

INI Hymns:

Sermon 23-30

Ascension

**Luke 24:44-53**

5/21/23

*“44 Then He said to them, “These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.” 45 And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. 46 Then He said to them, “Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, 47 and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 And you are witnesses of these things. 49 Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.”*  
*50 And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. 51 Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven. 52 And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, 53 and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God. Amen.”*

### **Dear Fellow Redeemed,**

In our Gospel Reading Jesus just mentioned that He was going to the Father and the disciples were filled with sorrow just at the thought of it. They couldn't bear the thought of Him leaving them. Now when Jesus actually did leave them we read, “They ... returned to Jerusalem with great joy.” And it wasn't just a passing joy but they “were continually in the temple praising and blessing God.” We'll see why they had such a change of heart. In doing so, we want to see why we too should:

### **Rejoice in Christ's Ascension**

#### **-I- Rejoice to Know His True Identity and Worship Him.**

Have you ever heard of Inge Sargent or Eberhard was her maiden name? I hadn't heard of her either until this past week. She just died this past February 5, two weeks short of her 91st birthday. She had an interesting life and a pretty amazing love story.

Born in Austria, she attended the university in Denver, Colorado. There she met another young exchange student who was from Burma whose name was Sao Kya Seng. Both being exchange students they had a lot in common and quickly became close friends. As time went on their friendship grew into love for each other. Their love developed into an engagement. They had a small wedding at a friends house in Colorado on March 7, 1953. After he graduated from University, he took her to meet his family in Burma.

It was only then that Inge learned that her husband was the reigning Prince of the Shan State of Hsipaw in northeastern Burma. They had a very elaborate wedding ceremony in Burma and she was crowned as the “mahadevi” or Queen of Hsipaw.

Can you imagine how shocked she would have been. She thought she knew her husband but now she saw him in a whole new light. She embraced her new role and worked together with her husband to make many improvements for the people of Hsipaw and became some of the most loved rulers of the Shan state.

It didn't last long though. In 1962, only nine years after their wedding, there was a military coup. Her husband, was arrested, and never seen again. He was killed in prison. Inge was under house arrest for two years, then she escaped with her two daughters and finally settled in Colorado. Though she no longer had any political power, she continued to work for the people of Burma (known as Myanmar today) through several activist organizations that she founded.

I tell you that story because, in many ways her life was similar to the life story of Jesus' Apostles. Jesus called them to follow Him and they spent three years getting to know Him. Unlike Sao Kya Seng, Jesus did not withhold His true identity from His disciples. He revealed it openly, but because of their own weakness of faith and understanding, they remained largely in

the dark and didn't fully know Jesus. They recognized right away that He was a wise teacher and a kind, caring individual. They learned early on that He was the Messiah, but they really didn't understand what that meant. They were drawn to Him, trusted Him, yes, even loved Him. But their knowledge about Him and His kingdom was still very vague because their understanding was so clouded by the preconceived ideas of the Jewish people. They saw His great power and were impressed by His miracles and even came to confess that Jesus was the Son of the living God. But that confession still lacked understanding and full conviction.

We have an indication of that in our text. Our text says that when Jesus ascended to heaven, "they worshiped Him." That made me wonder, so I did a little searching and found that even though they confessed that Jesus was the Son of the Living God, the Bible never says that they worshiped Him until after He rose from the dead and when He ascended to heaven. It's like they didn't really see His true identity.

After His resurrection they saw Jesus in a whole new light. Our text says that Jesus "opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures." Now, when they saw Jesus rise up into the sky and ascend into heaven, it was all beginning to really sink in. The reality struck them that Jesus truly is the Son of God who came down from heaven and was now returning to His home in heaven. And so they rejoiced and worshiped Him. So it is for us, He has revealed His true identity to us and opened our minds and hearts to comprehend the Scriptures. Therefore we too can Rejoice to truly Know Him and Worship Him.

-II-

While Inge didn't fully know her husband until he returned home with her, the people of Burma knew who he was. When he returned to Burma with his new bride, the people all gathered to welcome them home with shouts of joy. They rejoiced that he had come to reign over them. To this day he is considered the most loved ruler of the Hsipaw state. That is what Jesus' Ascension means for us.

