

"WE ALMOST MISSED IT"
SUNDAY, JUNE 1, 2025
LUKE 24:36-53, ACTS 1:1-14

Pastor Mark's message on Sunday emphasized the often-overlooked significance of Jesus' Ascension, which took place 40 days after Jesus' resurrection. Pastor Mark mentioned that the Ascension is as integral to the gospel narrative as is Christmas, Good Friday, and Easter, for a number of reasons.

First of all, the ascension re-united heaven and earth. Jesus, in His flesh, ascended into the presence of God. Secondly, the ascension of Jesus Christ is the promise of Jesus' continuing intercession for humanity. We are still being saved by virtue of Christ's ascension.

Thirdly, the ascension was the "hand-off" of the mission. Jesus has entrusted His followers with the responsibility of spreading the gospel. Pastor Mark called on us to embrace our identity, not just as disciples, but as "missionary disciples;" with being disciples who make disciples. Pastor Mark urged us to recognize the significance of the ascension and called on us to actively engage in the work that Jesus initiated.

ACTS 1:1-14

In my former book, *Theophilus*, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day He was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles He had chosen. After His suffering, He presented Himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that He was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. On one occasion, while He was eating with them, He gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days, you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

So they gathered around Him and asked Him, "Lord, is this the time when you are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

After He said this, He was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid Him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as He was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen Him go into heaven."

Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem. When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

LUKE 24:36-53

While they were still talking about this, Jesus Himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have."

When He had said this, He showed them His hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, He asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" They gave Him a piece of broiled fish, and He took it and ate it in their presence.

He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."

Then He opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

When He had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, He lifted up His hands and blessed them. While He was blessing them, He left them and was taken up into heaven. Then they worshiped Him.

QUESTIONS FOR CONVERSATION

1. As hard as it is to imagine, how does the truth that Jesus is still incarnate in heaven impact you? How does it challenge your thinking?
2. How might understanding Jesus' intercessory role in heaven impact your daily life and prayer practices? What practical difference would it make to consider that our Lord *"lives to intercede?"*
3. Do you think of yourself as instrumental in continuing the work that Jesus began? What gets in the way of thinking of ourselves that way?
4. Does the idea of being responsible for spreading the gospel challenge or inspire you? What fears or doubts come to mind when you think about sharing your faith?
5. What might change in our lives if we began considering ourselves "missionary disciples" instead of just as "disciples?"
6. What specific actions could you take to fulfill this responsibility?

PROMPTS FOR ACTION AND RESPONSE

1. Commit to being a more faithful intercessory prayer? Create a list of those who don't have a relationship with the Lord yet and pray for them daily.
2. Engage in Community Outreach: Identify a local community need or group that you feel passionate about and involve yourself in it for the sake of the gospel.
3. Start a Discipleship Group: Initiate a small group focused on spiritual growth and discipleship. Encourage participants to share their faith journeys and explore ways to invite others into the Christian community, fostering an environment of making disciples.