

The scene is almost comical. The time had come for Jesus to leave his disciples. The disciples had seen it all. Many of them were there from the changing of water into wine to God's greatest display of power and glory in Jesus death and resurrection. They had experienced the good news of salvation for themselves and for all people. There was nothing more important. Nothing more urgent. Nothing more necessary. Yet what did they do after Jesus ascended into heaven? They stood there looking intently, staring into the deep blue sky! You can almost imagine their jaws hanging open and a blank look on their faces. It took a two celestial beings to get them moving. When the angels asked the obvious: "***Men of Galilee, why do you stand here looking into the sky?***" "*I don't know. What are we supposed to do now?*"

We may laugh a little bit at their reaction, but don't we often react the same way. "*What are we supposed to do now?*" You and I really shouldn't have to ask that question. We've seen things the disciples didn't see. It's all been recorded for us on the pages of Holy Scripture. But there are times, aren't there, maybe more than we want to admit, that we act as though we don't know what to do now? The only thing that we know for sure is that we should be and could be doing more, but there's still a question mark in here (head) and in here (heart). Why did Jesus put me here? Why did he arrange my life the way that he did? Why did God give me the family I have and the friends I know and the job I go to? What's my purpose here? Today as we ask these questions I invite you to **Look up to Your Ascended Lord**. We find our purpose in this final chapter of Luke. This purpose involves: **I. Learning from Him II. Being His Witnesses** and finally **II. Worshiping Him**.

What are we supposed to do now? We must first **Learn from our Savior**. Before we can do anything we must first come to our power source. We must first sit at our Savior's feet and listen to him. This dispels doubt. This motivates us to act. Think of what happened when Jesus left his disciples the first time when he was arrested and then crucified. Peter, the one who said that he would rather suffer all then fall away from Christ, looked to himself for strength and ended up denying his Savior three times. Thomas, the rationalist, wanted some empirical proof and fell into ungodly doubt. "***If I don't see him with my own eyes, I'll never believe it!***" Both looked to themselves instead of to their Savior and fell into doubt and sin.

The same can happen to us can't it? Instead of looking up to our ascended Lord, instead of searching his Word for comfort and hope, instead of falling to our knees in prayer and petition, we often rely on our own strength and wisdom. After all we are Americans – self-made men and women. We are "do-it-ourselves." I got myself into this mess, and I'll get myself out. Unfortunately at times we trust ourselves more than we trust God and then when the problem is bigger than us we fall into doubt and sin.

Jesus understood his disciple's weaknesses and he understands ours as well, so he points us to our true power source. He directs our attention away from ourselves to himself. That's what he did in his final moments with his disciples. He wanted them to know that he is God's Son and the Savior of the world who had promised from the beginning of time. Look at what he tells his disciples in verse 44: "***Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.***" The Old Testament is like a beautiful picture frame with gold trim and an intricate design. The detail on the carving makes it appealing to the eye. Yet without a painting the frame is just a frame – it is incomplete. Without Christ the frame of the Old Testament would be incomplete. *He* is the magnificent picture for which the frame has been designed. An artist that I once knew told me that one of the worst compliments that she could hear at an art show was, "*Wow, I just love the frame!*" The frame is supposed to direct our eyes to what is inside. Christ wanted his disciples to remember that he was inside. He was the glorious painting planned by God and carried out in time.

Oh to have been there at that Bible Class on the shores of Galilee. Luke tells us: "***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."*** Christ is the key to understanding all of God's Word. Everything must be understood in light of his suffering, death, and resurrection. Without this God-given perspective, it is like holding your nose inches from an impressionist painting. You see nothing but dots and globs of paint. But when we see Christ it's like backing up to see the painting in all its beauty and splendor.

Christ opened their minds. What did he say? I can't wait to ask him in heaven. Perhaps he said: "I'm the seed of the woman who came to crush the devil's head." I'm the suffering servant spoken of by Isaiah who was pierced and crushed for your transgressions." I'm the one that David was talking about when he

wrote about a body that would never see decay. Even this message about me was prophesied in Scripture. Isaiah wrote: ***“Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.”*** All people will be included and you will receive my Holy Spirit to be my messengers as Joel foretold: ***“I will pour out my Spirit on all people.”***

What are we supposed to do now? The first thing that he wants us to do is to learn from him. Not just the information, but to believe that he is God’s promised Son and the Savior of all humankind. This is what empowers us to **be his witnesses.**

Listen to what Jesus says in verses 48-49: ***“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.”*** The disciples were very much involved in Jesus’ life. For three years they spent almost every waking minute with him. They had witnessed his miracles. They had seen his love. They had heard the truth. They had seen him die only to rise again three days later. Now they would be involved in a new way. They would no longer be passive by-standers, but active players. They would be God’s witnesses to the end of the earth.

What are we supposed to do now? **We are to be his witnesses.** We have seen Our Savior and all that he has done for us in the pages of Holy Scripture. We have tasted the forgiveness of sins and eternal life, and as Jesus’ disciples in the 21st Century have been given the same task as his disciples in the 1st century. I thought that there was a very interesting point brought out in the video that we watched for Bible Class last week. It said that some times we can get so bogged down in guilt about our failures to witness that we become paralyzed. The guilt from past failures and blown opportunities can actually lead us to give up. Yet the truth is, that Jesus knows about our failures. He knew that his witnesses in every age would still struggle with being his witnesses. So he gave us something more. Look at what he told his disciples: ***“I am going to send you what my Father has promised.”*** The Holy Spirit was coming and did come at Pentecost. This Spirit enters the hearts of believers and opens our eyes to see what we had trouble seeing before. He expands our minds by reminding us that there is no need for guilt. He comforts us by letting us know that even our sins of failing to witness have been left at the cross. Through the Spirit our hearts are warmed with forgiveness and empowered to go forward. Just as the Spirit would put steel in the steps of the disciples and give them courage to be witnesses, the Spirit continues to empower us today.

Be witnesses. Moms, today is a special day that we set aside to honor you. As you carry out your most important task be a witness by your words and your life. But Jesus’ words are for all of us. Let your light shine, direct your life so that all that you say and do leads others to the great and wonderful truth that Jesus is Savior and Lord. Live in the joy of knowing that through the power of the Spirit God forgives your sins and equips you with all that you need to carry out your task.

There’s one more thing that looking up to our ascended Lord causes us to do. Our text tells us that after Jesus ascended into heaven, ***“they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.”*** Before we can take on the assignment to be witnesses, we must take on the task of being worshippers. In the survey that was handed out a couple of weeks ago 28 of 47 people said that Glorifying God in Worship is to be one of the primary focuses of this congregation. That’s great because worship comes before witness. What do we do when we gather for worship? We retell the great things that God has done for us. The pastor proclaims God’s pardon. The hymns that you sing proclaim Jesus power. The choir sings of God’s grace. In worship we speak the Good News and we hear the Good News. Through the Law and Gospel the Holy Spirit comes upon us and changes us from selfish people to selfless people. He encourages us to be what Jesus has called us to be and challenges us to take the task that Christ has given us. He takes our attention off of ourselves and focuses us more clearly on our ascended Lord, who sits at God’s right hand and directs all things with his almighty power. *What should we do now?* Look up to your ascended Lord. Learn from him. Be his witnesses and keep on worshipping him. Amen.