

## The Ascension of Our Lord (2021)

Holy Spirit, Light Divine, shine upon this heart of mine;  
 Chase the shades of night away; turn the darkness into day.  
 Let me see my Savior's face; let me all His beauties trace;  
 Show those glorious truths to me which are only known to Thee.  
 Amen.

**Luke 24:44–53** Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. **While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven.** And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God.

In the Name of Jesus.

There is no gap between you and your Friend Jesus. Even though he went ‘up:’ “He was carried up into the sky, into heaven.” Same goes with Our Father in the sky, in heaven. Same goes for the Holy Spirit Who has landed on even \*our\* mouths and ears and hearts, “from on high.”

My dear ones: despite the Holy Spirit's use of words like ‘up’ and ‘sky’ and ‘on high’—and the apostles standing there, looking up. “Why?” the two men asked them!—

Despite all this ‘up’ language, the ‘Going up,’ the ‘Ascension’ of the Friend of sinners is the solid pledge that there IS...NO...UP...AND...DOWN any longer! Not with the Creator and Creation, man and God, sinners and the Holy One. No gaps.

So, there's your poor pastor's call to repentance for this week. Repent of the gaps! Take note of the times and places that a great chasm between you and your God appears—a gulf \*you and I\* insist is still there; not He! Recognize those pretend 'distances' for what they are: lies intended to harm. Then turn away. Actually, the Lord urges us to pray that we do not even encounter the temptation of the gaps. "Ooh! The \*news.\*" "Oh! Those people!" "Oh, that \*pastor!\*" No man can force a gap between you and your God!

It's clear the Savior has no confidence in \*our\* stability. Praise Him! Yes! \*T...h...a...t\* is \*w...h...y\* He 'was carried up.' To be, still, the Friend of sinners; the Friend of the fearful; the bosom buddy of those who say, daily and much, 'God is too far from me; I am too far from God.'

So He went \*up.\* \*N...o...t\* for Him, for His Father, for the Holy Spirit. But—like \*e...v...e...r...y...t...h...i...n...g\* Jesus does, He went 'up' for us.

'...and lifting up his hands he blessed them.' What hands He lifted! Hands of blessing. What hands were those? The Holy Spirit \*has\* come from "on high." (Learn to start smirking and smiling when you hear 'up and down' terms in the Gospel.)

Hands!

<sup>36</sup> As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, "Peace to you!" <sup>37</sup> But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. <sup>38</sup> And he said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? <sup>39</sup> See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." <sup>40</sup> And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. <sup>41</sup> And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" <sup>42</sup> They gave him a piece of broiled fish, <sup>43</sup> and he took it and ate before them. <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Lk 24:36–43). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Those hands are forever scarred with the nails from the day they nailed up His hands; feet too. Slow down with your poor, slow pastor. Jesus does not want or need our pity. He wants our idols; He wants our sins; He wants us to confess the gaps.

The best and the worst men used their hands to drive nails into the hands of Mary's firstborn Son; they nailed that man up onto a crossbeam to mock everything He was about. What was He about? We heard *\*that\** the night He was born. He was born, etc., to erase the distance between heaven and earth.

<sup>10</sup> And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. <sup>11</sup> For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. <sup>12</sup> And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." <sup>13</sup> And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

<sup>14</sup> "Glory to God in the highest,  
and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

Ah! That night, the angels were still speaking about God in heaven and men on earth. Glory and peace are all nice and everything; but it all still smacks of gaps and distance and fear. But the Babe of Bethlehem grew up. And then:

Jesus said to his disciples, <sup>44</sup> "Let these words sink into your ears: The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men." <sup>45</sup> But they did not understand this saying, and it was concealed from them, so that they might not perceive it. And they were afraid to ask him about this saying. <sup>2</sup>

Why? Why 'into the hands of men.' Why the wounding of His hands? Because of the 'gaps.'

<sup>27</sup> After this he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax booth. And he said to him, "Follow me." <sup>28</sup> And leaving everything, he rose and followed him.

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<sup>2</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version\*](#). (2016). (Lk 9:43–45). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

<sup>29</sup> And Levi made him a great feast in his house, and there was a large company of tax collectors and others reclining at table with them.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>30</sup> And the Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at his disciples, saying, “Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?” <sup>31</sup> And Jesus answered them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. <sup>32</sup> I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.” <sup>4</sup>

**15** Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. <sup>2</sup> And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.” <sup>5</sup>

<sup>45</sup> And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold, <sup>46</sup> saying to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be a house of prayer,’ but you have made it a den of robbers.”

<sup>47</sup> And he was teaching daily in the temple. The chief priests and the scribes and the principal men of the people were seeking to destroy him, <sup>6</sup>

Friends, money does not make man’s world go ‘round. Fear does. Hence the herald, ‘Fear not!’

Couldn’t even buy flowers for the altar without my poor eyes being trapped by the news-rag. And what was the headline? God is a funny fellow. ‘Gap!’ Some gap between us, or supposed gap. Race, gender, income, bleh, bleh, bleh. ‘Gap’ means ‘fear’ means you better buy this filthy rag and orient yourself around the fear the paper-peddlers peddle.

And...don’t despair! One savior after another is going to close those gaps! Government and education and the newest-fangled necessity you didn’t even know you were \*desperate\* to have! But those are all minor temptations. Your pastor’s calling is the gravest temptation.

<sup>3</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Lk 5:27–29). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

<sup>4</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Lk 5:30–32). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

<sup>5</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Lk 15:1–2). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

<sup>6</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Lk 19:45–47). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Men have been dressing up as angels of light since Pentecost and telling men how to bridge the gap between sinful them and holiness ‘up there.’ Men have all sorts of costumes they wear now, keeping up with the trends. But their message is boring, one and them same. ‘There’s you over here, God over there, and a gap. Now, here’s what \*youuuuu.....need.....\*’

Repent of ever giving ear to those liars. Most of the time \*we\* are to blame when we fall into their hands.

\*He\* was ‘carried up’ to pledge, with finality, that \*He\* has erased the gap that really existed; and so we may ignore all the pretend ones. He went up; and the Holy Spirit came from on high; to tell the world this.

“These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.”

And whenever you insist that God is far or hidden or an adversary, He saves you from you, again. With the words that are more ‘gap-less’ than we can believe.

<sup>19</sup> And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you.<sup>7</sup> Gaps? Between heaven and earth? I don’t have time for such nonsense.

Samuel Paul and grampa are still having trouble with the trike. We can get feet on the pedals; kind-of; for a few seconds. And a hand on the bars; sometimes two, briefly. And we know that pushing on the pedals is somehow involved. But the whole contraption

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<sup>7</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Lk 22:19). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

doesn't move until grampa's hand pushes on the back of the triker. Then the hands and feet fall off in despair and 'it's too hard.'

Until He comes again, my friends, our Friend Jesus is pleased with our attempts at pedaling; and patient when it's too hard; but He's never far. I haven't given up on the boy. And I am evil. How much more will your Father in the sky—(smile!)—give you His Spirit and Gospel and Sacrament and Prayer and all sorts of good works.

Sickness, death, pain, the news, worries, other men—temptation can come with any of them to tell us how far God is from us. But for you who have been baptized at His call, you who have been given His Body and His Blood—Yes! For you, it can be too hard for you; but not for Him.

There is not a sliver of a gap between you and your God. Despite you; despite me; despite the hands of men. In the Name of Jesus.