



Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
10 Johnson Road, Chestnut Hill Estates
Newark, DE 19713
302-737-6176
www.ourredeemernewark.org
Rev. Dr. John Rickert, Pastor

OUR REDEEMER'S VOICE

MAY 2019

Ascension

Forty days after Easter Jesus ascended into heaven. How this looked from earth is recorded in Luke 24:50-51 and Acts 1:9. How this looked in heaven is recorded in Revelation 5. As forty days after any Sunday is a Thursday, Ascension always falls on a Thursday. Thursdays are not a popular day of the week for worship services so we do not typically celebrate the Ascension, unless we transfer it to a Sunday. Therefore, I feel that the Ascension of our Lord does not get the attention it deserves in our thinking.

While a lot can be said about the Ascension (indeed a book's worth of words), we shall limit ourselves to just one thought: the Ascension is basically the coronation of Jesus. This "coronation" idea is found in the creeds with the simple words "and sits at the right hand of the Father." Jesus is resuming his proper place, only now he is both human as well as divine. This union is, ultimately, a mystery, but the Athanasian Creed gives us the best "short" description I know of:

But it is also necessary for everlasting salvation that one faithfully believe in the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

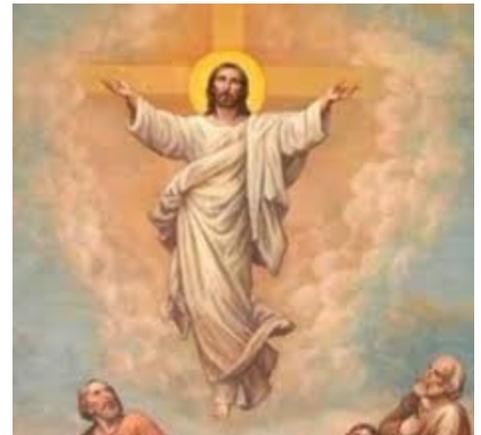
Therefore, it is the right faith that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is at the same time both God and man.

He is God, begotten from the substance of the Father before all ages; and He is man, born from the substance of His mother in this age; perfect God and perfect man, composed of a rational soul and human flesh; equal to the Father with respect to His divinity, less than the Father with respect to His humanity.

Although He is God and man, He is not two, but one Christ: one, however, not by the conversion of the divinity into flesh, but by the assumption of the humanity into God;

one altogether, not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person.

For as the rational soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ, (Athanasian Creed 27-35)



It is true that this union happened at the incarnation, but it was at the ascension that Jesus resumed his position as the eternal Son of the Father, and so, due to the union of the human and divine in the person of Jesus, humanity is crowned Son of God, King of kings, Lord of lords, eternal Messiah, and so on.

As the eternal Second Person of the Trinity, Jesus receives ultimate authority over all history according to his human nature. This is all the "scroll openings" in Revelation 5. We have a brother holding history in his hands. So, we read, "He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature, and He upholds the universe by the word of His power. After making purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews 1:3). Also, "Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven" (Hebrews 8:1).

Jesus reigns for the benefit of his body, the Church, which includes you. His position enables him to keep all the promises that he has made. This includes the sending of the Holy Spirit on the first Pentecost, which happened just ten days after the Ascension (Acts 1:4). But his giving did not end with the first Pentecost. Jesus, by his authority as the Ascended Lord, continues to send the Holy Spirit to all believers. The Augsburg Confession puts it this way: "There He forever reigns and has dominion over all creatures. He sanctifies those who believe in Him, by sending the Holy Spirit into their hearts to rule, comfort, and make them alive. He defends them against the devil and the power of sin" (AC III 4-5).

May our Ascended Lord Jesus bless you this Easter season.

Pastor



Digging In The Nicene Creed First Article, Part 12

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

We have taken a pretty good look at angels in our consideration of the invisible part of creation, but have not said anything really about souls, heaven or hell. We turn our thoughts to those portions of creation now.

