



He Lives to Rule All Things for the Church

Ascension

BETHEL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH | York, Nebraska

May 18, 2023

SERIES THEME: HE LIVES!

Life is full of either/or moments where you face an unavoidable choice between two alternatives. Some of those moments are relatively insignificant. Either I have the chicken, or I have the fish. Other times, they shape the course of your life. Either I accept this new job offer, or I keep my current job for the remainder of my career. Either I accept his marriage proposal, or.... Some either/or moments are bigger than others. Here is the biggest either/or of them all. Either Jesus is still dead, or Jesus rose. One might ask, "How does that either/or affect me?" Because Jesus claimed to be the Son of God and Savior from sin. He said the proof is that he would rise from the dead. "The Son of Man must suffer many things ... be killed and after three days rise again" (Mark 8:31). Thus, if Jesus remains dead, he is both failure and fraud. However, if Jesus rose from the dead, he proves he is who he claimed to be—the Messiah. And he did what he came to do—save us. Either Jesus is still dead, or Jesus rose. That means, either Jesus is a complete waste of your time, or he is your only hope for salvation. If Jesus is still dead, it is completely logical that you should want nothing to do with him. If Jesus rose, it is only logical that he becomes the center and greatest priority of your life. Either Jesus is still dead, or Jesus rose. This season of Easter is a 50-day-long celebration of the fact that the Holy Spirit has answered that either/or for us. We believe this life-changing truth. Christ is risen! He lives! Throughout this season, we explore what that means.

THEME OF THE DAY: HE LIVES TO RULE ALL THINGS FOR THE CHURCH

We understand why God became man in the person of Christ. The Savior needed to be able to suffer and die to atone for mankind's sin. What is fascinating is that when the work of redemption was completed, the Son of God did not set aside his humanity. The God-man ascended into heaven. It is a human, our brother, who sits on heaven's throne. The ascension marks the completion of Jesus' earthly mission, but it does not signify the end of his work. While on earth, Jesus had set aside so much of his divine power. But Jesus now picks all that power back up again. He ascended to exercise his limitless authority for the Church as we carry out our mission to be Christ's ambassadors of grace to the world. He lives! And he is in absolute and perfect control, ruling over Creation for the eternal well-being of his friends. And that is what we are! The Festival of the Ascension is one of the oldest and most joyful celebrations in the Christian Church. It will be observed by Christians until Christ returns to take us to be with him.

Worship Leader

Pastor Justin Wilkens

Organist/Pianist

Quinton Corwin

Acknowledgments

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Prayer at the Close of Day (page 225 in Christian Worship 21)

The Lord Almighty grant us a quiet night and peace at the last.
Amen.

It is good to give thanks to the Lord,
to sing praise to your name, O Most High,
to herald your love in the morning,
your truth at the close of day.

Hymn: 549 Across the Lands

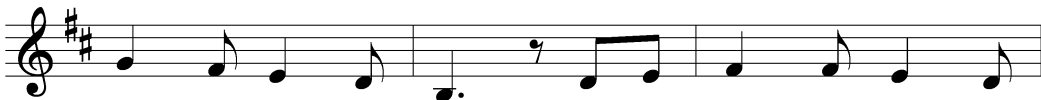
Sung by the choir.



1 You're the Word of God the Fa - ther from be - fore the
2 Yet you left the gaze of an - gels, came to seek and
3 With a shout you rose vic - to - rious, wrest - ing vic - t'ry



world be - gan. Ev - 'ry star and ev - 'ry plan - et has been
save the lost, and ex - changed the joy of heav - en for the
from the grave, and as - cend - ed in - to heav - en, lead - ing



fash - ioned by your hand. All cre - a - tion holds to -
an - guish of a cross. With a prayer you fed the
cap - tives in your way. Now you stand be - fore the



geth - er by the pow - er of your voice. Let the skies de -
hun - gry, with a word you calmed the sea, yet how si - lent -
Fa - ther, in - ter - ced - ing for your own; from each tribe and



clare your glo - ry, let the land and seas re - joice!
ly you suf - fered that the guilt - y may go free!
tongue and na - tion you are lead - ing sin - ners home!



