

I think we have a tendency, quite unintentionally, to sometimes overlook things that we may not fully understand. And I think we have a very good example of that today in Ascension. Because Ascension Day is not Easter, the day when we celebrate our Lord's resurrection. And Ascension Day is not Pentecost, when we talk about the coming of the Holy Spirit and the beginning of the mission of the Church. And because it's not either of those things, it's very easy to overlook and to misunderstand why we're here today. What does our Lord's ascension have to do with anything? What does it have to do with my life right now? And depending on how I think about it will depend on how I look at it at all.

But Christians, I tell you today that your Lord's ascension is not just some little tidbit that we talk about with Jesus. Our Lord's ascension is one of the greatest comforts that you have today, a comfort that cannot be taken away from you, no matter what. Because our Lord going into heaven has sat down at the right hand of God, and because he is at the right hand of God, no one will take that from him ever again.

But it's so easy, isn't it? To think of the ascension simply as Jesus going away, right? He's going away from the earth up into heaven and we don't see him anymore. So how could that possibly be a comfort? How could it be a comfort that Jesus is no longer here? Wouldn't we want him to be here? Wouldn't we want him to be among us? A child who is afraid, for example, is not comforted by the thought of their parent. They're comforted by their parent being there with them. And so we might think, if the Ascension is just Jesus going away, where's the comfort? Where is our hope in the midst of that?

And if we think of the Ascension in those terms, Christians, I think we tend to become a lot like the disciples in our Gospel reading for today: fearful and afraid of what the future might hold. Because if Jesus is taken away from us, how can we face the things around us? The apostles themselves, when they were thinking that Jesus was gone forever because he had died, were hiding. They were hiding out away from the Jews, away from the world, afraid that they were going to die themselves. And even the truth, Christians, that Jesus had risen from the dead was not enough to comfort them. Because the greatest truth, that Jesus is alive, is not going to be enough if we think that he's somewhere else not really concerned with the things that are going on here. Not here, in other words. And so that's why they are afraid, looking for certainty in the midst of a world that they think is out to get them.

But how often do we sometimes have the same kinds of fears, Christians? Fears of a world that we're uncertain about? Fears of what our future might hold? Fears of a world turned upside down? And if we think of the Ascension as Jesus being somewhere other than here, that fear is only going to increase. Because we are not going to find much comfort in our Lord being somewhere else.

But Christians, the Ascension is not Jesus leaving us. The Ascension is not about Jesus going up from earth and going somewhere else where we're not with him. The Ascension is something far more glorious than that. The Ascension is the very truth that our Lord Jesus reigns as King over all things. Because when he went up into heaven to sit down at the right hand of God, he was not sitting down just at God's physical right hand, as if this was the only spot and that's all that it meant. Jesus going to the right hand of the Father means that his victory is complete. Because now he has the name that is above every name, the name to whom every knee will bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and all will confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father. That is what has happened on this day, Christians. This is Jesus' parade, his victory march, going up into heaven to sit down in power and authority and glory forever. And his enemies are now under his feet, and no one will ever take that victory away from him. No one. Not in heaven. Not on earth. Not under the earth. It is his forever. And because he is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords in heaven, he has given us a sure and a

certain hope, knowing that no matter what happens in this life, Jesus is victorious. Jesus is the King of Kings. Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father, never to be taken away again.

There's a lot of talk these days, Christians, about what they call the "new normal." The new normal of fear, the new normal of distancing, the new normal of everything being turned upside down. And we're supposed to just accept that as being the "new normal" of things. But let me tell you something this day, Christians, on this Ascension Day. There is a normal that is far greater than anything that they're trying to tell us, a normal which will never change. Jesus reigns as King. Jesus has reigned as King over his Church through many plagues. Jesus has reigned as King over his Church through many wars. Jesus has reigned as King over his Church even when the world was turned completely upside down and everything changed, never to go back to the way things were before. And even when all of these things have come crashing to the ground, the normal is that Jesus will reign as king forever. And that victory belongs to him forever. And nothing will ever take it away from him.

So let us not worry about what we think might happen in this life. It doesn't matter how things have changed or how things have been turned upside down. Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father as the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. And no one will take that victory away from him. Because he is alive as our King, we don't have to be afraid. So let us trust in him always, and especially on this Ascension Day, knowing he has the victory forever.

To him be all glory, now and forever. Amen.