

“You Shall Be My Witness”
“Sent as Witnesses”

Today is the last Sunday in Easter. In more liturgical churches, Thursday was celebrated as the Ascension of Jesus. It always falls ten days before Pentecost and so always falls on a Thursday. Obviously most churches skip over it or they celebrate on the following Sunday. It is a hard thing to get one’s mind around, and yet in *The Apostles’ Creed*, we state that Jesus ascended into heaven. This week, we are focusing on that and also in our culture it is Mother’s Day weekend. How do these things go together? Perhaps they don’t or perhaps, inviting people to wait with the disciples for the gift of God’s spirit and to honor those women who have witnessed God’s love in our life go together... So we move through the last days of Easter and prepare for the coming of God’s Spirit. We are to be witnesses of God’s love and grace in the resurrection of Jesus and we know that God’s Spirit is with us always. Pastor Cindy

Things I’d like to remember from today’s sermon: **“Sent as Witnesses”**

Prayer for the Week

O God of earth and sky, as Jesus came among us in Bethlehem to raise us up to heaven, so today we recall his departing from us at Jerusalem to be in all places. Though he is hidden from our sight, enable us to abide in him by the power and grace of the Holy Spirit, until his mercy and grace fill your whole creation. Amen. Copyright © 2000 Order of Saint Luke Publications. Used with permission.

Study Guide

Monday, May 14, 2018 Luke 24: 36-43

Last week we had the disciples on the road to Emmaus and they came back to share this good news. Immediately after they were sharing, there was Jesus in the midst of them. They were afraid, but Jesus assures them that he is alive. He shows the scars and eats in front of them. This amazing experience will be part of what keeps the disciples going until they experience the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Jesus' presence among them, risen is a blessing and gives the disciples the reason to witness. Seeing Jesus' wounds, watching him eat, helps their faith deepen and strengthen. *How do you find ways to strengthen your faith so that you can be a witness to the risen Christ?*

Tuesday, May 15, 2018 Luke 24: 44-49

In Luke's gospel, this is Jesus' last appearance to his disciples. Again in these verses, Jesus recounts how everything in the law and the prophets and the psalms point to a different kind of Messiah. This Messiah doesn't rule by strength, but by suffering and serving. "Christ is risen from the dead" so that "a change of heart and life might be preached." "You are witnesses." Much of what we do as people is be a witness to something whether we realize it or not. *Is what we say or do pointing to something greater, pointing love, pointing to God?*

Wednesday, May 16, 2018 Luke 24: 50-53

Jesus asked the disciples to wait for the Spirit. They worshipped and praised God without knowing what would happen next. Jesus blesses them and then leaves them so that his presence, and more importantly, God's presence, could be made real in their lives and witness. They returned to Jerusalem overwhelmed with joy and they continuously praising God in the temple. Praising God for what? For what God had done in their lives through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Later this week, we will read the beginning of Acts which this author restates this story in more detail. *What would cause you to be overwhelmed with joy and make you constantly praise God?*

Thursday, May 17, 2018 1 John 3: 18-24

The author is challenging the reader to love not just with words but with his or her very life. God knows how we live and love. If we keep his commandments and love one another God will be with us. It is another way of witnessing. People pay attention to the deeds of those who follow Jesus. Our words matter, but what also matters is if our words and actions match. *Does what we say match what we do in our daily life? Do our words and actions witness to God's love and grace in the risen Christ?*

Friday, May 18, 2018 Acts 1: 1-14

The author of Luke/Acts begins his "sequel" by recounting again the ascension of Jesus. Beginning with the sixth verse, he adds some more information. The disciples were concerned with the restoration of the kingdom of Israel. Jesus certainly tried on many occasions to show how this is not the kingdom he was talking about. Instead, he encourages them to wait, until they have experienced the gift of the Spirit which will help them be witnesses to all they have seen and known. As he leaves they are greeted by two men and asked why they are looking up? They returned and waited and prayed for what was promised. The disciples were looking back to when Israel was a great power and looking up to where Jesus had gone, but they forgot to look forward to where God was leading them. Sunday we celebrate Pentecost, the birthday of the Church. *Come and worship as we look forward to what God is doing and will do in the lives of those who love Him!*