You're the au - thor of cre - a - tion, you're the Lord of ev - 'ry



man, and your cry of love rings out a - cross the lands.

Text: Stuart Townend, b. 1963; Keith Getty, b. 1974

Tune: arr. Ruth N. Coleman, b. 1953; Stuart Townend, b. 1963; Keith Getty, b. 1974

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Confession

CW 226

Our help is in the name of the Lord,
the maker of heaven and earth.

Let us confess our sins in the presence of God and of one another.

Silence for personal reflection

Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
we have sinned against you
in our thoughts,
in our words,
in our deeds,
and in all that we have not done.
Forgive us in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.
Deliver and restore us,
that we may rest in peace.

By the mercy of God we are redeemed by Jesus Christ,
and in him we are forgiven.

Let us rest in his peace until the rising of the sun,
when we shall serve him in newness of life.

Amen.

Psalm: 47A God Has Gone Up with a Shout

Refrain

God has gone up with a shout,
the LORD with the sound of the trum - pet.

Tone

Clap your hands, all you / nations;
shout to God with / cries of joy.
For the LORD Most High is / awesome,
the great King over / all the earth.
God reigns over the / nations;
God is seated on his / holy throne. *Refrain*

God has ascended amid / shouts of joy,
the LORD amid the sounding of / trumpets.
Sing praises to God, sing / praises;
sing praises to our King, sing / praises.
For God is the King of / all the earth;
sing to him a / psalm of praise.

**Glory be to the Father and / to the Son
and to the Holy / Spirit,
as it was in the be- / ginning,
is now, and will be forever. / Amen. Refrain**

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Reading

Acts 1:1–11

Jesus tells his disciples that although he was going to ascend, they would not be left alone. He promises to send the Holy Spirit to them and us.

Jesus Taken Up Into Heaven

¹ I wrote my first book, Theophilus, about everything Jesus began doing and teaching ² until the day he was taken up, after he had given instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. ³ After he had suffered, he presented himself alive to the apostles with many convincing proofs. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and told them things about the kingdom of God.

⁴ Once, when he was eating with them, he commanded them, “Do not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for what the Father promised, which you heard from me. ⁵ For John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

⁶ So when they were together with him, they asked, “Lord, is this the time when you are going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”

⁷ He said to them, “It is not for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

⁹ After he said these things, he was taken up while they were watching, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰ They were looking intently into the sky as he went away. Suddenly, two men in white clothes stood beside them. ¹¹ They said, “Men of Galilee, why are you standing here looking up into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Hymn: 472 A Hymn of Glory Let Us Sing

sts. 1-3



1 A hymn of glo - ry let us sing! New songs through-
2 The ho - ly ap - os - tol - ic band up - on the
3 To them the shin - ing an - gels cry, "Why stand and



out the world shall ring: Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!
Mount of Ol - ives stand, Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!
gaze up - on the sky?" Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!



Christ, by a road be - fore un - trod, as - cends un -
and with his fol - low - ers they see their Lord as -
"This is the Sav - ior," thus they say. "This is his



to the throne of God. Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!
cend in maj - es - ty. Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!
glo - rious tri - umph day." Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!



Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!

Text: tr. composite; The Venerable Bede, 673-735, abr.

Tune: Geistliche Kirchengesäng, Köln, 1623

Text and tune: Public domain

Reading

Ephesians 1:15–23

St. Paul teaches that Jesus ascended so that he might fill all creation with his presence and his power. Nothing is outside his control.

