

The Lord's Message: Ascension Sunday

Date: May 5, 2024

Where: Tilghman Methodist Church

Scripture Reference: Luke 24:44-53

Ascension Sunday moves us farther away from the cross toward Pentecost. Jesus has been 40 days after His resurrection giving final instruction to His disciples, so that when He is gone, they will be able to carry on the ministry that Christ has established here on earth. That ministry continues today. We are now called to carry on the ministry. In **Mark 16:15-16**, Jesus tells them and us that we are to go into the world and preach the Gospel Message. You might be thinking how can I be equipped to complete this task?

Let us pray.

The first thing is to know what the Bible says about Jesus. Jesus fulfilled all the prophecies in the Old Testament, so that when we read the Old Testament, we will know what it says about Him. Jesus says this in **Luke 24:44**. I was watching a YouTube video, and a man was going around a local market asking people if they were Christians. When they said yes, he then asked them to quote one Bible verse. Sadly, very few people could quote one Bible verse. According to a Gallop survey in 2000, 92 percent of Americans own at least one and the average household is 3 Bibles. I want to conduct this same poll with all of you. What is the first book in the Bible? Genesis. You are better than half of Americans. Who preached the Sermon on the Mount? Jesus. You are better than one-third of Americans. Why do we celebrate Easter? Resurrection of Jesus from the grave. You are better than one-quarter of Americans. I do not think those numbers have improved. I suspect that they have gotten far worse. You can not complete your task that Jesus left us if you do not know about Jesus. That is why we need to read the Bible. The Bible tells everything that we need to know about Jesus.

We need to read the Bible with the Holy Spirit, so that we won't misinterpret any scripture. That is what verse 45 tells us. Jesus opened their minds by the Holy Spirit, so that they could understand the scripture. Do you pray before you open the Bible asking God's Holy Spirit to teach you what God wants you to know?

When we read the Bible with guidance of the Holy Spirit, we get a very clear understanding of the Gospel Message as Jesus reveals in verse 46. The Gospel Message does not paint a rosy picture, but it tells us the truth of our sin and our need for a savior. It tells us that Jesus had to suffer on a cross for your sins and mine. Then God raised Jesus from the dead on the third day.

We know this as fact because the Bible tells us so. We are here today because someone told us about repentance and forgiveness of sin, verse 47. In verse 48, we are witnesses of the Gospel Message.

Now the only thing lacking for the disciples and all of us is for God's Holy Spirit to be at work inside of us, so that we have the power to complete the task of spreading the Good News as we are told in verse 49.

With Jesus' final instructions, He takes His disciples outside of Bethany to a hill. There Jesus lifts up His hands and blesses them. While He was blessing them He was taken up to heaven, verses 50-51.

When Jesus died on the cross, the disciples were filled with sorrow. Now that Jesus has ascended into heaven, you might think that they would be filled with sorrow as well. Well let us read verses 52-53. The disciples were not filled with sorrow but were filled with joy. Jesus has once again been taken from them. Why the change in attitude? Several reasons. First of all, Jesus was taken into heaven, not placed in a tomb. Second, Jesus had revealed to them through the Bible and the Holy Spirit that He must ascend. Third, they knew if Jesus ascended into heaven, that one day Jesus would come back, and they would ascend into heaven with Him also. The bond with Jesus was only broken temporarily, not permanently like His death. For these reasons the disciples were not filled with sorrow, but joy.

Jesus had to ascend, so that the disciples would carry on the ministry. How well did they do? I think you know the answer to that question but come back in two weeks to find out the results.

Amen.