

5.17.2026 Sunday after the Ascension

Church history has blessed us with three ecumenical creeds that serve as foundational and universal confessions of faith. The Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed have been recited by the Body of Christ throughout the centuries, and each of these Creeds accurately summarize the essential teaching of Holy Scripture and represent the universal consensus of the early Church. In these creeds, Christians not only profess their belief in the historical truth that Jesus Christ was crucified, dead, and buried, that He descended into hell and on the third day rose again from the dead, but also that He ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of God the Father Almighty.

In Christian conversation we often speak of our Lord's death and resurrection, the sorrowful Way of the Cross and the glory of His Easter Victory, but the truth stated in the creeds that our Savior ascended into heaven and now sits at the right hand of the Father can quickly be stated, and then easily overlooked. We practice the lenten disciplines, we celebrate the triumph of Easter, but do we take time to prayerfully consider the importance of our Lord's Ascension to heaven and His enthronement there at the right hand of the Father? If not, let's take a step in that direction today. This morning let's take a moment to consider three foundational truths, essential to Christian theology, that are connected to the Ascension, and the enthronement of our Lord in heaven.

First, the Ascension marks the exaltation of the Son of God above every creature. As St. Paul wrote in a letter to the Ephesians, God raised Christ *"from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named..."* (Ephesians 1:20-21). God the Father has given His Son the name at which *"every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth..."* (Philippians 2:10), and the truth that Jesus sits forever enthroned at the right hand of the Father not only exalts Him above every creature, but also assures us, those who have placed our faith in Him as Lord and Savior, of His continuing intercession.

As Christians, we find peace, and rest in the blessed assurance that we truly

have “*an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous...*” (1 John 2:1). Consider the comfortable truth that our Lord, the only-begotten Son of God, who came from heaven to earth to live and die and rise again for our redemption, now, as Holy Scripture states, “*lives to make intercession*” for us (Hebrews 7:25). Jesus, at whose name *every knee should bow*, Jesus, who is seated *far above all rule and authority and power and dominion*, is the One, who by His own Blood, pleads our cause in heaven. We speak often of our Lord’s death and resurrection, the peace found in the depth of His love poured out on the Cross and the glory of His victory over sin and death, and as we speak of His atoning sacrifice, we must also share the good news, the comfortable truth that at this moment our Risen Lord is enthroned in heaven and pleading our cause before the Father.

The second truth I’d ask you to consider is one that will be at the center of our celebration of Holy Communion next Sunday. Next week, on the Feast of Pentecost, the church and the altar will be adorned in red to symbolize the Holy Spirit and the tongues of fire that rested upon the disciples as the Spirit was poured out upon Christ’s Church, and into the hearts, souls, and minds of the first Christians. Next Sunday we’ll celebrate what’s often called the birthday of the Church, and it’s important to remember that without the Ascension there would be no birthday to celebrate.

In our Gospel lesson two weeks ago, Jesus said to His disciples, “*I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send Him to you*” (John 16:7). On the night He was betrayed, knowing He’d be abandoned by almost all of His closest disciples, Jesus told them that though they would leave Him, He wouldn’t leave them alone in this world, and it’s because of the Ascension that He can speak those comfortable words to them. Without the Ascension, Jesus said, the Spirit “*will not come,*” and without the Spirit of God dwelling in every believer, Christians in the first century, and Christians in the twenty-first century would surely be lost. Apart from the Spirit as our Helper, we’d be defenseless against the attacks and snares of the devil. Apart from the Spirit as our Guide, we’d have no Divine instruction by which to live, no objective, absolute truth on which to build our lives. Apart from the Spirit as our Comforter, we’d have no peace, and would find no rest amid the trials and sorrows in this world.

Jesus said, *“I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send Him to you.”* It is to our advantage that Jesus ascended, and is seated at the right hand of the Father, because it’s through the Ascension and His sending of the Holy Spirit that Jesus fulfills God’s promise to His people: *“I will never leave you or forsake you”* (Hebrews 13:5). *“I am with you always, even unto the end of the world”* (Matthew 28:20). Our Lord ascended to heaven, is seated at the right hand of the Father, sent the Holy Spirit to dwell in us, and now we live every day with the blessed assurance that we are never alone - we are never without God.

The third truth I’d ask you to consider this morning is the fact that the Ascension points directly to the objective reality of heaven - as the dwelling place of God, and the eternal home of His people. At the Last Supper, Jesus told His disciples that He was going to the Father, and as He spoke to them He said, *“I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also”* (John 14:2-3). Jesus ascended with His resurrected, glorified body to a particular location - to heaven, the dwelling place of God, in order to prepare a place for those who love Him, and in His words we see that the most important truth about heaven isn’t its objective reality, or that those who love God will one day close their eyes here and open them there. Rather, the most important truth about heaven is that God dwells there with His people. The inspired words of St. John perfectly reveal that truth in the book of Revelation, in which he writes that he *“heard a loud voice from the throne saying, Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and He will dwell with them. They will be His people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away”* (Revelation 21:3-4).

Throughout the centuries, the creeds we confess have brought great comfort to Christians because of the way they accurately summarize that which Holy Scripture reveals about the Triune God of heaven and earth, and the depth of His sacrificial love, and few words should bring us more comfort than those which declare the truth that our Lord ascended to heaven and sits at the right

hand of the Father. Because Jesus ascended, and is enthroned in heaven, Christians live every day with the blessed assurance that we truly have an Advocate with the Father, one who *lives* to plead our cause by His most precious Blood. Because of the Ascension we know that Jesus fulfilled His promise to send the Holy Spirit to the end that God Himself would live in us - to be our Helper, our Guide, our Comforter in this world, and because of the Ascension, we can rest in the knowledge that even though this life can be so difficult, the day will come when we will dwell with God forever in the place that He has prepared for us. On that day our “faith shall be sight” (Horatio Spafford), our hope will be fulfilled, and love, the Divine, sacrificial love of God, will be seen face to face in the Person of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 13:12).