

LETTER TO KNOX CHURCH FAMILY

MAY 22, 2020

Once again, I offer blessings to all of you, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord!

As we continue to physically and socially distance ourselves, we are beginning to see some loosening of the rules and regulations. I hope and pray that as things are beginning to change, we will continue to be safe and free from the virus.

Last week, Mary Pat Elliott, Elaine Lewis and I visited 11 different homes of people in our congregation. We delivered a card to them, made by Marg Fraleigh, knocked on the door, had prayer with them and sang for them in our beautiful voices!!! As we maintained our distance, we talked to them for about five minutes and then went on to the next. It was a great time for Elaine, Mary Pat and I and hopefully it was a lift for those we visited. We are going to continue to visit more people this week and hopefully for the next few weeks. So, don't be surprised if you get a knock on your door!!!!

GOOD NEWS

The drive-in church will start up again this Sunday at 10:30am. It will be held at Living Word Church. You must stay in your car! You will be given instruction how to dial in to the worship service. I plan on being there and maybe I will see you.

If not, I hope that you are finding a service either online or on TV. It's nice to be able to share in worship services from other congregations.

A song that we often sing at Knox is "In Christ Alone". Here is a link to the song with a video. I hope you enjoy it.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AjR_A2pGPrY

Until next week, stay safe and may God continue to bless you!

Barb

CALL TO WORSHIP

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

With all the angels and saints, O God, we give You thanks and praise with shouts of joy.

Our God has called us to a rich hope and a glorious inheritance.

You, O God, have fixed the world in place and rule over all from Your sacred throne.

You formed a people for Yourself and through Moses and the prophets You spoke to them of Christ who fills all in all.

As it was written, He suffered and was killed, but You raised Him from the dead and He walked again with His chosen ones, speaking to them of Your glorious kingdom.

You carried Him into heaven on the clouds and made Him head over all things for the church, seating Him at Your right hand far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come.

We praise You, O God, with songs of joy.

We draw near to You with thankfulness

You have made us one family on the face of the earth and opened to us the gates of heaven.

PRAYER

Let us pray.

Lord, we praise You this morning for the blessings of good weather and for the fertility of the land upon which we dwell. We praise You for the sun that shines upon our endeavours and for the moon and the stars at night which remind us of your glory. We thank you for the many good things that You have bestowed upon us. Most of all, O Lord, we thank You for your Son, Christ Jesus our Lord, who came to deliver us from the power of sin and death by dying upon the cross for us. We praise You for raising Him up in glory and for appointing Him as the judge of both the living and the dead.

Help us, O God, to have a heart that exalts in Your grace and goodness, lips unafraid to proclaim Your praise before all people, and minds which are focused on living according to Your glorious and living word. We ask it through Christ Jesus our Lord who taught us to pray, saying:

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever.

Amen

ACTS 1:1-11

In my first book I told you, Theophilus, about everything Jesus began to do and teach until the day He was taken up to heaven after giving His chosen apostles further instructions through the Holy Spirit. During the forty days after He suffered and died, He appeared to the apostles from time to time, and He proved to them in many ways that He was actually alive. And He talked to them about the Kingdom of God.

Once when He was eating with them, He commanded them, “Do not leave Jerusalem until the Father sends you the gift He promised, as I told you before. John baptized with water, but in just a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” So, when the apostles were with Jesus, they kept asking Him, “Lord, has the time come for You to free Israel and restore our kingdom?” He replied, “The Father alone has the authority to set those dates and times, and they are not for you to know.

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about Me everywhere, in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

After saying this, He was taken up into a cloud while they were watching, and they could no longer see Him.

As they strained to see Him rising into heaven, two white-robed men suddenly stood among them. “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why are you standing here staring into heaven? Jesus has been taken from you into heaven, but someday He will return from heaven in the same way you saw Him go!”

WHAT DOES THE ASCENSION OF JESUS CHRIST MEAN TO US?

