

Sunday, May 21, 2023 - 8:30am worship
Seventh Sunday in Easter

Welcome/Announcements

- Bulletins / Connection cards for prayer requests / Offering

Prelude

Call to Worship - Psalm 96 (CSB)

Hymn No. 43 - A Mighty Fortress is Our God

New Testament Reading - 1 Peter 4:12-14; 5:6-11 (CSB)

12 Dear friends, don't be surprised when the fiery ordeal comes among you to test you, as if something unusual were happening to you. 13 Instead, rejoice as you share in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may also rejoice with great joy when his glory is revealed. 14 If you are ridiculed for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.

6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you at the proper time, 7 casting all your cares on him, because he cares about you. 8 Be sober-minded, be alert. Your adversary the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can devour. 9 Resist him, firm in the faith, knowing that the same kind of sufferings are being experienced by your fellow believers throughout the world. 10 The God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, establish, strengthen, and support you after you have suffered a little while. 11 To him be dominion forever. Amen.

Congregational Prayer time concluding with the Lord's Prayer

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 sins as we forgive those who sin against us; lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Sermon Title: “Active Waiting” / Series: Turning Points, Week 7 / (#444)

Scripture texts: Ps. 68:1-10, 32-35; John 17:1-11; Acts 1:6-14; 1 Peter 4:12-14; 5:6-11

Honoring the life and ministry of Dr. Timothy Keller or as he used to say, “just call me Tim.”

- Keller planted and grew a Reformed evangelical congregation in Manhattan; launched a church planting network; cofounded The Gospel Coalition; and wrote multiple best-selling books about God, the gospel, and the Christian life.
- Everywhere he went, he preached sin and grace.
- **“The gospel is this,” Keller said time and again: “We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope.”**

Me...

- Before smart phones, back in the stone ages, before the invention of the internet, I used to keep a Bible, a book and a journal in my car in case of a delay in my schedule. Now, those three items are on my smart phone.
- I build margin into my day, traveling to an appointment a bit earlier than needed so I can read or journal or listen to some great teaching my Timothy Keller.
- This discipline is known as “active waiting”.
- Defined... **For believers, waiting is a time for activity, alertness, and hope-filled joy. Active waiting is a time to continue to cooperate with what God is constantly doing among us while we also prepare for new revelations of God's promises to us.**

You...

- I am noticing as we get older, there is more time to hurry and wait...
- What do you do while you wait? Do you pass the time by playing games? Reading? Napping? People watching? Daydreaming/reflecting? Praying? Talking with people? Journaling?
- Today, we will focus on the ascension of Jesus. Of course, this topic always leads to discussions and debates about the return of Jesus; we won't have time to debate that in this setting.
- As followers of Jesus, we are ultimately waiting for His return... how are you spending your time waiting? How are we as the “bride of Christ”, His church, spending our time and money waiting... are we active or passive in our waiting?

Sermon prayer

God's Word to us... the ascension of Jesus (Mark 16:19, 20; Luke 24:50-53)

The Holy Spirit Promised; Acts 1:4-11

4 While he was with them, he commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for the Father's promise. "Which," he said, "you have heard me speak about; 5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit in a few days." 6 So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, are you restoring the kingdom to Israel at this time?" 7 He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

The Ascension

9 After he had said this, he was taken up as they were watching, and a cloud took him out of their sight. 10 While he was going, they were gazing into heaven, and suddenly two men in white clothes stood by them. 11 They said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up into heaven? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come in the same way that you have seen him going into heaven."

- Thursday, May 18 was "Ascension day". Ascension Day is the celebration of Christ ascending into heaven after His death, burial and resurrection. Ascension Day is observed primarily in Catholic and Anglican churches, and it occurs on the Thursday, 40 days after Easter. Ascension Day is also called the Feast of Ascension.
- Interestingly enough, in our part of the world in here Lancaster County, Mennonites and Amish celebrate/recognize the day as a holiday.
- Businesses are closed, families gather for food and fellowship and the day is recognized devoutly and with much tradition.
- Why? As Protestants, what are we missing?
- We tend to focus on the return of Jesus and downplay or dismiss His departure... why?
- First a very brief overview of His return; the views that sadly seem to divide us in the church, a tactic of Satan to diminish our effectiveness to evangelize our world!

