

The Ascension of Our Lord – 2026

Acts 1:1-11

Ephesians 1:15-23

Luke 24:44-53

Adam and Eve were pitched out of their home. Paradise lost, our first parents became sojourners, foreigners in a land east of Eden (Genesis 3:24). Home; can you imagine their hunger for home? After eating the fruit of the *good* trees in Eden, I suspect that every mouthful of food outside of home was a bitter reminder of how inferior this new food was. I've never lived in paradise, but I have an awareness of what home is. Adam and Eve were pitched out of their home and angels with flaming swords guarded the way back. Sin prohibited them from staying in paradise. Rebellion pitched them out. Betrayal pitched them out. Justice pitched them out. Paradise lost; the way back was barred; and they remembered. They wept and they remembered home... and God's promise grew in their mind (Genesis 3:15).

Have you ever been homesick? Conversely, do you know what it is to be in the *right* place, entering the door of the *right* place, knowing that you're going to remain in the *right* place? The moment any of the characters of the TV show *Cheers* walked through the door of the bar and others called out their name, it was a homecoming. Your home is not a bar. When the female lead in the movie *Titanic* died, a character named "Rose," she returned to the glittering deck of the ship where all her fellow travelers were assembled – it was a homecoming. Your home is not an ocean liner. We go back to school reunions and it's called "homecoming." Your home is not a school. Christ is your home. Paradise is your home. Heaven is your home. God's eternal kingdom is your home. You are on your way.

The Son of God left His home. He was worshipped, honored, and adored in heaven and the Messianic King left His home and took up residence in a broken land. Mary's womb was His initial residence, but the Lord Christ came to all of us (John 1:14). East of Eden; the Son of God came into a foreign land as a sojourner. He was from above and He made His home here, below, with us (John 8:23). Pain and sorrow and the spite of man – that's what is found east of Eden. Jesus taught those He encountered with His whole heart. He lived majestically, serving others, pointing the way, giving everything that the Son of God had to give. The Son of God brought His home, His kingdom, with Him. Those who sat at Jesus' feet sat at the threshold of heaven. Christ's healing hand touched us as He cured leprosy, blindness, paralysis. The Word made flesh fed us, the multitudes, with two fish and five loaves. Broken creation was restored as Jesus calmed a storm, as He raised Jairus' daughter, as He gave His disciples His body to eat and His blood to drink. He was bringing us home. God does not leave us east of Eden.

Why would He spare our lives? Why would most holy God spare the lives of sinners – the hateful, the arrogant, the lazy and the selfish? Doesn't He know us? Doesn't He know that we gladly make our beds east of Eden? There are times that we prefer darkness over light. Lord, have mercy! There are times when we prefer the taste of what the devil offers. Lord, have mercy! There are times when we protect the log in our own eye and obsess over the speck in someone else's eye. We idolize the rich and famous. We covet the glamour of the beautiful but those who are also colossally superficial. We fail to discern that Satan promotes what is east of Eden and we consume, consume, consume the fruit of superficiality. Adam, where are you?

(Genesis 3:9). How many times did Adam recall God's probing question after he was cast out of paradise? "What is this that you have done?" (Genesis 3:13). How many times did Eve have God's question pierce her soul when she found herself east of Eden?

Jesus said that He had no place to lay His head. "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head" (Matthew 8:20). No place to lay His head except on a cross outside Jerusalem. Heaven was His home, but a tomb was where the Messianic King of Life laid His head. God spared your life by crucifying His Son. Why? Because your Father wants to bring you home. On the night before He was crucified, Jesus prayed to His Father, "Bring Me home." "I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed" (John 17:4-5). *The work that God the Father had given Jesus to do* – what was that? Slay bitter death. Crush the head of the serpent. Unleash forgiveness. Set the captive free. Open the kingdom of heaven. Pay the price for sin. Fulfill the Scriptures. Establish the NT church. Breathe the breath of the resurrection into the fallen. By a bloody cross and an empty tomb, it has *all* been accomplished! By the Word and the Sacraments, it has *all* come to you.

He ascends. As a man, Jesus ascends. The Son of God takes our humanity into heaven. He is seated at the right hand of power, the right hand of authority, the right hand of glory and He fills all things (Ephesians 4:10). He has raised our human nature to the right hand of God. Jesus went home and He took us with Him (Ephesians 2:6). St. Luke tells us that the Lord opened the disciples' minds so that they could understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:15). The Holy Spirit is among us. The Holy Spirit clarifies the truth, brings us into a right understanding of God's Word (John 16:13). The Holy Spirit enlivens our hearts with faith, with trust and hope and confidence and joy. *Our* minds are opened. We understand the Scriptures – here are a few examples: Joshua, in the OT, Joshua led the Israelites across the Jordan River and into the Promised Land (Joshua 3). That is Christ ascending to the right hand of the Father and leading us, through the water of baptism, toward our heavenly destiny (Matthew 5:17). On Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, the High Priest went into the Most Holy Place to sprinkle blood on the mercy seat to atone for the sins of God's people (Leviticus 16). That is the Lord Christ, our Great High Priest, who went into heaven to present His wounds before His Father (John 5:39; Hebrews 9). His sacrifice intercedes for us, speaking a better word than the blood of Abel (Hebrews 12:24). We journey in the Way, Christ opens the Scriptures to us and we are heartened as we make our way home.

The journey is perilous. The journey is too much for us. Hardship, loss, emotional distress – the journey is not painless or carefree. We need to be nurtured, fed, replenished, strengthened. And Christ feeds us the bread of life. Elijah was given supernatural food in order to make it to Mt. Horeb, the Mount of God (1 Kings 19:1-8). That is us. Elijah's enemies were Ahab and Jezebel. The Jezebels of this world still haunt the steps of the faithful. The Ahabs of this world still sneer their demonic sneer and we can feel overmatched. And Christ feeds us the bread of life. We are on our way home – to the Mount of God. We know the Way. We tell others. Evangelism is one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread. The bread of Christ's victory is dispensed in this place. Forgiveness is found in this place. Life is found in this Divine Service. Salvation is a very present commodity at Christ the King Lutheran Church – it's available to anyone. The Lord

of Creation abides with His people, leading us home. We are known here. We are known and loved and blessed here. The Lord is ascended and enthroned in heaven, and we are on our way. He serves us until that day when we see Him face to face. But now, what a joy it is to know that we are His, that we are in His presence and that paradise awaits.