

“¹Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout aloud the Rock of our salvation. ²Let us come before Him with thanksgiving and extol Him with music and song. ³For the Lord is the great God, the great King above all gods ⁶Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker; ⁷for He is our God and we are the people of His pasture, the flock under His care” (Psalm 95:1-3, 6-7 NIV).

It has been speculated that the world loses one species to extinction every week. Species extinction is something that has been going on since the fall into sin when death entered the world. No matter how hard man might try to prevent it, this is a decaying world that is spiraling down toward destruction. This phenomenon, if it can be called that, is not restricted to just the secular world. It also happens in the church. There are four significant dates on the calendar in May, 2007. Two of them are secular and two of them are religious.

The secular dates are Mother’s Day on May 13th and Memorial Day on May 28th. The religious dates are The Ascension of our Lord on May 17th and the Day of Pentecost on May 27th. Which dates do you think will hold the most prominence with the people of Milwaukee and its surrounding communities? If you say Mother’s Day and Memorial Day, I would say that you are right.

Now, what dates do you think will hold the most prominence with the members of Trinity Ev. Lutheran Church? The sad truth is that most of our members will also pick Mother’s Day and Memorial Day. As indicated by church attendance, only a minority of our members will pick Pentecost, much less Ascension Day. That latter date, the Ascension of our Lord, was once the number two festival day in the church year. It was second only to Easter. Christmas, the number one day on the church calendar in our time never registered higher than three. What vaulted it to the top was not reverence for our God coming in the flesh, but all the commercialization and secularism that was added to the day.

The Ascension of our Lord is a pivotal event! It marks the fortieth day after our Lord’s Resurrection from the dead. It was the last day that Christ dwelt on earth in bodily form. It is significant because if He had not ascended into heaven, there would have been no Pentecost. Without Jesus leaving and sending the Holy Spirit, you and I would not have been brought to faith in the waters of baptism and sustained in that faith through the Word of the Gospel and the Lord’s Supper. Without faith in Christ and His all-atoning sacrifice on Calvary, we would still be dead in trespasses and sins. We would be headed to the hell we deserve by nature, but Jesus did come, and He did die, and He did rise again, and He did ascend into heaven as we confess in the Creeds.

Extinction is something that is not restricted to the secular world. Through sin, it also has its variations in the church. One of the dates on the critically endangered list is Ascension Day. Many churches have already removed it from their church service calendar. The main reasons are apathy and inconvenience. Going to church on a Thursday evening is just too inconvenient for many people. For many it conflicts with shopping or TV programming. Another excuse is being too tired from working all day or having

too much homework to do. But as Jesus Himself said, “Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.” (Matthew 4:4)

Ascension Day has two main truths. One is that Jesus has now assumed all glory and power at the right hand of God. The other is that He is going to come again at the end of time in the same way that He was seen to go into heaven (Acts 1:11). There is a load of application in these two truths. You see, if our Savior’s Ascension into heaven and His Second Coming is not taken to heart, the events of our life will be out of perspective and out of focus.

Think how those two truths can help us deal with a continuing problem in life. Christ’s Ascension and Second Coming is an excellent reminder that He has overcome all sin and is coming back for us. Without His Ascension and return in glory our life is a tragedy with no hope of escape. Think also how His Ascension and Second Coming can help us keep our priorities right when we want a pleasure so bad that we feel like setting aside God’s Word. They are reminders that there is more to life than this earth. Finally, think how remembering Christ on Ascension Day along with His coming again at the end of time can help us when we feel like life is meaningless and without direction. For the Christian, entering into glory is truly the whole point of life.

As with Christmas, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday, this mighty act of our Savior deserves our attention and our praise. Not to demean mothers, but it certainly deserves more attention than Mother’s Day or Memorial Day. Right this minute, Christ is reigning with all authority in heaven and earth as both God and Man. As such He can now be with us in the flesh in word and water and bread and wine. He is not at a distance. He is with us more closely than ever, and He is coming again soon (Revelation 22:20).

We will celebrate Christ’s Ascension on Thursday, May 17th, at 7:00 pm. Please join your voice in praise of Christ for His glorious Ascension as faith calls us to “come before Him with thanksgiving”; to “bow down in worship”; to “kneel before the Lord our Maker”.

Thou hast raised our human nature

On the clouds to God’s right hand;

There we sit in heavenly places,

There with Thee in glory stand.

Jesus reigns, adored by angels;

Man with God is on the throne.

Mighty Lord, in Thine ascension

We by faith behold our own. —The Lutheran Hymnal 218, vs. 5