
WORD MADE FLESH

Ascension of the Lord*

Acts 1:1-11, Psalm 46, Ephesians 1:17-23, Luke 24:46-53

The central theme of the Gospel narratives throughout this season of Easter begins to draw to a close with the Ascension of the Lord. These gospel readings have been about perception, seeing clearly, seeing the Christ, seeing the presence of the kingdom of God in what is before us.

In today's Second Reading, Ephesians 1: 17-23, it is clearly put. "May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give you a spirit of wisdom and perception of what is revealed, ...enlighten the eyes of the mind...."

In the Ascension, the text tells us, Christ is shown as the ruler of everything -the measure by which we know the world- ; Christ is "the head of the Church, which is his body" - a subtle point suggesting that the Church is indeed made up of those who's self-understanding is in Christ. The Church is vision, perceiving the incarnation of divine love. And, the third image in this remarkable text is that Christ "fills the whole creation." The incarnation of divine love is what gives birth to our world, sustains it, and redeems it in glory. Divine love at the very centre of the cosmos, filling all creation.

And why such difficulty with perceiving the creation as Christ showed it to be? The reading in Acts, the First Reading, highlights the difficulty. It talks of how Christ continued to appear to the disciples and "tell them about the kingdom of God." The disciples, however, continued to look for victory, continued to ask, "Lord, has the time come? Are you going to restore the kingdom of Israel?" The sanctity of the cosmos coming toward us from the future verses the restoration of an old order, the longing rooted in our nostalgia.

We see the future only in the past. We want to walk "forward into the past and backward into the future". Simple presence to the kingdom of God, the kingdom of the Creator's presence is more than we can bare.

The Gospel for the Ascension of the Lord tells us how one comes to perceive what is given in the presence of the kingdom. Christ brought the Gospel of repentance and forgiveness of sins to all nations. It is repentance and the grace that flows from the forgiveness of sins that lays to rest the old kingdoms, that opens us to the presence of the kingdom of God.

So we pray with confidence and hope, "May we follow him into the new creation, for his ascension is our glory and hope."

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