### **We Rejoice to See Christ Reigning over All Things,**

Jesus came to this world to conquer all of our great enemies: sin, death and the devil. Now He has returned home to reign over us as our victorious Lord and King. Jesus' Ascension is essentially His Coronation day when He was crowned as our King. Several New Testament passages describe how Jesus is now seated at the right hand of God, just as we confess in the Apostles Creed. Our Epistle Reading from Revelation pictured this for us. John sees a vision where God the Father is sitting on His glorious throne and all the hosts of heaven are gathered around. The Father has a scroll in His hand which contains the future events in this world particularly as they affect God's Church. All the hosts of heaven begin praising Jesus, the Lamb who had been slain, because He was the only one who was able to open the scroll and reveal what was inside. This is a very picturesque way of describing how Jesus now is ruling over all things. The future is in His hand. He controls all things that will happen.

Many people today would say, if Jesus is ruling this world, He is not doing a very good job of it. This world truly is a mess, but that's not Jesus' fault. Jesus still has many enemies who are fighting against Him. They are attempting a coup to take over Christ's Kingdom. But unlike the coup that succeeded in Burma and killed Sao Kya Seng, the whole rest of the book of Revelation shows that Jesus is reigning and no matter what the forces of evil do in this world and against God's Church, yet Jesus and His Saints always come out victorious.

There is great comfort in knowing that Jesus, the Lamb who was slain for us to redeem us to God, is now ruling over all things and promises that, no matter how many enemies there are in the world, He will protect us and make all things work together for our good. Therefore we join the hosts of heaven in singing: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!"

### -III-

Our reading from Revelation gives us another amazing reason to rejoice in Jesus' Ascension. Not only because Jesus is now reigning over all, but also because He has "made US kings and priests to our God; and WE shall reign on the earth." Just as Inge suddenly became queen of Hsipaw and began to reign with her husband, so we

#### **Rejoice to Reign WITH Christ our King!**

Isn't that going too far? How in the world can we believe that we are reigning with Christ? Christians are encouraged by Christ to be the "meek of the earth." They are often despised and down trodden, you're trying to tell us Christians are reigning with Christ? Absolutely! Let me ask you, how does a king reign? Does he personally do everything he wants done in His kingdom? Does He physically carry out his plans and laws? Not at all! He makes decrees and laws and the people must abide by it. He sets up programs and his servants enact them. So you could say every king rules with His word. He gives a command and his servants carry it out. So it is with Jesus the King of kings. He rules with and through His Word. The big difference between Jesus and every other ruler is Jesus' Word has the power to do exactly what He says. In the beginning Jesus spoke the word and all things came into existence out of nothing. So today, Jesus speaks a word and it is done. His word has the power to raise the spiritually dead and open blind eyes to see Him and worship Him as our Savior God.

Here is the amazing, wonderful thing about Christ's Kingdom. He rules in our hearts with His Word. By the power of His Holy Spirit we were brought to faith and made God's children. As such we have become His servants to carry out His desires and His plans for the world. But more than that, He has equipped us with the Word of His power. Therefore when we use His Word we are exercising His power to reign. We reign with Christ.

When we speak God's Word in the world, it is done. God told Isaiah, "So shall My word be that goes out from My mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it." Isaiah 55:11 That is also true when we are the ones who proclaim it. Jesus said, "He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects Him who sent me." Luke 10:16. That is true because we proclaim His word in His stead. Therefore as Jesus said, when someone repents of their sin and you pronounce God's forgiveness to them, they are forgiven. Christ takes up His reign in their hearts. When someone does not repent of their sins and you tell them that unless they do repent they do not have God's forgiveness, they are not forgiven and remain as enemies of God.

So in spite of what it may look like in the world; it may seem like the ungodly are in control. There are evil governments and rich, powerful and corrupt men and women that seem to rule, but they all are subject to Christ and must submit to His Word which we proclaim. Psalm 2:1-6 describes the reality. "Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, "Let us break Their bonds in pieces and cast away Their cords from us." He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; The Lord shall hold them in derision. Then He shall speak to them in His wrath, and distress them in His deep displeasure: "Yet I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion." Yes, the ungodly rage against the Lord, but they will not accomplish anything. Christ rules over all, and on the last day "every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father." Rom. 14:11 & Phil. 2:10-11

So may we forever rejoice in Jesus' Ascension, knowing His true identity as the Almighty Son of God who reigns over all creation, and He graciously chooses us to reign with Him. All glory to His name.

Amen.