Every time Martin Luther would read the Scriptures, he would ask the age-old question: "What does this mean?"

I pray we all ask that same question; every time we read a portion of God's word or meditate on the truth of the Scriptures.

"What does this mean?"

What does this mean for me?

Let us today ask that same question in light of Jesus' ascension to heaven.

So, what does the ascension of Jesus mean for us this day?

Well it means that Jesus finished the work on earth that the Father gave Him to do.

Remember the words our Lord when He cried out from the Cross, "It is finished".

Very few of us have ever enjoyed the luxury at the end of a day being able to proclaim, "It is finished". I have accomplished everything. Instead, most of us have an unending list of things that need to be done. Very seldom, if ever can we just sit back, fold our arms, and say, "It is Finished"!

Yet Jesus could proclaim that.

Jesus could say, "It is finished; everything is done".

Forty days after that first Easter Day, Jesus led His disciples to the Mt. of Olives.

For forty days from Easter to Ascension, Jesus prepared the disciples for the work that was being laid out before them.

On the Mount, Jesus blessed them, then ascended into the heavens until a cloud hid Him from their eyes.

Yet, instead of being sad, the Scriptures tell us that the disciples were filled with joy.

What does this mean?

Perhaps we are stating the obvious, yet sometimes, the obvious needs to be stated.

God the Father sent his Son into the world.

He sent his only begotten Son to save the world from eternal death and to save humanity from the wages of sin.

The fact that Jesus ascended and that He returned to heaven means that Jesus clearly completed the work laid before Him.

It is Finished!

Yet if we are honest with ourselves, deep down inside our sinful natures, lurks the same age-old dark question that the rich young ruler had for Jesus.

"Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?" (Matthew 19:16)

We desperately need; we desperately want to have the assurance of heaven.

So, we seek something; some good work to assure us of this salvation.

If only I had a stronger faith.

If only I would care more.

If only I would study more.

If only I would pray more.

Now all these things are attributes of a Christian maturing in the faith.

They are all good things but not if you are doing them because you hope that you will earn peace of mind and that you will earn assurance of heaven.

There is no work that can bring you assurance. We are saved by grace; the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Jesus has completed the work. Jesus has paid the price. It is finished!

If there had been something left undone, if there was something else that was still required then Jesus would not have ascended into heaven.

Everything was done.

Everything was completed.

It is finished.

And since it is finished our debt of sin been transferred to the account of Jesus.

No wonder Jesus' ascension gave the disciples such joy!

If you know Jesus as your Saviour and your Lord, you can have confidence in the Lord's work knowing that we are redeemed.

Experience His peace and experience His joy.

It is finished.

In the Apostles Creed, we confess: ***On the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.***

What does this mean?

The Scriptures share with us this truth: **1 John 2:1-2** *My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.*

We have an advocate; Jesus Christ the righteous sitting with power at the right hand of the Father.

I hope in your daily prayers, you make a confession of where you have fallen short of the glory of God or where you have allowed sin into your life.

And they may be some of the same sins that you confessed the night before, and maybe even the night before that.

You may at times feel that the God of heaven may run out of mercy.

How many times will the Father forgive me for this?

Yet, there is Jesus at the Father's right hand.

He is advocating and interceding for those that know Him as Saviour and as Lord.

Because Jesus has ascended to the right hand of the Father, we have an advocate who has paid the price and who has paid it in full.

Not only did Jesus pay the price of our sins but He has been given the right to pardon us before the throne.

No matter how dreadful you feel that sin may be.

No matter how many times you may have committed it. When you confess your sins, when you repent of your sins you will be pardoned before the throne.

It is finished.

So, what does Jesus' ascension mean?

1. It means that Jesus completed his work on earth. It is Finished.

2. We have an Advocate sitting at the right hand of the father.

3. Jesus will come again.

As followers of Christ we make this proclamation: Christ has died. Christ is Risen. Christ will come again.