In the Old Testament the word "*nephesh*" is often translated "soul" (Genesis 2:7). It can also mean breath, life and be used as a way of referring to oneself. In Greek the word "*psuchay*" is often translated "soul." It may also be translated as spirit, life, breath. The two words carry much the same meaning in the lexicons.

The Greeks were more abstract in their thinking and language. It is no surprise that our modern discipline of philosophy began with the Greeks. The Hebrews were more concrete. If you look at the wisdom literature in the Bible you quickly see how practical and concrete it is.

This Hebrew view of reality translates to the soul. It is *something*, not just a principle or force. It is part of who we are. A Biblical definition of physical death could be the departure of the soul.

The soul is immaterial in that it fills no space. Nonetheless, we can say where it is: in a living person and not outside his body (Acts 20:10). The "new age" idea of a person's soul leaving their body and going other places finds no support in the Bible. Indeed, if the soul did leave the body, the person would be dead.

There is a debate between a man being body and soul (dichotomy) versus a man being body, soul and spirit (trichotomy). Francis Pieper, a leading early theologian of the LC-MS, accepted the dichotomy position. He wrote:

The assumption that man consists of three essentially different parts: on the ... body as the material part; the ... soul as the lower, or animal, principle of life, which man has in common with animals; and the ... spirit as the higher, or spiritual, principle of life, which distinguishes man from the animals, is not sufficiently supported in Luke 1:46-47 and 1 Thess. 5:23. In Luke 1:46-47 ("My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God, my Savior") "soul" and "spirit" are plainly synonymous, according to the parallelism of Hebrew poetry. The thought: "My lower principle of life" magnifies the Lord, and "my higher principle of life" hath rejoiced in God, my Savior, is foreign to the context. In 1 Thess. 5:23 the words "Your whole spirit and soul and body" refer to the progressive sanctification of the Christian in view of the approaching Judgment Day, and it is certainly better to take "spirit" not as a natural part of man, but as designating the entire spiritual nature of a regenerated person, and the ... [and the soul and the body] as specifying the ... [completely sanctify/make perfect your spirit] so that the meaning is: May your whole spirit, your soul as well and your body, be preserved blameless. Dichotomy is favored decidedly by passages like Matt. 10:28: "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Man is here described according to his entire essence (his "totality"), and still only "body" and "soul" are mentioned. Matt. 16:25-26 is also conclusive: "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" That "soul" and "spirit" are essentially the same and are interchangeable terms is also evident by the fact that the departed, after having laid aside the body, are called both "spirits" ... and "souls" ... (1 Pet. 3:19 and Rev. 6:9). Recent theologians (19th century) are divided on the question; nearly all the older Lutheran dogmatists teach dichotomy. [Francis Pieper *Christian Dogmatics volume 1* 476-477]

The Debate Over the Nature of Man

Dichotomy

- More accepted in the Western Church, especially under the influence of Augustine
- Notable Scriptural passages suggesting Trichotomy – 1 Thess. 5:23; Heb.s 4:12
- Scripture more consistently stresses Dichotomy

Trichotomy

- More accepted in the Greek/Eastern Church
- Elaborates on the distinctions:
 - Body – lower, material, earthly
 - Soul – personality, demeanor
 - Spirit – gift of God-consciousness

I have read any number of articles that try to make a hard and fast distinction between a human soul and a human spirit. As soon as you look at some of the passages they are not referring to, their arguments always struggle. Pieper, though, fails to consider Hebrews 4:12. Here is what I think can be said with confidence:

- The soul/spirit is/are real
- The soul/spirit is/are immaterial, but has a specific local (Genesis 2:7; Revelation 6:9)
- The body is dead when the soul/spirit departs (John 19:28)
- To have a living spirit/soul is to have faith in Jesus (Psalm 31:5)
- The soul/spirit is/are connected with desire/thought/etc., i.e. it longs, plans, etc. (Isaiah 26:9; Psalm 31:7; 35:9, etc.)
- On the Last Day, we will be raised with a perfect body and soul/spirit (Romans 8:11; 1 Corinthians 15:35-49; 1 Thessalonians 5:23).

