



Space to Repent

"After He said this, He was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid Him from their sight."

- Acts 1:9

This week we celebrate Ascension Day (Thursday) - an often misunderstood but very important day of the church year. After proving Himself alive from the dead to all His disciples, Jesus leaves them and returns to heaven to be seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty - a position of authority and power. Nevertheless, Jesus still promises to be with them "even to the ends of the earth." How can He do this? How can He be both absent (from their eyes, at least) yet still present? Well, the easy answer is: He's God! But that is not exactly the answer Jesus gives. He tells His disciples that before they are to go into all the world preaching the Good News of forgiveness of sins in Jesus' Name to every creature, they must first wait in Jerusalem for the promised Holy Spirit who will fill them with power to be His witnesses (Acts 1:8).

In other words, as summer vacationers well know, it is always good to fuel up before a long trip! After all, how far can you go on an empty tank? But with a full tank I also have, for example, 283 horsepower in my humble V6 Town & Country engine. To an Amish buggy driver that's a lot of power! Rest assured, the Holy Spirit has much more power than that! The Holy Spirit is equally infinite and co-eternal with God the Father and God the Son. And that certainly is one way in which Jesus, as a member of the Triune Godhead, is with us even to the end of the age - by the Holy Spirit. "It is to your advantage that I go away," Jesus actually tells His disciples in John 16:7; "for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you."

Jesus not only empowers His Church on earth to be witnesses of His incredible love, sent from the Father, sealed in His own blood; but Jesus also leaves this earth and gives space to mankind to repent and prepare for His second coming when He will come again - not as a sacrificial Lamb but as Judge of the whole earth. That is a Day worth reckoning with!

So, what are we doing with this historic "space to repent" granted mankind on this Ascension Day? Some scoff and say that no one is ever coming back. Others speculate and try to predict the exact hour of Christ's return. But the Lord tells us to "occupy until I come" (Lk 19:13). We have "occupations" and callings in which to be faithful. We have His immeasurable love to spread around to everyone we know. We have good deeds to do for our neighbor and Good News to share that Jesus Christ lives, and forgiveness of sins and eternal life are found only in Him!

Help us share the love! Our Reading Mentoring program at Peace Lutheran Church takes place every Tuesday from 5pm to 6pm. Just one hour will make a child's day special, too. Thank you for letting the love of the Lord shine through you!