Thanksgiving and Prayer

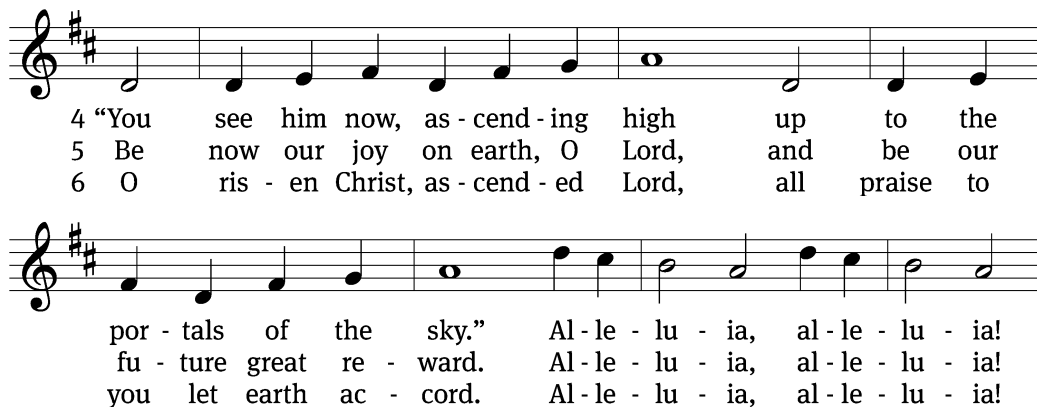
¹⁵ This is why, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, ¹⁶ I never stop giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. ¹⁷ I keep praying that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, will give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in knowing Christ fully. ¹⁸ I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know the hope to which he has called you, just how rich his glorious inheritance among the saints is, ¹⁹ and just how surpassingly great his power is for us who believe. ²⁰ It is as great as the working of his mighty strength, which God worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹ far above all rule, authority, power, and dominion, and above every name that is given, not only in this age but also in the one to come. ²² God also placed all things under his feet and made him head over everything for the church. ²³ The church is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Hymn: 472 A Hymn of Glory Let Us Sing

sts. 4–6



4 “You see him now, as - cend - ing high up to the
5 Be now our joy on earth, O Lord, and be our
6 O ris - en Christ, as - cend - ed Lord, all praise to

por - tals of the sky.” Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!
fu - ture great re - ward. Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!
you let earth ac - cord. Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!



“Here - af - ter Je - sus you shall see re - turn - ing
Then, throned with you for - ev - er, we shall praise your
You are, while end - less a - ges run, with Fa - ther



in great maj - es - ty.” Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!
name e - ter - nal - ly. Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!
and with Spir - it one. Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!



Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia!

Text: tr. composite; The Venerable Bede, 673–735, abr.
Tune: Geistliche Kirchengesäng, Köln, 1623
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Reading/Sermon

Luke 24:44–53

Jesus ascends, and instead of being sad, his disciples are filled with joy. They understood that Christ’s ascension marked his coronation as the king.

⁴⁴ He said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms.”

⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ He said to them, “This is what is written and so it must be: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ Look, I am sending you what my Father promised. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

The Ascension of Jesus

⁵⁰ He led them out as far as the vicinity of Bethany. He lifted up his hands and blessed them. ⁵¹ And while he was blessing them, he parted from them and was taken up into heaven. ⁵² So they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. ⁵³ They were continually in the temple courts, praising and blessing God. Amen.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise be to you, O Christ!

Offering

Offering Hymn: 476 On Christ's Ascension I Now Build



1 On Christ's as - cen - sion I now build the hope of my as -
2 Since Christ re - turned to claim his throne, great gifts for me ob -
3 O grant, dear Lord, this grace to me, re - call - ing your as -



cen - sion. This hope a - lone has al - ways stilled all doubt and ap - pre -
tain - ing, my heart will rest in him a - lone, no oth - er rest re -
cen - sion, that I may serve you faith - ful - ly, in thanks for my re -



hen - sion, for where the head is, there as well I know his
main - ing, for where my trea - sure went be - fore, there all my
demp - tion; and then, when all my days will cease, let me de -



mem - bers are to dwell when Christ shall come and call them.
thoughts will ev - er soar to still their deep - est yearn - ing.
part in joy and peace in an - swer to my plead - ing.

