

Saint Thomas and Saint Thomas of the Air Church
Sunday after Ascension
June 1, 2025
rmcneely+

Ye men of Galilee,
Why stand ye gazing up into heaven?

They must have been bewildered.
Jesus had taken the Apostles a half-day's walk from Jerusalem,
out to a hillside in Bethany.

He told them to go back to Jerusalem
Where they would be endued with power from on high.
As He blessed them, He was taken up
Into the clouds
To His post
at the right hand of God.
They lost sight of Him
And would see Him no more.

But two men in white apparel appeared.
They said: "Ye men of Galilee,
Why stand ye gazing up in heaven?
This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven,
Shall so come in like manner,
As ye have seen him go into heaven."

They must have stood there
Silent
Trying to comprehend what had just happened
And what it would mean.

It had been only 40 days since His Crucifixion.
There had been a whirlwind of activity.

His Resurrection; the astonishing news swirling and sweeping not just Jerusalem but all Judea.

There were accounts of people sighting Him
in His resurrected body,
walking and talking among them.

Later, He had appeared before the Apostles,
met them at the shores of the Sea of Galilee,
He had even shared a meal with them.

He kept telling them of something powerful coming.

And now this.

What had just happened?

Was it the conclusion or the beginning

And what was to come?

Jesus had told them He would go home to the Father.

Could they take it in?

Even after they had witnessed it

Could they comprehend what it meant?

As far back as the story of Daniel

The Ascension had been foretold.

Some 500 years before, Daniel wrote of his vision from heaven:

“behold, one like the Son of man

came with the clouds of heaven,

and came to the Ancient of days

and they brought him near before him.

And there was given him dominion and glory

and the kingdom,

that all people, nations, and languages should serve him:

this dominion, which shall not pass away

and the kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.”

It would be some time before scholars could put it all together.
 The enigmatic writings of Daniel had been meaningless;
 Until the Ascension.
 Daniel's vision was of Jesus ascending to heaven
 In return to the Father,
 His earthly mission completed.
 And then Daniel's words finally made sense.
 Jesus had dominion, glory and the Kingdom
 That all peoples, nations and all languages
 Would serve Him.
 Forever.

The Creeds boldly state the matter;
 "He ascended into heaven
 and sitteth on the right hand of God
 the Father Almighty."

That reference to "the right hand of God"
 May hold the key for us today.

Perhaps a reference to the preference of seating at the banquet
 table,
 The seat to the right of the host is the honored one.
 The one saved for the special guest.
 However, I think there is even more significance.

Daniel relates that He was given dominion, a Kingdom.
 Something foreign to our ears.
 But familiar and commonplace to the ancients.

Jesus is King of His Kingdom.
 That is why the hymns selected today sound of
 Coronation
 Diadem
 Royal state

Jesus returned to His Father as King
Ruler of all,
Omnipotent,
Omniscient,
Eternal.

His Ascension has one more important aspect:
He demonstrates there is a Heaven.
Perhaps not a place as we know it,
But certainly an existence.

He spoke of it to the Apostles.
He told them He was leaving this earth
And would go to the Father.
When Thomas questioned Him, He said (ever a servant):
“I go to prepare a place for you.”

So our King awaits us.
A King in state just as He was when He Ascended;
Fully human and fully divine.
A King who knows what it is like to be human in this world.
A King who knows suffering and solace.
Joy and despondency.
Triumph and tragedy.
A King who will be our Judge at the end of time.

We have the perfection of Heaven in our sights
A life goal
An eternal reward.

We have to feel for those who do not share what we have.
Those who deny Him
Deny the existence of heaven
Who live this life without purpose
Empty and without hope.

Doesn't life take on a completely different meaning to those for whom death is still final?

Maybe you can tell them this little parable that might give them pause:

In their mothers womb are twin babies

The first asks "Do you believe in life after delivery?"

The second replied: "why, of course.

There has to be something after delivery

Maybe we are here to prepare ourselves for what will be after

Nonsense says the first

There is no life after delivery. What could that life possibly be I don't know, but there will be more light than in here

Maybe we will walk on our legs and eat with our mouths

The doubter laughed: "that is absurd! Walking is impossible

And eating with our mouths? Ridiculous.

The umbilical cord supplies all our needs

Life after delivery just can't be.

The umbilical cord is too short

The second held his ground

I think there is something and maybe it's different than it is here

The first replied: "no one has ever come back from there

Delivery is the end of life

And in after-delivery there is nothing but darkness

Well I don't know said the twin "but certainly we will see mother

And she will take care of us.

Mother?

You believe in Mother? The first baby scoffed.

Where is she now?

The second calmly tried to explain

"she is all around us" It is in her that we live.

Without her there would be no life.

Well . . . I don't see her. . . so she does not exist.
To which the other replied: Sometimes when you're in silence
 You can hear her, you can perceive her.
I believe there is even a greater life after delivery
 And we are here to prepare ourselves for that reality when it
comes.'

The short and fleeting time that we have here on this planet
 This island
 In the universe
 Is but a miniscule portion of our journey.
It is a time to prepare
 To sculpt and to mold our souls
 To shed our sinful ways
 To learn and adhere to the will of God
So that we may go home.
 Where we will know life
 In all its richness and fullness

Jesus has made it all possible
 His bodily ascension has proved the way
With the Ascension
 For the first time
 People were able to see death
 As going home
 Going home to the heavenly place
 Going home to their heavenly Father.

Going home
 And entering into the presence of their Creator
 Where there will be joy
 Where there will be peace
 Where there will be love

