

ASCENSION 2014
Year A June 1, 2014

Theme: “Ascended: So What?”

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Would our lives Monday through Saturday be any different, that is, would the way we actually live and what we do and how we act, would all this be any different **if Jesus had not ascended?**

Perhaps if the Risen Jesus had not ascended, he could have become like a **permanent Pope** and just popped up in different places in the world each week, celebrating mass with folks and praying for them and their needs, working a few miracles.

He could have **shown up in troubled spots** and made peace; he could gone where there were natural disasters and prayed with people in their times of grief and need; he might have gone a big events like the World Cup in Brazil or maybe had an annual reserved seat at the Super Bowl each year.

The resurrection appearances of the Gospels would have just continued on and on.

The downside of staying of earth, of course, is that Jesus would come to **little old Weirton** and back water West Virginia about as often as does the Pope or the President or Beyonce!

Jesus had **something better** in mind for us, as his final words in the Gospel of Matthew report: **“I am with you always even to the end of the age.”**

And it is interesting to notice in Matthew’s text today that **Jesus never leaves**: he sort of says goodbye on the mountain but never leaves.

This is unlike the version of the Ascension we heard in the First Reading from the Acts of the Apostles where Jesus **“was lifted up and a cloud took him from their sight.”**

This account from the Acts has contributed to **our mistaken notion** that with the Ascension Jesus has left us and gone to some distant heaven, where as our Creed professes **“he sits at the right hand of the Father”**.

Matthew’s Gospel today gives us **the corrective** today that Jesus has not left us: he is **“with us always to the end of the age!”**

If he **“has been lifted up,”** Jesus has been lifted up not into the sky and space but **into resurrected glory and the majesty** of Lordship over heaven and earth.

The **“cloud”** that took him from our sight is not only the cloud of time and distance that separates us from his physical presence, but also the cloud of **our inability to see directly his spiritual presence.**

If he **“is seated at the right hand of the Father”**, it is **not in some distant heaven** light years away,” but right here and right there and everywhere the Creator God is present and alive and active in the world.

All of these scriptural foundations beneath us, what does the Ascension of Jesus mean **for our daily lives?**

It means the Risen Jesus is still with us, always with us, but now in a **new, dynamic and energetic way** than before.

Now his Presence is **to drive, to thrust forward on mission, to propel** his disciples to do the work he has commissioned them to do.

Ascension does not mean the Risen Jesus went away but that he has moved to **a different role** in his community of believers.

Now he works **from within**: within the community, within the hearts and minds of believers.

He has ascended to **a higher level of influence**, one where he can touch us all, all the time.

He can speak to **our hearts and minds**:

---he can prompt us to hear his message and follow his word.

---he can supply encouragement and counsel;

---he can challenge and cajole us when necessary.

We personally meet this present Jesus **in our own hearts and minds** if we have the patience and determination and usually the willingness to listen.

We must give him the time and space in our lives to speak and be heard.

We will also encounter him in our service to others, especially the sick, the hurting, the lonely, the little ones.

As a community we encounter this present Jesus here **in our assembly**:

Somehow, the Risen Christ has ascended into this **motley crew** of people gathered here in his name:

Strange as it seems, he has told us he would be present when we so gather; so look around, he's here.

And he has ascended **into the Word** we have heard proclaimed here today:

He guaranteed he would speak to us in his Word so somewhere in the texts we heard today was a Word he wanted us to hear.

And he has ascended into the **Bread and Wine** we are about to consecrate:

In his Body and his Blood we find his Real Presence.

“I am with you always to the end of the age.”