IF THERE IS TIME...

Information taken from Tim Keller's "The Gospel Coalition"...

- Eschatology is the field of Christian theology which concerns the study of last things.
- It is the study of Christ's future return, the resurrection, the rapture, the final judgment, the eternal blessedness of the redeemed with Christ, and the eternal punishment of the damned apart from his presence.
- The Millennium refers to the period of 1,000 year reign of Christ mentioned in Revelation 20:1-4.
- This passage is notoriously difficult to interpret has been the source of debate among three eschatological schools of thought: Amillennialism, Postmillennialism, and Premillennialism. The different eschatologies associated with the Millennium relate to the timing of the return of Christ regarding the 1,000 years and what is the precise nature of the Millennium.
- **Amillennialists** do not expect a future literal 1,000, but rather view it as Christ's reign with his saints during the time between his two comings.
- **Postmillennialists** believe Christ returns after the millennium as a golden age when the majority of the world has converted to Christianity.
- **Premillennialists** believe Christ returns before the millennium preceded by a period of intense tribulation.

Now that I have thoroughly confused you and dumped too much and probably unnecessary info into your brain, what about the ascension of Jesus?

Why should the ascension of Jesus be important to us?

What can it teach us about Jesus?

How can it encourage us in our obedience to follow Jesus?

- According to one of the early church fathers, Augustine of Hippo, the Feast of Ascension originated with the Apostles. It may be one of the oldest feasts practiced by the Church, possibly going as far back as AD 68. There is no written evidence, however, of the church honoring Ascension Day until Augustine's time in the fourth century.
- It is plain from Scripture that Jesus' ascension was a literal, bodily return to heaven. He rose from the ground gradually and visibly, observed by many intent onlookers. As the disciples strained to catch a last glimpse of Jesus, a cloud hid Him from their view, and two angels appeared and promised Christ's return "in just the same way that you have watched Him go." (Acts 1:11).

The Ascension of Jesus Christ is meaningful for several reasons...

1. Jesus' earthly ministry came to an end, signaling accomplishment. All that He had come to do according to the will of His Father, He "finished".
2. It marked the restoration of Jesus' heavenly glory and returns Him to His exalted position next to the Father. (Ephesians 1:20-23) The glory of Jesus had been veiled during His time on earth, with one brief exception at the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-9). The One with whom the Father is well pleased (Matthew 17:5) was received up in honor and given a name above all names (Philippians 2:9).
3. It allows Him to prepare a place for us to dwell with Him. (John 14:2)
4. Because of Jesus' departure, we have the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Counselor, to help us live like Jesus and model His behavior in this world. (John 14:15-17, 25, 26)
5. It indicated the beginning of His new work as High Priest (Hebrews 4:14-16) and Mediator of the New Covenant (Hebrews 9:15).
6. It sets the pattern for His return. When Jesus comes to set up the Kingdom, He will return just as He left-literally, bodily, and visibly in the clouds (Acts 1:11; Daniel 7:13-14; Matthew 24:30; Revelation 1:7).

IF THERE IS TIME...

The significance of Ascension Day is that it reminds us that,

- Jesus Christ is in heaven and sits at the “right hand of the Father”; a position of honor and authority. (Psalm 110:1; Ephesians 1:20; Hebrews 8:1)
- Jesus will return, glorious and triumphant; it will happen. We know how it will happen but not when... Are you ready?
- Jesus gives us the Holy Spirit in His absence to make Himself present with us. The ever-present Holy Spirit, watches over us, protects us and guides us as we disciple others through our testimony and witness to Jesus living in our hearts!

