



May 6, 2024

The Song of the Ascension

A seminary professor of preaching once said, “The real test of a good sermon is what you leave out.” That is, there should always be more behind the sermon, more you could have said. That’s how I felt on Sunday, preaching about the Ascension and the Second Coming. Honestly, I didn’t say much about the Ascension, choosing to focus on the Second Coming.

Liturgically, Ascension Day is Thursday, May 9.

Had Jesus lived to old age and died in his bed it would have meant the Resurrection was not complete and death would have the last word even for Jesus. But the Ascension confirms Jesus’ victory over death and the grave. It is the last scene in the drama, the great crescendo toward the final curtain, the grand exit. It reminds me of the last scene in “Les Misérables”. As Jean Valjean passes into eternal life, all those who had fought the battles with him, all those whom he had loved and lost join in the stirring chorus with banners waving:

<https://youtu.be/88T3elu2wfE?si=qYI0inmg-yv6yLHI>

Don’t let literalism destroy the beauty of the Ascension.

Don’t get hung up on laws of nature, the pull of gravity, or trying to guess exactly where Jesus went. Just allow the power of the imagery to speak of Jesus’ complete victory over death, his eternal presence which exceeds our human understanding. Allow the

poetry of the moment to witness to the belief that one day, "At the name of Jesus, every knee will bow in heaven and earth and under the earth; and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2:10-11)

I can't explain it. All I can do is proclaim with Christians of every age that "On the third day, he arose from the dead, he ascended into heaven and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence he will come to judge the quick and the dead."

Can you hear the people sing, say can you hear the distant drum? It's the song of the Ascension and it is a song we can sing until we are "...changed from glory into glory, till in heaven we take our place, till we cast our crowns before him, lost in wonder, love and praise."

~Written by The Rev. Dr. Jack Harnish

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