

The Nature of God: Yearning for Home

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The Holy Gospel according to 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, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised, so stay here in the city until you have been 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 was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and they were continually in the temple blessing God.

This is the Good News, the Gospel of our Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Jesus, who already died, was buried, and rose to new life, is now with the disciples

one final time. He blesses them. And then, he is carried up into heaven. And Luke tells us that the disciples “returned to Jerusalem with great joy.” Now, I suspect some of *us* might have reached up to grab Jesus’ foot, begging him to not leave. But maybe the *disciples* had a sense that Jesus is not abandoning the world. Jesus is preparing them—and us—for how God will continue working in the world now.

3 reflections stand out for me:

1) We yearn for our heavenly home because we struggle in this broken world. Jesus goes to prepare a place but tells the disciples to wait here on Earth. We know how this life on Earth often clouds our hope and fosters despair. The grief we carry, loneliness, anxiety, disappointment, suffering & injustice, wars & divisions that rage on, the entirety of human brokenness. Our souls feel heavy, worn down. We’re ready for the Father’s house with many rooms prepared for us but we live here in a suffering world. Sometimes we seek temporary relief through addictions or distractions that don’t fulfill. St. Augustine captured our sense of yearning when he said, “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you.”

In our yearning we find comfort and sustaining grace as we consider that when Jesus ascended, he was not escaping our human condition and leaving us to fend for ourselves – he was going ahead of us, bringing human flesh into heaven itself. Through Jesus, our broken human world is connected to God in Heaven!

2) We have the Holy Spirit to empower our life of service in this world.

Jesus doesn't pull us out of the world. No, Jesus sends us back, empowered by God the Holy Spirit, to serve to the world. We like to frame it as "God's work, our hands." That is Ascension theology. Christ's reign comes alive through Spirit-filled people serving their neighbors: meals shared, children taught, prayers offered, acts of forgiveness, comforting visits, working for justice, moments of grace. The Holy Spirit continually nudges us, the church, outward into the world God loves. After Jesus ascended, the disciples return to Jerusalem not to escape the world—but to engage it. The Spirit does not remove us from the world's brokenness - the Spirit sends us into the world—with courage, compassion, and hope. In a few minutes we'll gather at this table of grace to share again in Jesus and his human body broken and shed for us, and through God's holy meal, we are filled with the Holy Spirit to carry Jesus' love into the world.

3) God also yearns.

We know about humanity longing for God. But the Bible shows that God longs for us and all of creation. God yearns to be with us! The Ascension reveals something remarkable: God chooses to partner with us in relationship and entrusts us with God's mission for healing, justice, and reconciliation. God's Kingdom, the new creation, is unfolding here and now because God the Holy Spirit entrusts us as co-creators, co-workers in the kingdom for the restoration of the world. God yearns for everything to be made right and whole, and

God uses us in the work to fulfill God's yearning.

And so we yearn and we wait. But we wait actively, hopefully, prayerfully, by feeding people, by loving neighbors, by resisting despair, by building communities of mercy and belonging.

We live out our yearning by engaging with a world that can often seem obsessed with exploitation, death, and despair – we boldly proclaim a counter-narrative of resurrection & new life. One day, our yearning and God's yearning will know completion in the fullness of creation restored and all things gathered into the love of God. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on Earth as it is in Heaven. Let us Love God, Love Others, Serve. Amen.