Application - You...

While we WAIT, we need to be ACTIVELY...

- Praising God for His faithfulness and love toward us.
- Loving God by serving others and meeting the needs of those broken by sin.
- Restoring a broken world with the “good news” message of Jesus.

Application - We, the church...

- Christ is the Head of the Church. (Colossians 1:18)
- Christ is the giver of spiritual gifts. (Ephesians 4:7-8)
- Christ is the One who fills all things with Himself. (Ephesians 4:9-10).

Sticky Statement...

We “actively wait” on Jesus until He returns by living as His disciples and making disciples in His name by sharing His story of “good news”, grace and new life with anyone lost in sin.

Closing Prayer

Hymn No. 679 - When We All Get to Heaven

Benediction...

“The gospel is this, we are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope.”

Postlude

Scripture references from the sermon (CSB)...

Mark 16:19, 20... 19 So the Lord Jesus, after speaking to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. 20 And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the word by the accompanying signs.

Luke 24:50-53... 50 Then he led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. 51 And while he was blessing them, he left them and was carried up into heaven. 52 After worshiping him, they returned to Jerusalem with great joy. 53 And they were continually in the temple praising God.

Revelation 20:1-4 (CSB)... “Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven holding the key to the abyss and a great chain in his hand. 2 He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. 3 He threw him into the abyss, closed it, and put a seal on it so that he would no longer deceive the nations until the thousand years were completed. After that, he must be released for a short time. 4 Then I saw thrones, and people seated on them who were given authority to judge. I also saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and who had not accepted the mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.”

Ephesians 1:20-23... 20 He exercised this power in Christ by raising him from the dead and seating him at his right hand in the heavens— 21 far above every ruler and authority, power and dominion, and every title given, not only in this age but also in the one to come. 22 And he subjected everything under his feet and appointed him as head over everything for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of the one who fills all things in every way.

Matthew 17:5... While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased. Listen to him!”

Philippians 2:9-11... For this reason God highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow—in heaven and on earth and under the earth— 11 and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

John 14:1-3... “Don’t let your heart be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. 2 In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? 3 If I go away and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to myself, so that where I am you may be also.”

John 14:15-17, 25, 26... 15 “If you love me, you will keep my commands. 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever. 17 He is the Spirit of truth. The world is unable to receive him because it doesn’t see him or know him. But you do know him, because he remains with you and will be in you.

25 “I have spoken these things to you while I remain with you. 26 But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have told you.

Hebrews 4:14-16... 14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens—Jesus the Son of God—let us hold fast to our confession. 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin. 16 Therefore, let us approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in time of need.

Hebrews 9:15... Therefore, he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called might receive the promise of the eternal inheritance, because a death has taken place for redemption from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.

Acts 1:11... They said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up into heaven? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come in the same way that you have seen him going into heaven.”

Daniel 7:13, 14... 13 I continued watching in the night visions, and suddenly one like a son of man was coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was escorted before him. 14 He was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, so that those of every people, nation, and language should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will not be destroyed.

Matthew 24:30... Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the peoples of the earth will mourn; and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

Revelation 1:7... Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn over him. So it is to be. Amen.

Psalms 110:1... This is the declaration of the Lord to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.”

Ephesians 1:20, 21... 20 He exercised this power in Christ by raising him from the dead and seating him at his right hand in the heavens— 21 far above every ruler and authority, power and dominion, and every title given, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

Hebrews 8:1, 2... Now the main point of what is being said is this: We have this kind of high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, 2 a minister of the sanctuary and the true tabernacle that was set up by the Lord and not man.

Colossians 1:18... He is also the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything.

Ephesians 4:7, 8... Now grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. 8 For it says: When he ascended on high, he took the captives captive; he gave gifts to people.

Ephesians 4:9, 10... But what does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower parts of the earth? 10 The one who descended is also the one who ascended far above all the heavens, to fill all things.