

Prayer of the Week:

O God, the King of glory, you have exalted your only Son Jesus Christ with great triumph to your kingdom in heaven: Do not leave us comfortless, but send us your Holy Spirit to strengthen us, and exalt us to that place where our Savior Christ has gone before; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, in glory everlasting. Amen.

(Source: Book of Common Prayer 2019, Collects of the Christian Year, The Sunday After Ascension Day)

Prayer of Thanksgiving:

Almighty God, Father of all mercies, give you humble thanks for all your goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all whom you have made.

We bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for your immeasurable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory.

And, we pray, give us such an awareness of your mercies, that with truly thankful hearts we may show forth your praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to your service, and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory throughout all ages. Amen.



Ascension Sunday
1 Peter 5:6-11 (NRSV)
May 24, 2020

Ascension Sunday

Today is Ascension Sunday.

The ascension of Christ to the right hand of God is a way of recognizing that Christ has been raised up or promoted to his place of authority over heaven and earth where he now fills the cosmos with his presence. The ascension is not a way of explaining his apparent absence in the world; it is about the cosmic presence of Christ filling the earth as he now rules over all the nations.

This is the theological backdrop of our passage this morning. The letter of First Peter deals with themes of persecution and the general sufferings of life and gives us theological grounding for hope in the midst of suffering.

God Is In Control?

As we all try to make sense of what is happening in our world, I've heard many Christians key in on the idea that God is in charge. However, the way I hear it talked about is troublesome.

Much of the time, "God is in charge" is taken to mean the same thing as "God is in control."

However, saying "God is in charge" IS NOT the same as saying "God is in control." To figure this out, we need to look no further than we Jesus received his crown (of thorns).

God in Christ sees that the world needs healing because everything is not as God would will or intend. So, he takes on our sin and defeats death through resurrection. This is his act of kingship. This is how he rules. He does not rule with control over all the details of life, he rules with authority. On the cross he demonstrated his charge (authority) over sin by not falling victim to revenge, insult, or violence toward those who sinned against him. When met with sin, he was able to respond with forgiveness.

He then demonstrated his charge (authority) over death itself through resurrection. God is in charge is what these actions proclaim.

God does not rule the world through control, God rules the world through self-giving love.

"The cross reveals that God's omnipotence is not primarily about control but about his compelling love. God conquers evil and wins the heart of people by self-sacrificial love, not by coercive force." -Greg Boyd, Is God to Blame, pg. 49

Peter's Benediction

All of this sits in the background of Peter's benediction (close of his letter) after writing about hope in the midst of suffering. He says:

Keep yourselves humble: Without humility, we tend to place our trust in ourselves rather than in Christ. Without humility, we will be tempted to turn ourselves into gods and our enemies into the devil (this is why Peter reminds us that there is a real enemy who seeks to destroy us, but it isn't our fellow humans).

Cast our anxiety upon him: Cast your anxiety up on him because the Ruler Over All the Nations has filled the world with his presence, defeated death, and rules with self-giving love. Whatever the nature of our anxiety can be cast upon the One who is good.

Christ himself will restore, support, strengthen, and establish you: The idea of restoration, support, strength, and a firm foundation is attractive to us just as it was to Peter's first audience.

Peter's encouragement is that these are found in Christ, the Resurrected & Ascended King.

May we know the nature of God's sovereignty and rest in His goodness.