



Weaving God's Promises

LESSON 29

JESUS ASCENDS INTO HEAVEN

SUMMARY OF TODAY'S STORY

For 40 days after his death, Jesus appears to his apostles and promises them the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Then Jesus is taken up to heaven while they watch.

KEY CONCEPTS

- Ascension
- Jesus' imprint
- Believing is seeing

WHERE YOU'LL

FIND TODAY'S STORY

In the Bible

We recommend the *New Revised Standard Version* Bible.

Acts 1:1-11

In Our Sunday Lectionary

Today's story is told in church on the following Sundays:

Year A: Ascension Day and the

Seventh Sunday of Easter



WEAVING OUR STORY WITH THE BIBLICAL STORY

There are times when God “disappears” to put us on our own.

God wants persons, not puppets. And yet there is a sense in which Jesus did not go away at all.

Jesus is God with us (Emmanuel), which means that the reality of God's presence is tied to the very existence of Jesus, not just to his acts or his miracles or his teachings. As he ascends into heaven, he brings us with him.

Jesus had said to his disciples (and to us), “I will be with you to the end of the age.” Where he had once dwelt among them, he now dwelt within them. In some ways, he was more real than he was before.

They could reach him wherever they were, in a deeper and more abiding relationship.

And so it is with us. Jesus dwells within us. Though we have never seen or known Jesus in the flesh, as his disciples did, Jesus is as much with us now as he was with them at his ascension. When he ascends to heaven, he becomes available to all of us, at all times and in all places. His ascension signifies the total assurance and fulfillment of his promise to us. He has made our reconciliation with God happen; his work is complete, so he can now join his Father in heaven.



EPISCOPAL THREAD

Jesus' ascension into heaven is not the end of the story for us, but the beginning. Jesus promises us that the Holy Spirit will be with us. Ascension Day falls on a Thursday, 40 days after Jesus' resurrection. This follows the biblical text, which says that Jesus walked on the earth as the risen Christ for 40 days before he ascended into heaven.

Even though Ascension Day falls on a weekday, it is one of the seven Principal Feasts observed in the Church. Hymns sung in honor of this day are #214- 222 in *The Hymnal 1982* (New York, NY: Church Publishing, 1985) and are often sung on the Sunday between Ascension Day and Pentecost, so are very familiar: “Hail the day that sees him rise” (#214); “See the Conqueror mounts in triumph” (#215); “Hail thee, festival day!” (#216)



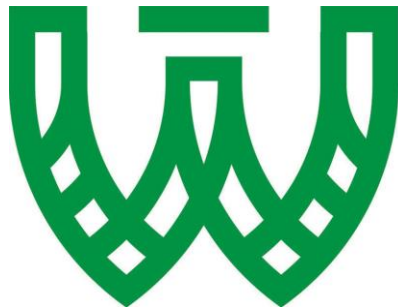
WEAVING GOD'S BELOVED COMMUNITY

Jesus reunites with God in heaven, and in departing from his earthly ministry, he promises to send us his Holy Spirit to help us continue his work to build that Kingdom for which he lived and died.

So now, through Jesus' intervention, earth and heaven are reconciled and now joined. But earth is not heavenly yet. How now to transform earth?

Jesus' gift of the Spirit tells us that he recognizes we need God's guidance to bring about the fulfillment of God's Beloved Community. The Spirit gives us the gifts that help us to combat social sins such as racism, exploitation of others, social greed, and destruction of God's good earth.

- ▮ What gifts do you have to help build God's Beloved Community?**
- ▮ Who is someone you admire that shares their gifts with the world?**
- ▮ What are examples of the Holy Spirit in your life encouraging you?**



**Weaving
God's Promises**

2-ACTS 1:1-11

Jesus promises that the Holy Spirit will come:

After Jesus is raised up from the dead, he stays on earth for 40 days. During this short time, he talks a lot about the kingdom of God. He wants us to know that God's kingdom has been brought by Jesus. Everything that Jesus taught while he was with the disciples was part of the kingdom of God. Let us remember all that Jesus taught us!

Then Jesus says to his disciples, "Now, you need to stay in Jerusalem.

Something is going to happen when you are here. God will send the Holy Spirit to you, as God has promised. So stay here and wait."

Jesus goes up to heaven:

The disciples ask Jesus one day, "Are you going to make Israel a kingdom now?"

Jesus says, "It is God who decides things. And what God decides is not for you to know. But here's what I will tell you. When the Holy Spirit comes upon you,

the Spirit will give you power to be my witnesses, who speak for me to everybody in the whole world.”

As Jesus is talking, suddenly he rises up into the air. The disciples watch, surprised. Then a cloud covers Jesus and he is gone. Gone!

The disciples look upward toward heaven. He was lifted up, so he must be up there somewhere! But as they are all looking up into the sky, two men suddenly appear, standing right next to them. The two men are wearing blinding white robes. Angels!

The angels say, “Why are you standing there looking up? Jesus has been taken from you. He is not here anymore. He is in heaven. But he will come back someday.”

The disciples look at each other. The angels are gone. It is only them. Time to head back to Jerusalem, as Jesus told them to do, to wait for the Holy Spirit. What will happen when the Spirit comes to them? They will find out soon.

