

## **A Sermon for the Ascension, May 14, 2026**

*For the Epistle, Acts 1:1-11 - The Gospel, St. Luke 24:49-53*

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The Ascension is the completion of the Incarnation. The Son of God who came down from heaven now ascends into heaven and sits on the right of the Father. The words “came down” and “ascended” provide images for truths that transcend the limitations of language. Heaven is not merely a geographic location. In the Incarnation Jesus left the realm or dimension of eternity or heaven, where God lives, and entered the physical creation, which is bounded by time and space. In the Ascension, he went back from time and space into eternity—back into the presence of God.

But the Son of God did not return in the same form that he left. He brought back into heaven with him his humanity and sacrifice. This changed forever the relationship between heaven and earth. In Christ, humanity has been raised from the dead and glorified. “In Christ,” humanity now lives and rules in heaven with the Father. His sacrifice, offered once in time, is now a permanent fixture in heaven.

Through baptism and faith, we share in the glorified humanity of Christ. We ascend with Christ to Father, and we participate in his ministry. As Ephesians says,

God, who is rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ . . . and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus (2:5-6).

We experience this in the Eucharist. We lift up our hearts—we ascend—to join with angels and archangels in the eternal Sanctus. We experience again our union with God through the sacrifice of Jesus. We rule with Christ through our prayers. As Revelation says, Jesus “loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father” (1:5-6).

Ascension is the experience of our prayer. When we pray we move from time and space into eternity. We go from the world that is passing away, where we feel fearful, guilty, and anxious, into the kingdom of heaven, where our sins are forgiven and Jesus rules as Lord.

This experience of ascending to the Father through Jesus in the Spirit is different than merely believing in the Ascension. Sometimes faith is viewed as a list of doctrines to which we give intellectual assent. However, it is possible for people to believe in the Ascension but not experience the Ascension. This happens when we abandon the life of prayer.

Conversely, it is possible to have an experience of the Ascension, but not be able to fully explain it. The first Christians experienced the presence of Jesus and the descent of the Spirit on Pentecost. In Revelation, St. John was called to “come up here” (4:1). He ascended into the presence of God. But these Christians were not able, in those moments, to explain exactly what just happened.

It took the church three hundred plus years to explain her experience in the Nicene Creed. The creedal truths of the Catholic and Apostolic faith are simply the right explanation of what the church experiences when she prays to the Father through the Son in the Spirit. The Creed explains our experience of ascension.

To ascend with Christ through prayer is the central activity of faith. Through habitual prayer, the truths of the faith move from our head to our heart. As the experience of faith takes root in our heart, it produces the fruit of joy and peace and fills us with hope. The experience of ascension enables us to be witnesses for Christ, to share with others our experience of ascension. By prayer we intercede for the various needs we see in the world. Our impact on the world for the kingdom depends upon our prayer. We must in a sense reverse the pattern of Christ. We must first ascend to be with him before we can become incarnate in the world for him.

Today, the Risen Christ has ascended into heaven where he rules as Lord and Savior. It is our great privilege, as those who have been baptized into Christ, to ascend with him and participate in his ministry through prayer and the good works flow from our prayer. As the Ascension Collect says,

Grant we beseech thee, Almighty God, that like as we do believe thy only-begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ to have ascended into the heavens; so we may also in heart and mind thither ascend, and with him continually dwell, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen.