

2021-05-16 – Rev Esma Collins-Marks

Luke 24:44-53

Every four years in the last half of January there is a party in Washington D.C. For at noon on January 20, the president-elect takes office. Whether he is beginning his first term or second term, it's a celebration. The day often begins with the inaugural parade as the president-elect travels to where he will take the oath of office. After swearing to preserve, protect, and defend the constitution of the United States, he gives his inaugural speech. Then later comes the inaugural ball with famous names and high celebration, as the pomp and circumstance gives way to fun and entertainment. Although this year was different with Trump and Covid.

In many ways our Saviour's ascension is like a president's inauguration, as the eternal Son of God, Jesus had always ruled as King of all. But his ascension shows us that now he rules not only as the Son of God but as the Son of Man as well. Jesus, the God-man rules as our ascended King.

As the Holy Spirit works in us through this word of God today, may he stir us to worship our ascended King. That is the theme today. Worship our ascended King. Worship him with joy and celebration for our Saviour's ascension is greater than any presidential inauguration. Worship our ascended King in joy and celebration. So what brings us to this point? First of all, He has fulfilled his mission for us. And also, He reigns eternally for us.

He has fulfilled his mission for us. Six weeks earlier, late Thursday night. The disciples thought all had ended. Jesus had been arrested. They had all scattered. The news grew worse. Jesus was condemned. He was crucified. He lay dead in the tomb.

What kind of king would suffer such cruelty? Who would honour such a weak and helpless king? Jesus appeared to have failed. "He was led like a lamb to the slaughter. He was cut off from the land of the living". The

heartache of losing a presidential election was nothing compared to what the disciples had felt.

But what happened to Jesus, happened to him according to his will and plan. This had been God's promise ever since Adam and Eve had sinned.

But the disciples could not see Satan's power crushed and crumbled. They saw their Jesus dead. They saw his mission fail, or so they thought. Even after Jesus showed himself alive again, even after they had touched his resurrected body, even after they had witnessed that the same Jesus that was nailed to the cross and still bore the nail marks, the same Jesus who had certainly died, that same Jesus was alive, risen from the dead – even then, they did not fully understand that all this was part of his mission. He had not failed; he had fulfilled his mission.

Since they did not understand, the risen Jesus told them that he had explained this to them before it happened. He opened their minds so that they could put two and two together and see that all that had happened was exactly as God's Word, recorded in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms, had said.

Jesus' mission was to seek and to save what was lost. His mission was to seek and to save us. How did he do that? He did it exactly as God's Word had said he would.

This Good News, the Gospel of Jesus, is the message of forgiveness of sins that is preached in Jesus' name to all nations. This Good News comes into our hearts through Baptism and the Word. This Good News changed us so that we see that Jesus alone is our Saviour. Only he has come to seek and save what was lost, to seek and to save you and me.

As we watch our Saviour ascend, believe that he has fulfilled that mission. He is not leaving us, but he is showing us that the work he has born to do is complete. He has paid for all our sins. He has won full and free forgiveness for us.

He reigns eternally over everything. We worship our ascended King in joy and celebration because his reign has no end. Unlike a president who

runs the country for four years or eight if he is re-elected, Jesus reigns eternally over everything.

Just as he lifted his hands in blessing for his disciples so also he is blessing you and me. The disciples “worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and they stayed continually at the temple, praising God’. Jesus’ ascension leads us to worship him with great joy and to praise God for the great things he has done for us in Christ Jesus.

And yet so often things may seem the opposite. So often our lives do not seem to be victorious. So often we suffer and all the more so when we boldly confess our Lord. We succumb to the same sicknesses, the same tragedies, the same problems that confront others.

When you see these happening to you and feel the temptation to be angry or fearful, to give up or to seize control, to worry or to get even, remember your ascended King. Even though the world around you denies him, he truly reigns over all. Even when you feel helpless and wonder why such things happen to you, your King is taking care of you. You and I may not see his hand beneath us lifting us up, protecting us. By faith we know it is there, for as our ascended King he rules over all things for our good.

He has already given his life for us. He has ascended in victory. He gives us this victory. No matter what others do, or what disaster befall us, or how little we have, we can be content. We can be happy. We can be joyful. Our ascended King has won the victory for us. We will reign with him forever in heaven so what does it matter what others do to us for the few moments of our earthly life?

Depending on your politics, a presidential inauguration can be a joyful time. Yet that joy soon comes to an end and many plans and promises remain unfulfilled. The joy we have in our ascended Lord never ends. He has fulfilled his mission – his mission to save lost sinners like you and me. He rules eternally over everything so that we can live in joy and happiness now and forever. Amen.