

Easter IV

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Preacher: Father Randall Russell

[0 : 00] Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Hallelujah! In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Amen. If someone were to ask you, What is the Gospel?

Have you ever given any thought to how you might respond? Perhaps you might say something about Christmas. About how God became a flesh and blood human being in the person of Jesus Christ.

Or perhaps you would say something about Good Friday and Easter. About how Jesus Christ suffered and died, and on the third day rose triumphantly from the dead.

But if someone asked you, What is the Gospel? Would you ever say anything at all about Ascension Day?

[1 : 06] How 40 days after Easter, our Lord ascended into heaven? Or would you ever say anything about the day of Pentecost? How 10 days after our Lord's Ascension, the Holy Spirit came down from heaven?

My guess is probably not. Or at least, most wouldn't. However, in this morning's Gospel, Jesus tells us that both Ascension Day and the day of Pentecost are just as important as Christmas, Good Friday, and Easter.

For in this morning's Gospel, our Lord tells us about two future events that were to come, Ascension Day and the day of Pentecost.

For this morning, Jesus says, But now I go away to Him who sent me. And none of you asks me, Where are you going?

But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. Nevertheless, I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away.

[2 : 24] For if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I depart, I will send Him to you. In other words, our Lord is saying that His ascension, His returning to His Father in heaven, is much, much more than just a heavenly homecoming.

For in this morning's Gospel, Jesus says, It is to our advantage that He goes away. And why?

Because if our Lord does not go away, then the Helper, that is, the Holy Spirit, will not come.

And here it might be helpful for us all to think of Ascension Day, not so much as our Lord ascending to a place, but more like our Lord ascending to the throne.

For our Lord's Ascension Day is more like our Lord's Coronation Day than it is His heavenly homecoming. Therefore, one of the reasons Ascension Day is so, so important is because it is the day on which God, as a man, as a human being, as the long-awaited flesh-and-blood descendant of King David, takes His rightful place at the right hand of the Father to sit on heaven's throne and to actually rule and reign over all as King forever.

But how is it that our risen, ascended Lord now rules and reigns over all as He sits on heaven's throne? Our Lord rules and reigns over all through the coming of the Holy Spirit.

[4 : 25] For ten days after our Lord's ascension to the throne of heaven comes the day of Pentecost, when Christ our King rules and reigns over all His people on earth through the help and comfort of the Holy Spirit.

For Pentecost is the day on which God sent His Holy Spirit to guide and to lead His church. That is the kingdom of God in all truth.

For in this morning's gospel, our Lord even says, But when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth, for He will take of what is mine and declare it to you.

For there is a link between our Lord's ascension into heaven, His going away, and the coming of the Helper, that is the Holy Spirit, on the day of Pentecost.

For ascension day is when our Lord ascends to the throne of heaven, and the day of Pentecost is when the Helper, the Holy Spirit, helps our Lord rule and reign by guiding His people in all truth.
[5 : 44] So might I suggest that the next time someone asks you what the gospel is all about, don't just tell them part of the truth.

Don't just tell them that God became man in the person of Jesus Christ, because that means very little if that God-man didn't do something.

And don't just tell them that Jesus Christ suffered, died, and rose again from the dead, because that too means very little if Jesus Christ isn't still in charge and isn't still ruling and guiding and leading His people.

For the next time someone asks you what is the gospel all about, simply tell them the truth, the whole truth.

Tell them that God became man in the person of Jesus Christ, Christmas, in order to live a perfect life and to suffer and die for the sins of the whole world, Good Friday, and that three days after His death, Jesus Christ rose from the dead, Easter Sunday, in order to ascend to the right hand of the Father and to sit on Heaven's throne, Ascension Day, as King over all, and that it is through the coming of the Holy Spirit, Pentecost, that God still leads and guides His people in all truth.

[7 : 23] For the truth is that Jesus Christ is Lord, and Jesus Christ is King to the glory of God the Father, and it is only through the help of the Holy Spirit that any of us, any of us can believe and fully acknowledge this truth and thereby give a hearty and honest Amen when that truth is both spoken and heard.

for Jesus Christ is King and one day Jesus Christ will return. One of the greatest comforts of the Gospel is that in Christ Jesus we have both the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come for it is all His.

It is the property and the possession of our most gracious and heavenly King in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Ghost.

Christ is risen! We are risen indeed. Hallelujah!