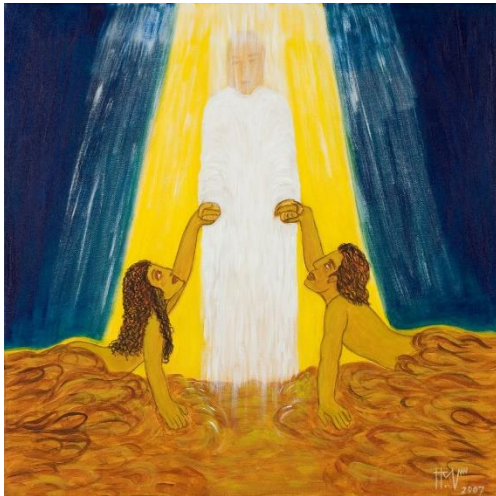


Notes for Brian's Sermon at Brentwood Presbyterian Church Sun, June 2, 2019 – Holy Communion on Ascension Sunday

Why Is Jesus' Ascension Important?

(Luke 24:36-53)



Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.”
(Luke 24:45-48)

A lesson from Luke 24:45-48

It's a fanciful story – it doesn't fit into any of the common categories of understanding things that we use on a day-to-day basis for making sense of things – it didn't fit into any of the categories that the followers of Jesus used in their day either – Jesus had to keep reminding and reforming their minds about what the story of God's intent for creation that their scriptures had told and how he fit into that story as it's key event – his suffering and death was God's way of granting as gift repentance and forgiveness of sins to all nations – and the church, as Luke will go on to recount in Acts, has the privilege of proclaiming that salvation to the whole world – as is often the case, I have no idea of the source of this image this morning – but it captures my current sense of why Jesus' ascension is so important – it assures us that God sees human beings as “in Christ,” as Paul puts it so often in his letters – we are a new humanity in Christ – that happens thorough an act of God, not through anything we can do on our own – repentance and forgiveness are gifts to be accepted and appropriated as we mature in our relationship with the triune God, best understand by coming to know Jesus and his actions on the world's behalf – there is a phrase used in among Orthodox Christians, who have paid much more attention to the Ascension than Western Christians, especially Protestants – it's “Christification” – becoming like Christ – being raised from the grim grime of life as we so often experience it – from the muck and mire of our rebellions against God's intent of justice, kindness, and humility – that's what I like about this image – in companionship with Christ being raised with him into light of God's reconciling love

Provocative points to ponder – as always, too many to cram into one sermon

- If Jesus' ascension means that we are seen by God as being in the process of being 'Christified,' then what difference does that make to how we see ourselves? – do we see ourselves as mud-bound, miserable sinners who can't do anything right, traumatized and traumatizing creatures stuck in what *Living Faith* calls "the grim fabric of life?" – or do we see ourselves as ascending into God's presence and purpose in the hands of our divine friend, Jesus Christ? – that's a fundamental choice we all make, knowingly or unknowingly – not just once, but in every situation in which we find ourselves – to use more traditional Christian language, miserable sinner or beloved and forgiven child and friend of God?
- And further, what difference does this kind of self-regard, self-respect, self-love, make to how we see others we meet every day? – do we have the strength and wisdom to see them as friends of Jesus Christ with whom we share the dignity and worth gifted to us by the Creator through the Saviour in the power of the Holy Spirit? – because that's who they really are, no matter how stuck in the muck and mire of our rebellions they may seem to be – our proclamation of God's reconciling grace in Jesus Christ comes first and foremost in how we treat them – how we connect with them in compassion

How does this all relate to our witness as a fellowship of the friends of Jesus?

So, to reiterate my earlier point, the Jesus' ascension is important because of what it says about how God sees humanity – in the flesh, in this world – Luke takes great pains to emphasize that Jesus is a risen human being – the wounds are there – he eats with us – this is not some magic apparition – this is the first fruits of the new humanity who is taking us with him into God's future of justice, kindness, and humility

My Notes

My Prayers

