

ASCENSION SUNDAY 2020
Minnesota Valley Free Lutheran Church;
Pastor Tom Olson; May 17, 2020

HYMN: "CROWN HIM WITH MANY CROWNS" Matthew Bridges (1800-1894)

**1. Crown Him with many crowns,
The Lamb upon His throne.
Hark! How the heavenly anthem drowns
All music but its own.
Awake, my soul and sing Of Him
Who died for thee,
And hail Him as thy matchless King
Through all eternity.**

**2. Crown Him the Lord of love,
Behold His hands and side,
Rich wounds, yet visible above,
In beauty glorified.
No angel in the sky
Can fully bear that sight,
But downward bends His wond'ring eye
At mysteries so bright.**

**3. Crown Him the Lord of life,
Who triumphed o'er the grave,
Who rose victorious to the strife
For those He came to save.
His glories now we sing,
Who died, and rose on high,
Who died eternal life to bring,
And lives that death may die.**

**4. Crown Him the Lord of heav'n,
One with the Father known,
One with the Spirit through Him giv'n
From yonder glorious throne,
To Thee be endless praise
For Thou for us hast died;
Be Thou, O Lord, through endless days
Adored and magnified.**

PRAYER

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE: *John 10:2 ...I am going to prepare a place for you.* Our moms do many things and most of them could be defined by one word: PREPARE. They prepare food, prepare our beds, prepare our clothes, prepare the flower bed, prepare for vacation, prepare for winter. Moms are great preparers. Proverbs 31 says that an excellent wife is one who is prepared. Today we need to appreciate all of the preparing our moms have done for us.

GOSPEL READING: Luke 24:44-53 *He said to them, "This is what I told 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 so they could understand the Scriptures. 46 He told them, "This is what is written: 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 at Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things. 49 I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high." 50 When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. 51 While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. 52 Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. 53 And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.*

CONFESSION OF FAITH: *I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth; And in Jesus Christ, His only son, our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit; born of the virgin Mary; Suffered under Pontius Pilate; Was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into hell; The third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven; And is seated on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From where He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit; The holy Christian Church; the Communion of Saints; the Forgiveness of sins; The Resurrection of the body, And the Life everlasting. Amen*

MESSAGE: GIFTS FROM GOD Pastor Tom Olson, 5/10/20

We just read the Ascension Gospel. The other account we are familiar with is *Acts 1:8-12* **But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."** *9 After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. 10 They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. 11 "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." 12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day's walk from the city.*

There are two more Ascension verses I would like to share with you under the theme, "He Gave Gifts." Let's talk about it.

I. GIFTS TO HIS CHURCH

Ephesians 4:7-8 **But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. 8 This is why it says (quoting Psalm 68:18): "When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men."**

SENT: The Holy Spirit that the Lord sent from heaven brings gifts to the church such as prophet, evangelist, pastor/teacher, healing, miracles, mercy, service, tongues and interpretation and so many more. The church really hums when people are using their gifts and not being forced into an area that they are not equipped or called to handle. These gifts are endowed with what the Greeks called "dunamis" from which we get dynamite. It is not power in general but the power to do a specific task that God wants us to do. That is why we try some things and they are so painfully discouraging, there is no dunamis, no special power. And we do other things, be they much harder, and they are fulfilling and fruitful! The purpose of these gifts is to build up the

body of Christ and bring us all to maturity according to *Ephesians 4:12&13 to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*

EXAMPLES: To the person gifted with children, work in the nursery is a joy. To one not gifted, it is drudgery. To a gifted teacher, a Sunday school class is a dream come true and to someone else it is terrifying. To the gifted administrator, leading a committee is fulfilling and to someone else it isn't. So you can see how important it is to operate in your gifting to the church. King David was a gifted military leader and did well out with the men, but when he stayed home to do administration, he got in trouble. It is not too hard to find out what your gift is...you know it when your heart is singing for joy when you are doing it. My mom was a gifted teacher and she loved teaching junior high Sunday school for most of her life. She had so much fun preparing the lessons and finding helpful supplementary materials. CHRIST SENDS FROM HEAVEN GIFTS TO THE CHURCH.

II. GIFTS TO HIS CHILDREN

The second type of gift that Christ gives us is personal and covers the entire gamut of good things that we enjoy and love from food, to friends, to our homes and possessions that bring delight to our lives. *James 1:17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.*

CONTEXT: The context of this verse is overcoming temptations to sin. James here is telling us that we don't have to crave bad things that hurt us and others. God has given us so many good and wholesome things to focus upon instead. There are three qualifying words here to note about these gifts...EVERY, GOOD AND PERFECT.

EVERY: What an amazing word for qualifying the gifts we have, EVERY. It is not just SOME of the good gifts we have that are from God it is every one. It would include some of the things that Martin Luther talks about in his catechism when he defines "daily bread" from the Lord's prayer... like food, clothing, home, family, daily work, good government, favorable weather, fields, flocks, good neighbors, rest from labor, God's Word, forgiveness, a home in heaven, divine protection and provision and so much more. Look around at all we have inside and outside our home and in the world. I give thanks to God for so many wonderful gifts. On Saturday I went fishing and fishing is a gift of God in terms of provision of food and joyful moments with friends in God's great out of doors. God's gifts are ABUNDANT.

GOOD: These gifts are GOOD. They don't lead us into temptation. They make our body strong and our heart sing. We could say, they are WHOLESOME. One of the best ways to avoid temptation with bad things is to stay busy with the good things God has given us to do including Christian fellowship, activities with family and neighbors, personal interests and meaningful service to folks in need. God's gifts are GOOD.

PERFECT: These gifts are PERFECT. Not everyone has the same gift because we are different, just like we wear different size clothing. The gifts God gives are for us perfectly. The perfect gift for someone is a fishing boat...for someone else craft supplies...for someone else a higher education...for someone else a new thick book to read...for someone else a musical

instrument...for someone else a vehicle...God knows who we are and what makes us sing for joy and He helps us get and enjoy those gifts.

1 John 3:1 See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

Psalm 103:1-5 Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. 2 Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: 3 Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; 4 Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; 5 Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.

Don't feel ashamed of your gifts. I would feel bad if I gave you a birthday gift and you were ashamed to have it. Enjoy God's gifts and share them with others who will enjoy them...just like I enjoyed sharing someone's fishing boat on Saturday. I delight to see my children enjoying their lives and good things and good activities. I don't want them to be crabby Christians thinking that doing nothing, going nowhere and owning nothing is somehow spiritual. But I don't want them to be materialistic either. There is a healthy balance.

One day we will get the greatest gift of all, life in heaven in the presence of our Savior. There will be perfect provision, perfect health, perfect relationships and perfect weather. ***Psalm 16:11 says that in God's presence there is "FULLNESS OF JOY AND PLEASURE FOREVERMORE."*** That starts in this life and blooms into fullness in the life to come. Jesus went to heaven to send us the Holy Spirit and gifts to the church and to individuals. God is so good to us. How can we help but praise Him. Amen

PRAYER & LORD'S PRAYER: *Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, The power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen*

BENEDICTION: The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you, the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and grant you peace. Amen

DOXOLOGY: Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; Praise Him, all creatures here below; Praise him above, ye heavenly host: Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen