

Sermon Luke 24 44 53 Ascension

Sermon: Ascension Sunday

Text: Luke 24:46-48

Theme: You are witnesses of these things

Goal: To witness about Jesus so that people can be lead to repentance and to faith in forgiveness.

Dear Friends,

Introduction: The ascension of Christ seems to be a final dot in His history. After all He did, He went back to the Father. The Gospel of Luke finishes with the report of His ascension. But – NO – rather to be a final dot, the ascension is a colon: The same Luke wrote about Jesus work's continuity through the Book of The Acts of the Apostles and through our acts and lives as well! “Jesus’ work continues in Acts through His personal intervention (the apostles worked in HIS NAME) and the ministry of the Holy Spirit” (CSSB). *“You are witnesses of these things!”* Now: Go to all nations, share the Good News! The ending was truly a new beginning; just a pause to breathe during the next 10 days until Jesus would bestow power from the high upon His faithful people: The Holy Spirit came at Pentecost Sunday and empowered them to be *“witnesses of all these things”* – and we are witnesses as well!

What are *“these things to be witnessed”*? Jesus Himself gave a list of things to be witnessed (Luke 24: 46-49): *“This is what is written: The Christ will **suffer** and **rise** from the dead on the third day, and **repentance** and **forgiveness** of sins will be preached in his name **to all nations**, beginning at Jerusalem. **You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but you stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.**”* ; and the apostles fulfilled His command as we read in

the Book of Acts. Let's see some reports in the Book of The Acts of the Apostles:

I – Jesus' life and deeds

We read in Acts 10:39-40 as Peter preached at Cornelius house: "**We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem.**" After some years, the life and the deeds of Jesus were written in the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, so that we can read and know about Jesus and be His witnesses too.

II – Jesus' suffering and death

In Acts 3:15 Peter accused the people of Jerusalem. He says: "*You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead.* **We are witnesses of this.**" And after this he called the people to repentance and to faith in Jesus. On the basis of His sacrifice and glorious resurrection, the forgiveness of sins can now be announced to all.

III – Jesus' resurrection

The most impressive thing in the life of Jesus was His resurrection. This is the key point of all Christian proclamation, and His resurrection was the key point of all the preaching of the apostles in the Book of Acts. Acts 2:32 reports Peter preaching at Pentecost Day: "*God has raised this Jesus to life, and **we are all witnesses of the fact.** Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.*" - And Paul gives his testimony in Acts 13:30-33: "*But God raised him from the dead, and for many days he was seen by those who had traveled with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. **They are now his witnesses** to our people. We tell you the good news:*

What God promised our fathers he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus." – Without Jesus' resurrection, there is no forgiveness, no life, and no hope. I repeat: The resurrection is the key point of the Christian faith!

IV – Jesus' Ascension

Even Jesus' ascension was witnessed by the apostles combined with the promise of the Holy Spirit and the preaching of repentance and forgiveness :Acts 5:31-32: "*God exalted Him to His own right hand as Prince and Savior that He might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel. **We are witnesses of these things**, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him.*" And again in Acts 10:41- 43: "*He was not seen by all the people, but by **witnesses** whom God had already chosen—**by us** who ate and drank with him after *he rose from the dead*. He commanded *us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who *believes* in him receives *forgiveness* of sins through his name.*"*

V – “To all nations”

Acts 1:8 reports that Jesus said to His disciples before ascending to heaven: "*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and **you will be my witnesses** in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*"

When the Apostle Paul was baptized, Ananias said to him (Acts 22:15): "**You will be His witness to all men** of what you have seen and heard."

And, note, Paul wasn't a direct disciple of Christ. He didn't have seen the miracles of Jesus and either listened personally to His

teaching. But he was a witness as well, not an eye witness as the other apostles; but still a big witness! - This is our case too: We have the reports about Jesus in the Bible. But this is enough for us to be His witnesses. The Holy Spirit works through the Bible to call us to repentance and faith and enables us to be Jesus' witnesses to all the world. This is the way that the Gospel reached Africa and so many other countries around the world. - And we are the witnesses for our time and for our people. What Jesus did for us on the cross and how He shares His blessings of love, forgiveness and hope with us is a matter to be witnessed to our family and to our friends.

Conclusion: To be a good witness we need to know more and more about Jesus and His deeds, death, resurrection, ascension and everything related to the salvation He brings to everyone. In any event of Jesus' life, we are reminded about the commission to carry on Christ's work as His followers and witnesses. Therefore it is so important to read the Bible at home daily, to come to the Services, to take part in Bible Study, to use every opportunity to grow in knowledge and faith. Through His word, Jesus will "*open our minds*" as He did with the disciples; and will give His Holy Spirit so that we can open our mouths to testify about Him and His grace.

Jesus is still among us according to His promise. He went back visible and bodily to the Father. People cannot see Him anymore, but they can see "the Christians" – WE! – as we live and follow Jesus' deeds. And He gave us His Holy Spirit to work in us and through us. Let us rejoice in Jesus' ascension and in the privilege we have to be witnesses and to share the good news of repentance and forgiveness in His name with all the nations, until He comes again. Amen.

Pastor Carlos Walter Winterle
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