Let us look again at a portion of our text from Acts: "When He had said these things, as they were watching, He was lifted up ... and a cloud took Him out of their sight. While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven suddenly, two men in white robes stood beside them; They said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw Him go into heaven.'" Acts 1:9-11

Why do you stand here looking toward Heaven?

The focus of the New Testament is not about when Jesus will return.

The focus is how those who call Jesus their Saviour and Lord live until He returns.

The Scriptures are clear. We need to live our lives in such a way that people yearn to have what we have. That the world would hunger and thirst for the righteousness and for the relationship that the followers of Christ have with their Creator.

That is our challenge. That is our call.

It is not to know the time or the season of His return, or to stand around staring at the sky.

It is to do the work that He has laid before us.

Rather than fearing what is to come, we are to be faithful till Christ comes.

Instead of fearing the dark, we are to be candles whose light points the way to Jesus.

Remember Our Lord's words to his disciples: ***"Let your light so shine before others, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."*** *Matthew 5:1*

Jesus' disciples visibly saw Him rise into the heavens.

Jesus closed sin's account.

And when we repent when we ask Jesus to be our Lord and Savior, our sin account is closed; closed forever!

Jesus intercedes for you and me!

Jesus is our advocate.

Jesus' ascension into heaven gives us comfort and confidence for the day of His return.

For those who have sought Jesus for salvation, who have accepted Him as both their Savior and their Lord, there will be no fear. Take solace in our Lord's words to his disciples and to us: ***"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in me. In my Father's house, there are many dwelling places; if it were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to the place where I am going."*** (*John 14:1-3*)

How tenderly our Saviour spoke before He ascended into heaven.

And our ascended Saviour speaks tenderly to us, this day.

"Do not be afraid, Believe in God, Believe also in Me"

In this world, we will experience dangers. There will be sorrows.

Yet, Jesus shares these words of comfort: ***"I am with you always. I will never leave you. I am preparing a place for you. And when I come again, I will take you to myself."***

So, what does our Lord's ascension mean?"

- 1. It means that Jesus completed His work on earth. It is Finished***
- 2. We have an Advocate interceding for us in the heavenly's.***
- 3. And His ascension gives us assurance that He will come again.***

CHRIST HAS DIED. CHRIST IS RISEN. CHRIST WILL COME AGAIN.

And when He comes, He will take you and me to the place that He has prepared for us.

Amen and Amen!

LET US PRAY

Loving and gracious God, Lord of Hosts and Creator of all things, Your only Son was taken up into heaven and in power is seated at Your right hand, where He intercedes for all those whom You have called to Him in faith.

Open our eyes to You so we may understand the immeasurable greatness of Your power at work in us and in that strength let us do as Jesus commanded us to do.

Give us the wisdom and the power to go out and make disciples of all nations so that we can teach them those things He has revealed to us. Enable us to show forth in all that we do, the glory that You have bestowed upon us.

Lord of heaven and of earth, we pray for your Church. May we at Knox and all of Your children, hear the cry of those who are lost and, in Your name, show them the way of wholeness that You have prepared for them. We pray your blessings on the churches in those countries where Christianity is banned and where the faithful are persecuted.

We pray also this day for anyone afflicted with Covid 19. Give them peace and we ask that You would support and strengthen the medical profession who are caring for them.

Be with those who are home alone during this time. May they know Your love and Your care.

Almighty God, You who are the beginning and the end, the Alpha and Omega. We especially pray for those persons and those situations that You have put upon our hearts and minds this day.

Hear the special prayers that we now offer to You with the words of our lips and the meditations of our hearts.

We ask these things, and we praise You and bless Your Holy name through Christ Jesus Your Son, and our Lord.

Amen

BENEDICTION

Go in peace and love and care for another in the name of Christ Jesus.

May the Spirit of God fill you and use you according to God's most Holy will.

May the Word of God fill your heart with joy and wisdom and patience.

May Christ dwell within you so that all your actions and words will be a witness to His unsurpassed grace and His transforming love.

This both now and forevermore.

Amen