

Lk. 24:44-53      “What’s Up?”††

#### (PICTURE OF GRADUATION DAY)

Very shortly, we will be at the end of another academic year in our schools. Some of our colleges and university have already ended their academic year with commencement exercises. When one thinks about it, the end of one period of a student’s life ends, and the beginning of a new period in their lives will be anticipated. High school graduates look forward to summer jobs and college in the Fall and Spring, and college graduates look forward to beginning their careers. With the way the economy has been going lately, there may be a little longer waiting period. And for some, a continuation of education and for others a need for a vocational change in plans. These students may say farewell to friends that they may never see again or only see occasionally. It is a time of ending and beginning.

#### (PICTURE OF THE ASCENSION OF JESUS)

The ascension of our Lord, Jesus Christ, marks an ending and a beginning also. The earthly ministry of Jesus was finished. Jesus suffered, died, and rose again. And Luke’s gospel records Jesus final instructions to His disciples. Then He ascends into heaven to eternal glory as our Prophet, Priest and King. But this ending was truly a beginning. We are told in **Lk. 24:45-46 Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day.**

So, what’s up? Jesus opens the minds of the disciples by explaining the Old Testament Scriptures to them. These prophecies were written about the Christ in the Law of Moses, the prophets and the psalms. And all these prophecies were fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ. The Word of God reveals to all of us that He is the Center of the Word. His suffering, death, resurrection and ascension is the key that opens up the Word to us.

What’s up next? And Jesus says in our text, **Lk 24:47 repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations.** Jesus gave the disciples a glimpse of what will happen a few days later.

(Picture of Pentecost with the Holy Spirit coming upon the disciples)

For Jesus says, in **Lk 24:49 I am going to send you what my Father has promised.** The heavenly Father gave the disciples the Holy Spirit. Where Jesus ministry ended, their ministry and our ministry begins by the power of the Holy Spirit. This started on Pentecost, which we will be celebrating next Sunday.

(Back to the picture of the ascension)

For the disciples, in our readings for today, things were looking up. What's up? Jesus ascension into heaven.

Although Jesus left them, the disciples were happy. In fact, we are told that the disciples were filled with great joy. Isn't that strange? Why weren't they sad to see Jesus go? Most of us would be sad if our best friend left us. We would expect the disciples, too, to be sad. But they weren't. Why? They had a good reason. In fact, they had several good reasons to rejoice.

- 1) They knew that Jesus was alive.
- 2) They knew where Jesus was going.
- 3) Jesus had promised to be with them wherever they would go.
- 4) Jesus Christ prepared the way for them to spread the Good News by the power of the Holy Spirit through the Word.

This is why the disciples reaction to Jesus ascending was not a sad event at all. In fact, the Bible tells us in **Lk. 24:52, they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy.** It is kind of like students graduating from college and ready to go to work. It was a time of ending and a time of beginning.

Something else is up in our text. What's up? Jesus said, in **verse 48 You are witnesses.** The disciples were witnesses of all the things Jesus had accomplished, and His ministry had come to an end as our Prophet and Priest. Then, Jesus ascended to carry out His place as our King. This means a beginning for the disciples and for us.

(Picture of someone being baptized)

What's up now? We are in the midst of what had begun since Jesus' ascension. The Great Commission. As recorded in **Mt. 28:19-20, [Jesus said] Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing**

**them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.**

**(Picture of someone witnessing the Gospel to someone)**

And where the apostles ended, we continue that work as God's witnesses. What does it mean to be a witness? A witness is one who cannot but speak and live the endings and beginnings that God by His grace has given to all of us. As we began in our baptism, we receive the forgiveness of sins and the living, risen and ascended Lord, Jesus Christ. We continue the message of repentance and forgiveness to others by the power of the Holy Spirit. Like the disciples, we, too are called to be His witnesses. We witness to what we by faith have seen ourselves in the work of Christ Jesus in His written Word.

The fact that our Lord Jesus ascended on high should have a definite effect on our life. Our response by the Holy Spirit is to fulfill what God has sent us to do. As the Apostle Paul tells us, in **Eph. 4:12-13, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.**

**(Picture of Jesus being with us)**

There is still something that's up. What's up now? We have the promise of Jesus, when said in **Mt. 28:20, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.**" We should be rejoicing greatly as the disciples did. We have this promise of Jesus' comforting presence. This is why He is called Immanuel -- "God with us."

**(Picture of Jesus Second Return with all His angels and saints)**

There is still something that is up. What's up? The kingdom of glory is coming. Since Jesus victoriously ascended, we know that one day He will return and we will spend a glorious eternity with Him in heaven. May we always believe in Him and look forward to that day with great joy.

What's up – is that when Jesus returns, we will become like Him, a changed body. We will be like His glorious body. The Apostle Paul describes it well in **1 Cor. 15:42-44: So will it be with the**

**resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.**

So, what's up with the ascension of Christ Jesus? His ascension is the crowning climax of His work of redemption. It should assure every one of us that Jesus completed the work He came to do, and has now returned to the Father as our Prophet, Priest and King. In the name of Jesus Christ, we are to tell people that there is mercy and forgiveness for every sinner.

**(Picture of Jesus as King sitting on the right hand of the Father)**

As our King, Jesus Christ ascension assures us of an understanding ruler of all. As our second reading from Eph. 1:22-23 says, **God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.**

What does this mean? This is why the disciples left, after the ascension of Jesus, with great joy. Their great joy was on that which is from above.

**(Picture of heaven)**

For the Apostle Paul reminds us in Col. 3:1-4 **Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.**

All the things we have on this earth are mere tokens of the much more precious things our Savior, Jesus Christ, has acquired for us — eternal life in heaven. We will not find true happiness in people or things. Rather, our only great joy is found in our personal, living, risen, and ascended Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Our real home is in heaven. We greatly rejoice that He intended for us to have a heavenly home where His choicest and eternal treasures are still waiting for us.

We pray:

Dear Resurrected and Ascended, Lord Jesus,

We praise You on the day for Your ascension, which assures us of our completed redemption. May our thoughts and our hearts be directed to our true home, heaven, where everlasting treasures await us. Guard and keep us from sinful ways, and help us serve You. Help us to witness to others the message of salvation, that many may enjoy eternal joy with You. We ask this in Your name. Amen.