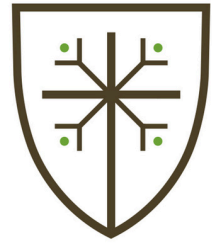


SERMON NOTES



May 17, 2026

SERMON INFO

TITLE

"Ascension Hope"

PREACHER

Rev. Josh Keller

TEXTS

Acts 1:6-11

1 Peter 5:5-11

John 17:6-11

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What mistaken assumptions do we often make about life in God's kingdom?
2. What comfort do we find in the knowledge that the resurrected and ascended Jesus rules over all the earth?

SERMON IN SUMMARY

This Sunday, we looked at the event in Jesus' life on earth that is most often overlooked, his ascension from earth into the heavenly places. In his sermon, Josh looked at the questions, "What is happening in the ascension?" and "Why does the ascension matter?"

Mistaken Assumptions

The disciples had just watched Jesus crucified and then resurrected. They are watching the salvation of God promised in the Old Testament Scriptures unfolding in front of them. So, their question in the text is a natural one. But their question also makes a lot of assumptions. It assumes the time of work is over and everything is now going to be easy. It assumes that the coming kingdom is what they are used to: a Davidic kingdom – that power will be taken out of the hands of the Romans and given to the Jews. They assume that they will have power and prestige in this new kingdom. Like the disciples, we all too often assume that God is supposed to make our lives easy in the ways that we are familiar with.

Jesus reorients these assumptions and expectations. God's redemption is still ongoing. It won't be easy, but there is a finish line fixed by God's authority. They must only trust. Jesus also tells them they will receive power, but not the kind the disciples are talking about. They will receive the presence of God himself in their lives through the Spirit. Jesus is doing something greater and beyond their understanding and asks them (and us) to trust him as he sends them out into it.

Visual Illustration

While he is asking them to trust him, Jesus bodily ascends from the earth and is covered by a cloud. This isn't just an accident of nature, but the very real presence of God's Shekinah glory taking Jesus from the physical world to the heavens. To those watching, this would have immediately brought to mind God in the pillar of cloud leading the Israelites out of Egypt, God in the cloud at Mt. Sinai, and the vision from Daniel 7 of the Son of Man ascending in a cloud to the throne room of heaven. Jesus is not disappearing or retiring. It is his coronation, when he goes to the place of direction and rule. He is not being crowned on earth because he reigns over all the earth. He is fulfilling all the Old Testament Scriptures and sitting down to rule his universal kingdom. Visually, Christ is bringing us into God's presence, his throne room.

In Leviticus, the first sacrifice that was made before you could go into God's presence was the whole burnt offering sacrifice. The entire animal was burned up into the sky,

ascending to God. In his ascension, Jesus completes all of the sacrifices, including this one, and brings his people into the presence of God. God wants his people with him and near him. The Son of the Father has access that no one else does, and all those who are in him share in that access.

Martyrs

Being filled with the Spirit will enable God's people to be witnesses wherever he sends us. But being a witness is not just telling about something you saw. It's not just a set of facts. The Greek word for witness is "martyr." What you witness transforms your very life. For every Christian, there is some type of martyrdom. You cannot stay the same. There are little deaths to self and to the world always taking place. You give away control of your life because you know you're not in the best vantage point to decide what is best for you. You know that because of the ascension, Christ is seated on his throne and ruling all things. And because of the ascension, Christ has brought us into full access to the presence of God the Father. So, he calls us to trust God's presence in us and trust the work he is doing through his Spirit in our lives.