

I.N.I.

Ascension Day
May 14, 2015
Acts 1:8-9

In Christ Jesus, our Ascended Lord and King, who rules all things, both in heaven and on earth, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Very often in our family driving vacation trips we would see the road sign “Scenic View Ahead.” But since we were so often in a hurry to get to where we were going we did not stop. Now as I have gotten older and do not have children in the car with me as I drive, I think I should stop at these “Scenic View” spots. One wonders how many beautiful views and fantastic sights we might have missed by being too busy to “get somewhere.”

Well during this pretty busy spring season with buying and planting flowers and gardens, mowing, spring cleaning and a host of other activities like graduations, confirmations, weddings, etc. we are taking the time tonight to stop and view Jesus’ Ascension. And what a “Scenic View” we see!

It is 40 days after Easter and the risen Jesus is standing with His followers on the Mount of Olives. He has spent much of the past 40 days speaking with His disciples making final preparations with them for His departure.

The Scriptures have been fulfilled. The cross was put up and Jesus was put on it. He suffered the torments of hell and proclaimed, **“IT IS FINISHED!”** He died and was buried in the tomb and it was emptied on the third day as He prophesied. Jesus showed Himself alive with the words, **“Peace be with you!”** Jesus has finished His mission of salvation and is now returning to His glorious home in heaven.

So what does the sight, the “scenic view” of our ascending Savior show you and me when we stop to look? We see Jesus leaving, not with half a sacrifice for sin, but a complete one. All sins paid for in full. All transgressions washed away. All prophecies fulfilled. His work of salvation requires no finishing touches, no loose ends to be tied together by me or by you. His Ascension shows you and me that **WE HAVE BEEN SANCTIFIED (made holy and set apart) THROUGH THE OFFERING OF THE BODY OF JESUS CHRIST ONCE FOR ALL.** Jesus mission is done!

This “Scenic View” of Jesus’ Ascension shows us that heaven is also our home for we too will ascend some day. For Jesus promised: **“IN MY FATHER’S HOUSE ARE MANY MANSIONS; IF IT WERE NOT SO, I WOULD HAVE TOLD YOU. I GO TO PREPARE A PLACE FOR YOU. AND IF I GO AND PREPARE A PLACE FOR YOU, I WILL COME AGAIN AND RECEIVE YOU TO MYSELF; THAT WHERE I AM, THERE YOU MAY BE ALSO.”**

This “Scenic View” of Jesus’ Ascension shows us that Jesus is going to heaven to sit on the Father’s right hand and rule heaven and earth. Paul tells us: **HE (God, Father) RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD AND SEATED HIM AT HIS RIGHT HAND IN THE HEAVENLY PLACES, FAR ABOVE ALL PRINCIPALITY AND POWER AND MIGHT AND DOMINION, AND EVERY NAME THAT IS NAMED, NOT ONLY IN THIS AGE BUT ALSO IN THAT WHICH IS TO COME. AND HE PUT ALL THINGS UNDER HIS FEET, AND GAVE HIM TO BE HEAD OVER ALL THINGS TO THE CHURCH, WHICH IS HIS BODY, THE FULLNESS OF HIM WHO FILLS ALL IN ALL.**

And this “Scenic View” of Jesus’ Ascension shows us that even as Jesus’ mission is done ours has only begun. In vs. 8 of our text Jesus said: **“...YOU SHALL BE WITNESSES TO ME IN JERUSALEM, AND IN ALL JUDEA AND SAMARIA, AND TO THE END OF THE EARTH.”**

That’s our mission---to tell lost souls about their Savior’s accomplished, completed, finished work of salvation. That everything has been done to save us sinners. The ascending Savior reminds me that as long as there is one soul who still has not heard, my mission is not done!

Amen.

Our second text this evening is found recorded in Luke 24:50-51.

We talked about our “Scenic View” of Jesus’ Ascension, but what did the disciples see on that day? How could they miss the nail prints in His hands stretched out over them as He blessed them rising into the sky? At once they must have remembered Calvary’s cross with its agony and pain. At once they must have remembered the cause behind that cross---their many sins and their Savior’s great, amazing love. In love the sinless One had come down to earth to be defiled by man’s sin. In love the eternal One had come to face our death and to fill our grave for us.

But they also saw that those nail prints were not on dead hands folded across a lifeless chest. Throughout those 40 days they had seen and heard their risen Savior assure them of full forgiveness, perfect peace, and eternal life in heaven. Now as He leaves them with His work done, those hands lifted in blessing over them reminded them of what He has done, His completed mission.

Remember this was Jesus’ glorified body. He could pass through walls, appear and disappear. Time and space could not hold Him, so why does He still have the nail marks in His hands? They show that He paid for our sins! They show how much He loved us.

THEY REMIND US OF HOW MUCH HE HAS DONE FOR US.

How that sight of Jesus’ nail print hands must have remained with the disciples. When troubles arose, when everything seemed hopeless and the future looked dark they needed only to remember His hands stretched out over them in blessing. When temptations came, those same hands were there, always ready to strengthen them and bless them again and again. They knew that in the face of sorrow and sufferings, danger and death, Jesus was not off in a secluded heaven, unaware and unconcerned about them. He was holding His loving, living hands over them. It is no wonder they returned to Jerusalem with great joy. Those lifted nail print hands reminded them of how much Jesus would still do for them.

It’s easy for me to see Jesus’ loving hands lifted in blessing over me when the sun shines brightly and everything is going well. But in fact, sometimes in such days I might not even look for His hands, to my shame and I forget upon whom I need to depend for everything in my life.

But then there are other days when I search eagerly for those lifted hands because I know that I cannot exist without them holding me up. I am sure you have experienced such days. When you’ve had to lay a loved one in the grave. When you’ve had a lab report come back with news of health problems, when you’ve been wheeled into an operating room, when you get up to a day of loneliness and sadness, when your heart aches with sorrow.

What would we do without those loving arms in blessing. Who else can hold us close and wipe away both our tears and our fears. Yes, Jesus’ nail print hands raised over the disciples on that Ascension Day also

REMINDS US OF HOW MUCH JESUS STILL DOES FOR US.

Lord Jesus, who dost love me, Oh, spread Thy wings above me and shield me from alarm!

Though evil may assail me, Thy mercy will not fail me; I rest in Thy protecting arms.

Amen.