

NORTH MAIN SERMON MAY 17, 2026

7th Sunday of Easter *Ascension Sunday*

Luke 24:44-53

<sup>44</sup> He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.”<sup>45</sup> Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. <sup>46</sup> He told them, “This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, <sup>47</sup> and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup> You are witnesses of these things. <sup>49</sup> I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.” <sup>50</sup> When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. <sup>51</sup> While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. <sup>52</sup> Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. <sup>53</sup> And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.

- **John 17: 1-11**

After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed:

“Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. <sup>2</sup> For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. <sup>3</sup> Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. <sup>4</sup> I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. <sup>5</sup> And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.

## Jesus Prays for His Disciples -

<sup>6</sup> “I have revealed you<sup>[a]</sup> to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. <sup>7</sup> Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. <sup>8</sup> For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. <sup>9</sup> I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. <sup>10</sup> All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. <sup>11</sup> I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of<sup>[b]</sup> your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one. <sup>2</sup> While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by<sup>[b]</sup> that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled. <sup>13</sup> “I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. <sup>14</sup> I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. <sup>15</sup> My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. <sup>16</sup> They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. <sup>17</sup> Sanctify them by<sup>[c]</sup> the truth; your word is truth. <sup>18</sup> As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. <sup>19</sup> For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

## THE WORD OF GOD..

**Ascension Day** which is observed in the United States on the 40th *day* of Easter. It commemorates Jesus Christ's *ascension* into heaven, according to the New Testament AND the end of Eastertide. So, today as we reflect on Jesus' farewell prayer in John 17, we learn that God now calls Christ into heaven, having completed His earthly journey and His earthly work. It is a significant event, maybe, in some ways, far more significant than most people give it credit for. In our culture we have a tradition of honoring the birth of people. We celebrate birthdays. When there is someone important, we make note of their birthday. Sometimes we even make national holidays out of the birthday of famous people, Presidents, and so forth. We do that not because their birth was significant, because

none of their births were really significant. And when they were born, they had accomplished absolutely nothing. At their birth, nothing was yet accomplished, nor could anything be determined as to what the future might hold. We might not be sure that they would amount to anything. But when it was over, then we could look back and see the real value. The only person who ever lived whose accomplishments were written before He was born was Jesus Christ. And so, while it makes sense to celebrate His birthday because it was already written what He would accomplish, it also makes equal sense to celebrate His ascension which ended His earthly journey...not in death the way everybody else's earthly journey ends, but in simply transporting Himself in full view of His followers into heaven. It began with the Son of God being born of a virgin, descending to earth and it ends with the Son of God being born from the dead, ascending to heaven. The story began with hope unrealized and ends with hope fully realized. It began with a promise and ends with a fulfillment and a new promise.

And also, the story began with praise and worship. And it ends the same way. We have come from the beginning to the end. And in between is the incomparable magisterial of His life, His teaching, His miracles, His rejection, His death and His resurrection, a history written majestically by Luke and not only Luke, but Matthew, Mark and John as well.

However, only Luke is given the sole privilege of recording the culminating event, the ascension. And Luke tells us about the ascension twice. It's how he ends his gospel and it's how he begins his next volume of history called the Book of Acts. Luke tells the story of Christ on earth. Acts tells the story of the coming of the Holy Spirit and the fulfillment of the Great Commission in the establishment of the church and then we learn of the ascension when he disappears into the clouds. Most of us do not have our lives changed by watching clouds, but the fact is most of us have had times when watching clouds has had some effect on us. If we have watched clouds enough, we can praise the lord when we see an amazing one. We can look at them as a beautiful place where Jesus lives or we can look at them at things that bring storms and block the sun, but thinking of God telling his disciples he is leaving them and then goes in a cloud, makes us see clouds as something beautiful. It's hard to really understand the important place that clouds play in the Bible. There are

148 verses in the Bible dealing with clouds, Just a few of them indicate God's presence in a cloud....And the LORD came down in a cloud, And the LORD came down in the pillar of the cloud, And there was a cloud that overshadowed them. And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

Jesus saith unto him, nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. God used the cloud as a means of conveying His glory. The clouds still do that, for when they are awesome in their beauty and grandeur you cannot help but think of God. Their gigantic size and the beauty of their whiteness convey a glory that is Godlike. Jesus ascended into heaven in the clouds to sit beside his Father on the throne.

One primary theme throughout the Bible is our responsibility to help others in need. Just as Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice for the benefit of those who believe in him, we are called to make sacrifices to share Christ's love with others. We can't always share everything, but we can share the life of Jesus Christ. We can tell the Scripture reading. "While they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight." His work on earth was finished. The plan of redemption had been completed. The way of salvation had been made. What a reception must have been awaiting Him in Heaven. Jesus' life on earth was spent for us. What good news—and now Jesus prays for us. Through his prayer, his unceasing intercession on our behalf, we become more than we would otherwise be. Today as we celebrate the miracle of the Ascension of Our Lord; this is one of those stories that is hard for us to get our mind around. What does it mean that Jesus was "carried up into heaven"? We need to accept this on faith. Not because we truly understand it but because it is God's word, and we trust God. So, what does this miracle mean for us? It is an important miracle; an important event.. but through this and Through his prayer we become the church. While in heaven he is also with us; The church has the ultimate responsibility to carry on Jesus work on earth. Regardless of what is happening in our lives or in our world - and there is a lot happening in our lives and in our world right now - we know that our ascended Lord is in control and has not

abandoned us. He is seated at God's right hand - The ascension, in other words, takes Jesus away from us, but only so that he can be present with us in a new way - filling all things and being everywhere present, in a way that he could not do had he remained on earth. We need to accept it on faith. And rejoice knowing that Jesus is with us; that he will never leave us. That is his promise. To you and to me.