

Pastor Roy's Sermon from May 13, 2018

Ascension Day was last Thursday. What does Jesus' Ascension mean to us today? The fact that we were not there with Jesus and his followers does not change the power of the story of Jesus' ascension. And the power of the story is not found in whether I understand exactly what happened or whether I believe the right thing *about* what happened. We can believe all the right things and still fail to experience the power of God flowing through the story. The power of God for us, right now. It's not the details, but the leading of the Spirit to engage this story of faith with our own story. Our challenge is to see the connection between your story/my story and the Jesus story. That is always the challenge when we read, study, and meditate on the ancient writings.

During the ascension Jesus' original followers suddenly realize that Jesus will never again be with them precisely as he had been, up to that point. Do you think they felt **doubly** abandoned? --By his death, and by his final departure.

But he promises to be with them by his Spirit. What will they do now? The same is true for us. Jesus is with us and yet he will never be with us as he was with his followers who learned by watching and listening.

Next week we celebrate with red that the Holy Spirit is poured out in us, the Spirit of Christ is speaking to us a story of faith. This story reveals that the presence of God fills our lives with hope and meaning. Jesus is present in a powerful way if we listen, if we watch, if we still ourselves—open ourselves to faith being formed within us. Ultimately, faith is less about what happened 2000 years ago, and more about who we are and what we do today because our story has been touched by Jesus' story.

The apostles in Acts begin to make decisions for themselves based on what Jesus taught them and showed them. They choose a new apostle to replace Judas who is also no longer among them.

The Spirit is guiding them, now, as Jesus' work on earth is done. The apostles ponder and proclaim that Jesus' teachings have eternal, lasting relevance. The life Jesus lived, the death he died, the new life of his resurrection matters for all time, for all people. As John suggests in today's reading, Jesus' life is one with God who holds all of creation together. What I take away from the Ascension of our Lord is that it is an exclamation mark. Yes, Jesus is no longer with us in body. But his Spirit is. And his Spirit is the power of life and love at work in the world today. We carry this faith in love and mercy which takes us to the least and reveals profound communion in love.

Today is Mother's Day. Our mothers and those who have had a maternal influence on us often influenced daily--early on. They imprinted their image on us. As we get older, their *daily* influence often lessens. But even with this natural progression, their influence goes with us wherever we go. Their influence is often inseparable from our own identity. For the goodness of their influence we are forever grateful. For the life they gave us, we are grateful, as well as for all the mothers and motherly presences who have gone before us in our family trees.

So it is with Jesus. We have a part in our relationship with our Ascended Lord. . . Jesus Christ. It is ours to ponder his story and take note how his story touches ours. How it informs, gives light and courage and the strength of love to our story.

Today as we remember our mothers, let us seek and be mindful of the ongoing presence of our Lord in faith as the Spirit of Christ touches our life with his story of selfless love. Amen.