Text: tr. William M. Czamanske, 1873–1964, alt; Josua Wegelin, 1604–1640

Tune: Etlich Cristlich lider, Wittenberg, 1524

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Prayer

CW 228

Hear my prayer, O Lord;

listen to my cry.

Keep me as the apple of your eye;
hide me in the shadow of your wings.

In righteousness I shall see you;
when I awake, your presence will give me joy.

Brief intercessory prayers may be added in a fitting place.

Confident of our Lord's return, let us approach our Father's throne of mercy on behalf of the Church and of all people.

Gracious Lord God, amid shouts of joy we celebrate your Son's ascension into heaven where he is now seated in majesty at your right hand. Grant your Church steadfastness in these gray and latter days that she may hold to the truth and boldly confess the saving name of Jesus.
As the devil, the world, and our sinful nature seek to silence our witness, grant us courage to believe and confess that Jesus is Lord.

Even as your beloved Son intercedes on behalf of his Church, so has he commanded us to pray for others. [We pray especially for...*here name the person and the cause of the petition.*]
Hear us, O Lord, as we implore you to show mercy to those in need:

to the sick, the lonely, and the depressed grant relief;
to the dying and those who mourn bring comfort;
to the hungry, the homeless, and the unemployed send your help;
to the elderly, give joy for living life to the full;
to the young, send patience to wait for the fuller life to come;
to husbands and wives and their families and to single parents who raise their children alone grant wisdom and strength.

Bestow your blessings to all who depend on your power and grace.

Almighty Father, you are the good Giver of all that we have. In your mercy continue to grant us daily bread, supplying us with what we need before we even ask.

Teach us to be thankful and content, whether we have plenty or are in need.

Come with your guidance, O Lord, and pour out your blessings on all who have gathered here to proclaim your love in speech, song, and symbol. May our worship enrich us so that our work for others adorns your love among them.

Lead us to praise you as we joyfully wait for your return.

O Lord, heavenly Father, we remember the sufferings and death of your dear Son, Jesus Christ, for our salvation. Praising his victorious resurrection from the dead, we draw strength from his ascension before you, where he always intercedes for us as our own high priest. Gather us together, we pray, from the ends of the earth to celebrate with all the faithful the marriage feast of the Lamb in his kingdom which has no end.

Graciously receive our prayers, deliver and preserve us.

Hear us, Lord, as we pray in silence.

Silent prayer

To you alone, O Father, be all glory, honor, and worship, with the Son and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Lord's Prayer

CW 230

Our Fa - ther in heav - en, hal - lowed be your
name, your king - dom come, your will be done on
earth as in heav - en. Give us to - day our
dai - ly bread. For - give us our sins, as
we for - give those who sin a - gainst us.

Lead us not in - to temp - ta - tion, but de -

liv - er us from e - vil. For the king - dom, the

pow - er, and the glo - ry are yours

now and for - ev - er. A - men.

Tune: Dale A. Witte

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Let us praise the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Blessing

The almighty and merciful Lord—the Father, the + Son, and the Holy Spirit—bless us and keep us.

Amen.

Hymn: 700 Draw Us to Thee



1 Draw us to thee, for then shall we walk in thy
2 Draw us to thee, Lord, lov - ing - ly; let us de -
3 Draw us to thee; O grant that we may walk the
4 Draw us to thee that al - so we thy heav'n - ly
5 Draw us to thee un - ceas - ing - ly; in - to thy



steps for - ev - er and has - ten on where thou art
part with glad - ness that we may be for - ev - er
road to heav - en! Di - rect our way lest we should
bliss in - her - it and ev - er dwell where sin and
king - dom take us. Let us for - e'er thy glo - ry



gone to be with thee, dear Sav - ior.
free from sor - row, grief, and sad - ness.
stray and from thy paths be driv - en.
hell no more can vex our spir - it.
share; thy saints and joint heirs make us.

Text: tr. August Crull, 1845–1923, alt.; Friedrich Funcke, 1642–1699

Tune: As hymnodus sacer, Leipzig, 1625

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