1 Corinthians 15: 42-44

*So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; **it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.***

Also, one should not make a hard and fast distinction between the body and the soul/spirit, as if the body is incidental and the soul/spirit is what really matters. The entire person matters to God and Jesus has redeemed the entire person, body and soul/spirit. You can't attend a worship service in spirit only; your body must be there also. You can't pray in spirit only; your body must pray also. You can't sing a hymn in spirit only; your vocal cords must work also. You can't even think in the soul/spirit alone; your brain must be there also. Finally, God doesn't just love our spirits/souls, but our bodies also. Certainly, the incarnation of Jesus teaches that! If the physical wasn't important to God, then Jesus would not have become flesh.

One final thought concerning immaterial things. Some have difficulty believing in things that can not be weighed, measured, etc. This works just fine, for the most part, with the physical creation, but fails to provide any real help in the immaterial creation. It is a mistake to conclude that, because souls have no material component, they are not real. The spoken word is real even though it has no physical existence. Measuring the effect of something is not the same as measuring the thing itself. That the spoken word affects sound waves is not the same thing as measuring that speech.

This pretty much wraps up what I'm going to say about the first article of the Nicene Creed. Next month we will turn our attention to the second article. Until then, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all" (2 Corinthians 13:14). Amen.



Silent Witnesses

Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself. (John 20:6-7)

Read John 20:1-9

It seems so tidy, somehow. When the disciples look into the tomb, they see the linen cloths lying on the stone bed, with the face cloth folded up neatly a little distance away. There are no grand explosions, no linen left dramatically draped around the room.

Rather it suggests to my mind that when He rose from the dead, Jesus simply sat up, removed His wrappings, folded His things (no doubt as His mother taught Him!) and then stood up and went about His day.

Such a quiet, homely beginning for the day that changed the world. A beginning like any other -- one that says "This is home; this is comfort; this is your life where you belong." A beginning unlike any other -- because this is the day that sees death undone, first for Jesus, and ultimately for every Christian who belongs to Him.

We fear death; for death is the enemy; death is a stranger and unknown to us. But Christ is no stranger. He is our Lord, our Savior, our brother and friend and refuge.



And He is the One who has mastered death.

Now we do not need to be afraid. Jesus our Lord goes with us, through life and suffering and death and life again. He knows the way, and He holds us safe through all terrors. And just as it was for Him, so it will be for us some day: we will rise from our graves to enjoy the eternal life He gives -- the life that is home, that is comfort, that is where we belong -- forever -- with Jesus.

THE PRAYER: Dear Lord, thank You with all my heart for rising again. Help me to trust in You as I face life and death, knowing that You will be with me and help me through every step of the way. Amen.

Arlen D. Besel – Ambassador

THROUGH THE WORSHIP WINDOW



May — The Four Sundays of Easter:

The post Resurrection story includes the time when Peter and others went fishing. Jesus appears and guides them to a huge catch of fish. This also includes Jesus reinstatement of Peter in light of his denials. This enables Peter to carry on his ministry.

Our Gospel journey takes us back to a reminder of the refusal of the Jews to accept their Messiah. It includes Jesus promise of the coming Holy Spirit who will enable them to spread the Gospel message.

The overview includes Jesus final appearance and his reference to the fulfillment of the many prophecies that point to Him and His salvation completion.

Rather than Old Testament readings, our first readings are taken from Acts in this season. The first message describes the conversion of Saint Paul on the road to Damascus, when Saul is called to be the evangelist to the Gentiles. The story continues with the details of Paul's several missionary journeys in the Middle East. He works to establish congregations in all the cities he visits and in some cases returns to strengthen them or sends his followers to do so.

Meanwhile Peter is also commissioned to spread the Gospel to the gentiles by a vision. Thus the church grew among both the Jews and Gentiles.



The final Sunday in Easter is the Ascension of Our Lord. After His final words and encouragement, Jesus is taken up into heaven. The angels that appeared told the disciples that they would see Jesus return in the same way He was taken up.

