia, SC 29169  
(803) 794-7777

John D. Jordan  
Pastor

Dear Trinity Family,

Many of you may have heard that the Bishop has said that churches can reopen for in-person worship June 14. That is the date that churches can reopen but it is not a mandatory date. In his statement the Bishop states that each church should reopen for in-person worship when that church decides based on the context of each particular church.

As we look at reopening for in-person worship here at Trinity the worship committee and church council are working on developing a plan for returning to worship. Our concerns will include how to and if we can maintain social distancing, especially as we enter and exit the sanctuary. Also, how will the service be? Congregational singing and the sacraments will not be part of the service for some time, for these increase the spread of the virus. We may also be looking for alternative times and ways to come together in smaller groups. Regardless, we will continue to have the service online and work toward live streaming so you may participate on line in real time.

As we plan to reopen for in-person worship, we would like to hear from you. What are your concerns? What are your ideas for worshipping differently? Email me at [jdjordan@umcsc.org](mailto:jdjordan@umcsc.org) or call me at 803-351-0975. Please leave a voice message and I will get back to you.

As I told the council, we are in uncharted waters. No one has any training on how to be the church in a pandemic but our biggest concern is for the health and safety of the congregation. As your pastor I feel a little like a hairdresser from Albany, Ga, which was one of the early hotspots

in Georgia. When told that she could reopen she said that she did not think that she would but that she would wait. She felt her customers would understand as they wanted to look good, but not in a casket. I want us to come together to worship but I do not want our coming together to lead to people coming together for funerals.

Shalom,

John