

Sermon for the Feast of the Ascension

'And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy.'

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An ancient martyr of the Church once wrote: 'The glory of God is the living man.'

It is the Feast of Ascension of Our Lord; of Christ, in human flesh, being assumed into the Triune life. What have you seen? 'The glorification of God.'

But that is nonsense, for how can He who is glory become even yet more glorified? Who shall confer glory upon Him who *'sealeth up the hand of every man; that all men may know His work; who by His breath creates the frost' 'and scattereth the bright cloud.'*

Who shall add to the might of Him who is called Almighty, who *'hath laid the foundations of the earth, and who laid the measures thereof? Who 'commands the morning since all thy days, and causes the dayspring to know its place?'*

Who shall magnify Him who *'scourged the Egyptians by the strength of his arm, and pursued them by strange rains and hail and relentless storms, utterly consuming them with fire.'* Who *'gave to Israel in the desert the food of angels, and without their toil supplied them from heaven with bread ready to eat.'*

Who when He spoke from the mount of Sinai, the people cried out *'We are greatly afraid.'* Who, then, *'shall proclaim his generation'*, He, who is without beginning nor end? Who shall increase His glory, Him whose glory extends beyond all understanding?

Yet it is not in such devastating power, in such terrible might that the Glory of the Lord is found.

For 'The glory of God is the living man.'

It is the Feast of the Ascension of Our Lord. What have you seen? 'The glorification of God.' Indeed, and it could not be otherwise. For God's glory is revealed in mercy, and *His power is made perfect in weakness.*' And in what weakness shall his power be perfected? In man, who is a vessel of weakness.

'What is man, that you are mindful of him?' For *'man is born of woman, and few are his days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not.'* *'His flesh is overcome with pain, and his soul within him shall mourn.'* Yet it is this same humanity that the Father has determined to be His image. It is man that God has destined to become His glory. It is in the life of this mankind, who is *of few days*, that will shine forth the glory of God.

For from Christmas day, we have journeyed with a man, that he might live our life, and complete it.

For Jesus was 'incarnate by the Holy Spirit ... and was made man.'

He was born of a woman, and entered into the coldness of human existence, even we as we are.

He '*grew in wisdom and stature*' even as we do.

He was baptized by water and the word, by the font and the Spirit, even as we are.

He was tempted by the deceits of Satan towards sin, and showered with empty promise by the Father of lies, even as we are.

He knew friends, ate, drank, was merry, was saddened, knew death among those he loved, knew suffering among those who yet live, even as we do.

He was maligned by jealous men, His name demeaned by their envy, even as we

are, even as we do.

He died, crucified, upon a cross, and breathed His last, even as we must.

He descended into hell, even as, in sin, even as we were destined.

He was raised from the dead by the power of the Almighty Father, even as we shall on the Last Day.

In every way, Jesus has lived the life not of the invisible God, but of frail man.

And yet in this season of Easter, we see frail man overcome death. We witness the weakness of man overcome the dread power of death. And so we know that, since he has risen from the dead, so too shall we who have faith overcome death and grave, wherefore it is written: *'O grave, where is thy victory, O death, where is thy sting?'* Indeed, *'The glory of God is the living man.'* And now man lives in God, never to die again.

For so it was that man was made in the beginning not to die, but to live, as it is written that *'The Lord breathed into man his Spirit, and he became a living being.'*

Yet, if we stop here, with the life of man, even the eternal life of man in Christ, we have not come to the end of the story. We have not seen the completion of the Will of God.

For the will of God does not end with the giving of life. Nor does it end with the command *'be fruitful and multiply.'* But with *'fulfill the earth, and be the lord over it.'*

For *'What is man, that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that thou visiteth him?'* *'Thou hast crowned him with glory and honor; thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet.'*

It is the Feast of the Ascension of Our Lord. See now that Christ ascends to his Father! But see that he does not ascend as God, but ascends as man. See that he does not depart from the trek that man shall make, but
He completes the trek we were destined to make.

See that He does not leave his disciples upon the earth, but shows them the final step in the path of their redemption, the step not merely from death unto life, but the step from life unto dominion.

See now, He 'sitteth at the right hand of the Father', the heavenly Jerusalem, the royal hall of the blessed; and there He awaits us as our brother, that we too in the redemption won for us in His Victory, shall return to the throne of glory established for us before the foundation of the world; there to *have dominion over all the works of the Lord's hand*. In the Ascension of Our Lord Jesus, we see the completion of the life and destiny of man; the glory of God, which is the honor of man; the glory of man, which is the reign of God over his eternal Israel. The completion of God's creation in the exaltation of His image to dominion over all that is created. [In the Ascension, we don't just see the end of the story of Jesus on earth. We see the ending promised to all who believe. We see the ending promised you.]

See now, good Christians, to what end you were made, to what glory you have been predestined, to what power you have been exalted; The completion of your life. *'Taste, and see that it is good.'* *'See, and rejoice therefore evermore.'*

"And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy."

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Preached by Pastor Fields

Sermon Texts: Acts

1:1-11; Ephesians 1:15-23; Luke 24:44-53.