

Jesus is Here Now and Forever

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Acts 1:1-11

Luke 24:44-53

I heard this many years ago as a child. I think I am quoting it correctly. “Up, up and Away, the Adventures of Superman.” This morning for this Ascension Sunday, I would like to change that line to “Up, Up, but Not Away.”

When Jesus was here on earth there were many gods in the Greco-Roman world that claimed to be god. There were, however, two main differences between those gods and the God of Christianity. First of all those gods acted like human beings, including a lot of unruly and immoral behavior. Secondly, they did not associate with human beings. For example, the Greek gods were on Mt. Olympus.

At this point Christianity is absolutely unique – nothing like it. The Christmas story is that God in Jesus became a human being. He was like us in every respect except one key thing – He was without sin. As a human being He could give his life for us humans, because He is one of us. A sinless God, He could die on the cross not to forgive himself, but forgive us.

Martin Luther put it well in explaining the first line of the Lord’s Prayer – Our Father who art in heaven. No, God is not tucked away from us on some heavenly cloud. God is as near to us as a loving father to his beloved children.

One of the greatest truths of faith is that God is not only right here at Redeemer Church. God is with you at home, at work, in school, wherever.

Now, however, we switch gears to Ascension Sunday. Jesus has gone back to heaven. Why? Well Jesus himself puts it well. I go to prepare a place for you that, where I am, you may be also. While we are here on this earth, Jesus is with us. But no one is here on this earth forever. When you leave this earth I am still with you. I have prepared a place in heaven for you.

A week ago I was out in California to celebrate the birth of a baby to my son and daughter-in-law. Ten years ago my son was told that, because of his cancer and amputation and chemotherapy, he would not be able to have children. But here was their little girl.

Ten years ago my son was talking to his good wrestling buddy, Nicky in Philadelphia. “Yo, Nicky.” That sounded good because Mark was beginning to get a bit of a California accent. “Yo, Nicky,” is not California.

Nicky had asked Mark what was the biggest thing he learned after being through your horrible ordeal? Mark answered, don't take life for granted. We just do not know about tomorrow.

Today, of course, is Memorial Day weekend. I have fond memories of Memorial Day being worthwhile. We paid attention especially to veterans who had given their lives.

In 1967 I had a funeral service for a young man in the congregation I served in Lockport. His name was Paul Dolik. He had been killed in Vietnam Nam. I remember when Paul left me before he left for duty. I don't know if we will see each other again this side of heaven, but we will meet again. We will meet again. And we will.

I have here a magazine which just came to my house. The cover may not look like it, but it actually comes from the American Association of Retired Persons and features 63 year old Dolly Parton. Dolly says, "Some times people call me a dumb blonde. That is just plain wrong. I may be dumb." By the way, as a sidelight, Jane Fonda says that Dolly is one of the smartest persons she has ever met. Anyway, back to the words of Dolly, "I may be dumb, but I am not really blonde."

Jesus has been here on earth. On Ascension Day he ascends back into heaven. But He is here. He is here now. He is here forever. Amen