Ascension Day Exodus 14:21-31
May 26, 2022 471*-175-170-173
*CW 21 Hymnal – "Now All the Vault of Heaven Resounds"

Our Ascended Savior Sits at the Father's Right Hand
I. That's not His promise of an easy life.
II. That's the comfort of Jesus in control of everything.
III. So confidently follow His leading.

Dear Christian friends – and especially you, Caleb and Morgan, as you graduate tonight,

As you listened to these verses were you PERHAPS WONDERING, "**What** does Israel crossing the Red Sea HAVE TO DO with **Jesus' ascension** into heaven OR with **your graduation** tonight? It's going to take a REAL STRETCH of the **imagination** to tie all that together!"

No it won't. This **incident** is a good illustration of **what we confess** every week – that Jesus has ascended into heaven and **now** "sits at the right hand of God the Father almighty." So let's study these verses guided by **this thought** – OUR ASCENDED SAVIOR SITS at the Father's right hand. 1)That's not God's promise of an **easy life**, but 2)that is the comfort of **Jesus in control** of everything. 3)So confidently follow His lead.

I. Not God's promise of an easy life.

Today in another important day in **your** life. **Today** is also another important day in **Jesus'** life. 40 days after Jesus ROSE TRIUMPHANT from the dead He ascended triumphant into heaven. That was a SIMPLE MIRACLE **so to speak**. Jesus led His disciples ***"out as far as the vicinity of Bethany. He lifted up His hands and blessed them. While He was blessing them, He parted from them and was taken up into heaven, …and a cloud took Him out of their sight."*** Jesus returned home to His heavenly Father MISSION ACCOMPLISHED. Born **our Savior** Jesus has taken care of everything for us. He perfectly obeyed all the commandments for us. He fully paid for all sins of all people with His own death on the cross. Death and **the devil** have been defeated.

Jesus' triumph is OUR triumph. Trusting in Jesus we enjoy **God's forgiveness** of all our sins – **we have** a whole new relationship with God – AND **we have** Jesus' precious promises. Promises like, ***"Surely I am with you always. I go and prepare a place for you. I will come back and take you to be with Me."*** But NOTE WELL that Jesus never promises us an EASY LIFE here on earth.

These **Israelites** are a good illustration of that. They had just been rescued from slavery in Egypt and it was ALL GOD'S DOING. They were NOW FREE to head home to the **Promised Land** of Canaan. They were FREE – but **life** would not be easy for them. Right here they were in DESPERATE STRAIGHTS. They were convinced this was THE END for them.

We have our ASCENDED **Savior sitting** at God's right hand. SAVED from our sins we are now heading home to **our Promised Land** of heaven. But let's be clear – it won't be an EASY TRIP! Ask your parents or grandparents. Life can be ROUGH at times – **real rough**. Life can be SO UNFAIR and **disappointing**. A job or promotion you **worked so hard** for goes to somebody else. Health problems can make our lives **downright miserable**. People take advantage of you. Let's not forget **too** that the DEVIL – the world – our own sinful natures won't make it EASY FOR US to **live as Christians**. They will throw ALL KINDS of **temptations** to PUSH GOD off to the side in our lives – **temptations** to be greedy and **selfish** – to screw up our **priorities** in life. Just as for these **Israelites** life at times can BE VERY SCARY.

That's why Ascension Day is SO FANTASTIC. We have our **ascended Savior** sitting at God's right hand. – and that's…

II. The comfort of Jesus in control of everything.

God is a ***"spirit"*** – He doesn't have a body or a right hand. God's right hand is a Bible picture of God's almighty POWER AND CONTROL over **all** things. After God delivered these Israelites Moses taught them to sing, ***"I will sing to the LORD, for He is highly exalted. The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and song. He has become my salvation. He has cast Pharaoh's chariots and his army into the sea. The deep waters covered them. They sank down to the depths like a stone. LORD, Your right hand is glorious in power. LORD, Your right hand has shattered the enemy."***

Sitting at God's right hand Jesus is not sitting around TWIDDLING His thumbs **waiting** for Judgment Day. SITTING at God's right hand our ascended Savior is IN CONTROL of **all** things – ruling all things with His almighty power – working all things for **His glory** and **our eternal good**. Recall Jesus saying, ***"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me."*** Paul tells us in Ephesians 1 that Jesus is ***"seated at (God's) right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule, authority, power, and dominion, and above every name that is given, not only in this age but also in the one to come. God also placed ALL things under His feet and made Him head over EVERYTHING for the church."***

WHAT COMFORT! **Life** isn't always EASY or FAIR. **Going through** life we quickly learn that we're not the ones IN CONTROL – we don't have all the ANSWERS – we can't make everything WORK OUT. **Life** doesn't always go the WAY WE WANT it to. You go out for **sports** and you get injured – **you have** a losing season. You work hard to GET AHEAD and enjoy life and you get hit with a **devastating disease** or crippled in a **car accident**.