A Post Script:

As Summer takes over our weather and climate, it is a good time to rejoice in the many blessings we receive from the Lord.

Arlen D. Besel– Worship



Dig Into The ORCHARD

I am please to report that we have received our second garden grant, this one being over \$1200! We have purchases many much-needed items for our garden space, but more work needs to be done, so volunteers are always appreciated. We have scheduled a workday for Saturday, May 11th at 9:00 a.m.; please come if you are able—Madi Walter from DNREC will visit The ORCHARD and see our progress (part of the grant require-

ment), so let's turn out and get this neighborhood project finished! Thanks to all who have volunteered their time and talents thus far—we so appreciate your hard work!

Kitty Rickert, Evangelism Chair



Bulletin & Newsletter Information Dates

Please have all information for the bulletin into the office no later than Tuesday of each week. Newsletter info is due no later than the 20th of each month to ensure its inclusion. Thanks!

Thank you to all who brought things for our Easter Breakfast; it was a delight! Also, a special "Thank You" to Bonnie Johnston for her labor of love in making our new fair linen on the altar—wow!!

May Birthdays

2 Jason Cooley
9 Christina Johnston
14 Juliana Johnston
21 Arlen Besel



Anniversaries

4 Walt & Lina Besteder
12 Milt & Mitzi Steltz

If we missed your birthday or anniversary, please call the church office (302) 737-6176 or email secretary.orlcde@outlook.com with your info so we can celebrate with you!



Mid-Atlantic Branch

Considerations for Donors

All items **MUST** be clean, in good repair, and only gently used

- **We NEED men's, women's, children's and infant's clothing and shoes in all sizes and for all seasons as well as:**
 - Purses & handbags
 - Accessories – scarves, gloves, belts
 - New (packaged) underwear

- **We ALSO ACCEPT these non-apparel items:**
 - Domestic goods
 - Curtains, drapes, tablecloths
 - Sheets, blankets (no used bed pillows), and towels
 - Sewing supplies
 - Children's items
 - Soft (only) toys in good condition
 - School kits
 - Personal care items
 - New toiletry items – e.g., soap, shampoo, deodorant, shower caps, toothpaste and toothbrushes
 - Medical items – Canes, crutches, commodes, and wheelchairs
 - Hand tools
 - Bicycles

- **We CANNOT ACCEPT these items:**
 - used underwear – e.g., bras and underpants – and used swimwear
 - glass, ceramic, hard plastic or battery powered items
 - items with questionable themes/logos – e.g., satanic, skulls, skull & crossbones, death heads, swear language, demeaning to a gender or other group

"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you." John 14:18

MAY BIBLE READINGS

1 1 Samuel 2:1-10
Titus, Philemon

2 Psalm 121
Hebrews 1-4

3 Psalm 122
Hebrews 5-7

4 Psalm 123
Hebrews 8-10

5 Psalm 124
Hebrews 11-13

6 Psalm 125
James 1-3

7 Psalm 126
James 4-5

8 Psalm 127
1 Peter 1-2

9 Psalm 128
1 Peter 3-5

10 Psalm 129
2 Peter

11 Psalm 130
1 John 1-3

12 Psalm 131
1 John 4-5

13 Psalm 132
2 John, 3 John, Jude

14 Psalm 133
John 1-2

15 Psalm 134
John 3-4

16 Psalm 135
John 5-6

17 Psalm 136
John 7-8

18 Psalm 137
John 9-10

19 Psalm 138
John 11-12

20 Psalm 139
John 13-14

21 Psalm 140
John 15-16

22 Psalm 141
John 17-18

23 Psalm 142
John 19

24 Psalm 143
John 20-21

25 Psalm 144
Acts 1-2

26 Psalm 145
Acts 3-4

27 Psalm 146
Acts 5-6

28 Psalm 147
Acts 7-8

29 Psalm 148
Acts 9-10

30 Psalm 149
Acts 11-12

31 1 Samuel 2:1-10
Acts 13-14

