

Ascension – 2021

Picture, if you will, your Home. What does that simple word mean to you, “Home?” I suspect for many, the perception of home has changed somewhat in the past year. Ideally, home is the place we belong, where we are free to be ourselves, where we can relax when work is done, where the things most precious to us are found. The importance of home is also seen in the suffering of those who are homeless, or far away from home – in the military, as refugees, perhaps in long-term care, or those whose homes have been destroyed by natural disaster or war or the breakup of family.

Yet for some, home during COVID maybe feels too familiar, too confining. When our school space and workspace and relaxation space all become the same, we may fall into boredom or anxiety or apathy. Even this experience can teach us that we are meant for something greater than this world with its troubles and fragile joys; we need a home that is beyond all the limitations and uncertainties we know here.

The idea of home gives an insight into the Ascension of Jesus. It is not so much that Jesus has gone home to His Father in heaven ... as though the Ascension is simply about Jesus going from one place to another, leaving His work here to return from where He came. ***Instead, this conclusion to Jesus’ earthly ministry means something very different:*** NOT that Jesus is gone from us and inaccessible, but rather that He even MORE accessible to us. ***Jesus has passed beyond the boundaries we know as space and time, and brought our human nature into the permanent presence of God. Now, every heart and every home can be a home for the Lord.*** The Ascension is our assurance that Jesus is with us always, as He promised, in every place, in every circumstance, until the end of time itself. The Eleven no longer saw Jesus, but that lack of a physical presence opened their eyes, in joy, to the greater promise He had made at the Last Supper: ***“In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places ... I am going to prepare a place for you, and then I shall come back to take you to myself, so that where I am, you also may be.”***

Jesus promises a home, a place to belong at the end of our journey, when our life's work is done, where we will be fully ourselves, where all that is truly worthy of being precious to us will again be found, and enjoyed forever. We will know ourselves as loved, *at home with the Lord*. All the restlessness of spirit we experience in our pilgrimage of life will be over, and *we will find our rest in God*.

When the angels say to the Apostles: "*Why are you standing there looking at the sky?*", they imply that the Eleven have important things to do, entrusted with the Gospel for the whole world. But they were not alone in this task, and neither are we. Because of the Spirit's presence and help, every place can now be Home for the Gospel, and every home is a place where the Gospel is to be lived. We need to look up, at least spiritually, on a regular basis, lest we become discouraged by the troubles and labors of life. But we need to look at the world as it is, troubles and all, so we can bring something of God's truth and peace to that world, *precisely where it is needed as a witness to hope and mercy*. That is simply what it means to be missionary disciples. Like the Apostles, we too come to spend time with the Lord and then are sent with the Gospel wherever we go ... even if it is those familiar spaces of our homes and all the routines so familiar to us.

When you look around your home today, remember that Christ is with you, making every place His home in a redeemed world. Welcome Him there, for we are His witnesses ... not simply of Jesus Who once WAS, but of Jesus Who now IS – walking with us on that way Home.