

JUNE 1 , 2014  
ASCENSION SUNDAY



Dundalk United Methodist Church  
Graceland United Methodist Church  
Cooperative Parish



## What Are You Looking At?

Jesus came to save us. He taught for three years, suffered and died, rose from the dead, spent 40 more days on earth and then ascended into heaven.

He taught and prepared his disciples for his death, resurrection and ascension, but they were never quite ready for it when the actual experience came.

It was not just Thomas who doubted the resurrection at his first hearing—all of the disciples were doubtful at first. They had to run and see the empty tomb to satisfy their own curiosity.

Was this wrong? Of course not. Our limited mortal senses need something within our limited sphere of experience in order to understand. Faith, though gives us ultimate understanding, as Paul says in Romans 10:17, *“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”* (NKJV)

Or as *The Message* says in Romans 10:14-17, *“But how can people call for help if they don’t know who to trust? And how can they know who to trust if they haven’t heard of the One who can be trusted? And how can they hear if nobody tells them? And how is anyone going to tell them, unless someone is sent to do it? That’s why Scripture exclaims, A sight to take your breath away! Grand processions of people telling all the good things of God! But not everybody is ready for this, ready to see and hear and act. Isaiah asked*

*what we all ask at one time or another: “Does anyone care, God? Is anyone listening and believing a word of it?” The point is: Before you trust, you have to listen. But unless Christ’s Word is preached, there’s nothing to listen to.*

And so, after preparing his disciples and then seeing Jesus raised from the dead, they were about to “lose” him again...or at least they felt that way because Jesus now had to ascend to the Father in heaven, and they had not been baptized by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

Today is Ascension Day! Today, Christians around the world remember the final scene of Jesus’ ministry on earth.

Ascension Day is the 40th day following Jesus’ resurrection. On this day, Jesus completed his God-given mission, charging his disciples with a task that Christians today continue to work towards: “Go into the whole world and proclaim the good news to every creature.”

Jesus’ ascension—his physical return to heaven—is mentioned briefly in Luke 24 and Mark 16. The most complete account of Jesus’ final days on earth is found in Acts 1, but I think the most significant statement is in verse 11 when the angels say:

*“Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”* (NRSV)

In essence... the angels were asking the disciples... what are you standing around here for? He’s coming back! But for right now there’s work to be done.

You see, the angels were warning the Disciples about the trap that many Christians can fall into... just standing around. (let it sink in for a minute or so).

There are a lot of Christians – who have come to Christ who behave just like that. They get all excited about what God can do in their lives.

They receive the greatest gift of all history – at great cost to God – their salvation by the blood of Jesus Christ, and then they live as if they think that God will be pleased if they just stand around and do nothing. I think that we all know what verse 11 means. It was not just the apostles, Jesus was talking to.

He is also talking to all of His followers for all time. The scriptures are for us too!

It is all about focus. We should focus on Jesus.

The message from the angels is not only to the disciples at the Ascension...but to **us**.

“What are you looking at? Why are you standing around? Get to work!”

Let us all change our focus to a kingdom focus. Let us Expect Great Things from God and Attempt Great Things for God! And we will be blessed and see great things in the **Church!**

—Pastor Dan.