We have those days and we GET DOWN. We get worked up – we worry – we're **fearful**. WAIT! **What is it** we confess every week? Jesus "ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty." We're not **in control** but we know WHO IS. **Life** may be out of our hands but we are SAFELY in the hands of **Him who is** the Lord God almighty – the hands of our ***"Good Shepherd"*** who has promised us that ***"no one can snatch us out of His hands."*** We couldn't ask for a BETTER PLACE to be! WHAT COMFORT to know that our **ascended Savior** now sits at God's right hand in control of ALL THINGS – AT ALL TIMES. What a reason then to…

III. Confidently follow His lead.

The **Israelites** were trapped. IN FRONT of them was the **Red Sea**. On their sides were **desert mountains**. Coming full speed at them FROM BEHIND were ***"Pharaoh and all his army, his chariots and horsemen."***

How did they get in this **pickle**? They had followed GOD'S leading! AT THE TIME they didn't see it and it didn't look like it but God was IN CONTROL. God was going to bring one FINAL JUDGMENT on **defiant** Pharaoh. God was going to show these Israelites **once more** that they could CONFIDENTLY follow **His** leading. We don't always understand WHERE God is leading us or HOW He'll work things out for us. But **instead** of SECOND-GUESSING God – **instead** of grumbling and **worrying** – we CAN CONFIDENTLY follow **God's** leading. LATER ON – just like these Israelites - we will be able to LOOK BACK and see God working things out.

There was no human solution to the Israelites' **dilemma** EXCEPT surrender and death. They needed to learn to GIVE UP on **themselves** but NOT GIVE UP on their God! Moses told the people, ***"Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you. The LORD will fight for you; you need only be still."***

This is quite the miracle when you think about it. There was ***"a wall of water on their right and on their left."*** The dry ground **had to cover** a good half-mile or more. There were some two million people – **plus their animals** – who crossed over in **less than 12** hours. You know what **God then did** to the Egyptians!

There are some big lessons for us here. Our enemies and **problems** can be TOO BIG **for us** to handle but not for our God. God has already handled our BIGGEST PROBLEM of sin and death. WE could do nothing about them. We're guilty of ignoring and **defying** God OVER and over again. We can't hide from God. We can't make it up to God. God really should be **totally** DISGUSTED and FED UP with us – He really should just send us to hell's eternal punishment once and for all.

Yet we know what God in AMAZING GRACE has done for us. We have God's own Son as our perfect Savior. We have Christmas – Good Friday – Easter – **and now** Ascension Day. **Our sins** have all been washed away in Jesus' blood shed on the cross. We've been clothed with Jesus' own holy life. Clinging by faith to Jesus we've been promised that we're **going straight** to heaven when we die. THAT SAVIOR – in control of **all** things – is now leading us through this life to heaven. NO PROBLEM is **too big** for our Jesus. The problem is that we often try to handle our problems ON OUR OWN instead of **letting Jesus** take care of them.

Another lesson here. God used Moses' help in **delivering** the Israelites. At God's command Moses ***"stretched out his hand"*** and God parted the waters for the Israelites and later brought it back on the Egyptians. God COULD HAVE done it all without Moses' help. But that's not how God **wanted to do** it.

God today wants to use you and me to HELP Him carry out His plans. God wants our help in getting His WORD OUT to others. God wants our help in **bringing** HIS LOVE and HELP and **forgiveness** to others.

I like how this miracle ends. ***"Israel saw the mighty hand which the LORD put into action against the Egyptians, and the people feared the LORD*** (they were filled with awe – "WOW! **What a God** we have!") ***and believed in the LORD and in Moses, His servant."*** Having reached another Ascension Day we've seen ***"the mighty hand"*** of our God fighting to save us. **God fighting to save** us is also the MOST IMPORTANT LESSON you ever learned here at St. John's. As you graduate tonight **we pray** that you will NEVER GRADUATE from that **simple, glorious gospel** truth. May it ALSO BE TRUE of us, ***"they feared*** (we're filled with awe of) ***the LORD and believed in the LORD."*** Amen.

Hymn #170