



Ascension by Fr. Georges Saget

Hope United Church of Christ Moline, IL
 Worship Bulletin May 24, 2020
 Ascension Sunday

Thank you for joining us for worship today.

We are glad you are here!

No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey,
 you are welcome at Hope UCC!

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: In awe and wonder, we lift our eyes to the heavens. We raise our songs of joy to the Ruler of all time and space.

Many: Sing praises to God, sing praises; Shout to God with loud songs of joy.

One: We gather to remember the One who shared our common lot. Jesus Christ, who visited this earth, dwells in heaven.

Many: We celebrate the life and ministry of Jesus. We rejoice in the hope to which Christ has called us.

One: We open ourselves to baptism with the Holy Spirit. We expect to be empowered as witnesses in today's world.

Many: We seek a spirit of wisdom and revelation. We are here to be filled with power from on high.

OPENING HYMN *How Firm a Foundation*

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INVITING GOD INTO OUR MIDST

As Christ ascended to heaven, our spirits are lifted to you this day, O God. Your Spirit fills all the universe. We dwell within your embrace and cannot escape from your watchful care. You are with us here, choosing us as apostles and instructing us in the way we should go. Focus our limited understanding on the person of Jesus, that all he did and taught might come alive in us during this hour. Grant to us convincing proof of your promises as we welcome your winds of change in our lives. Amen.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Hear us, God, our hope, for we have too easily denied our heritage amid the competing claims all around us. We declare ownership of what is only lent to us for a time. We strive for knowledge and control beyond our capacity, wanting power on our own terms rather than through the unpredictable empowerment of your Spirit. Sometimes we stand on tiptoe to view what is out of sight, then arrogantly conclude that there is nothing to see. O God, open our eyes and our hearts that we might be forgiven and find true life in you. Amen

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS AND PASSING OF PEACE

Repentance and forgiveness of sin are proclaimed to all people in the name of Jesus Christ.

Forgiveness is God's gift to us, one we can never earn but are welcome to accept. When we agree to God's freeing offer, we are also agreeing to let God's love change us. We are blessed by this opportunity for newness of life.

Let us offer one another the gift of peace. May the Lord's peace be with you!

(If you are using this liturgy as a private devotion or participating in the live stream worship, please hold out your hands in blessing for all you are joined with in spirit. If you are participating in the live stream worship, please type in your peace greeting.)

PASTORAL PRAYER/LORD'S PRAYER (debts)

One: May the Lord be with you.

Many: And also with you.

One: Let us pray:

Almighty God, We gather today reminded of your greatness and glory, your loving power and eternal purpose all expressed so wonderfully in Jesus Christ, our Lord: Risen and Ascended. We thank you for the wonder of Ascension, that marvelous yet mysterious moment in the life of the disciples which left them gazing heavenwards in confusion yet departing in joy. We thank you for the way that it brought the earthly ministry of Jesus to each of us to continue, as Jesus is returned to you. As the ascension reminds us of Jesus's oneness with you, we thank you that we understand Jesus is now set free to be Lord of all: no longer bound to a particular place or time, but with us always - able to reach even to the ends of the earth. We thank you that through his departing Jesus prepared for his return: through his Spirit, his Church, and his coming again in glory. Gracious God, Forgive us for so often failing to grasp the wonder of Ascension. Forgive the smallness of our vision, the narrowness of our outlook, the weakness of our love, the nervousness of our witness, our repeated failure to recognize the fullness of your revelation in Christ. Give us a deeper sense of wonder, a stronger faith, and a greater understanding of all you have done. Like the first disciples, we may never fully understand all that Ascension means. We accept, but we do not fully understand. We believe, yet we have many questions. Help us, despite our uncertainty, to hold firm to the great truth that the wonder of Christ Jesus goes far beyond anything we can ever imagine, and in that faith may we live each day to Christ's glory and honor.

It is with a faith that continues to grow within each of us that we lift our prayers to you today. We ask your blessings be known to ...

With the assurance Jesus offers, together we pray the words Jesus taught us:

Our Father, who is in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

HEBREW SCRIPTURE LESSON

Psalms 93

The Lord is king, he is robed in majesty;

the Lord is robed, he is girded with strength.

He has established the world; it shall never be moved;

your throne is established from of old;

you are from everlasting.

The floods have lifted up, O Lord,

the floods have lifted up their voice;

the floods lift up their roaring.

More majestic than the thunders of mighty waters,

more majestic than the waves of the sea,

majestic on high is the Lord!
 Your decrees are very sure;
 holiness befits your house,
 O Lord, forevermore.

NEW TESTAMENT LESSONS

Acts 1:1-11

In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning until the day when he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. After his suffering he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. While staying with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. "This," he said, "is what you have heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" He replied, "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. They said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

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.

SERMON "Learning to Let Go"

INVITATION TO OFFERING

Our giving expresses our faith in Jesus Christ and our love for all those who have led us to a deeper understanding of Jesus Christ. In the church we depend on prayers for one another and the generosity of our support for the ministries, mission, and programs that help us all to grow in wisdom and capacity to serve.

We are profoundly grateful for your continued support of Hope UCC as we stay connected as a faith community in this time of social distancing and spiritual connection. We are continuing the ministry of our church throughout this stay at home order and we thank you for making this possible. We now have two ways to make your offering. Hope UCC is now able to offer e-giving through Breeze Management System to make it safer and easier for you to give anytime. You are able to safely donate electronically using your credit card or ACH transfer. You can find the link on our church

website (www.hopeuccqc.org). We also invite you to mail your offering to the church office – mail and messages are checked daily by Pastor Santina. Thank you for your generosity- your commitment is vital to continuing our congregation's ministries and commitments. Hope Grows! And there is nothing- not even a global pandemic - that can stop it! 😊

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

May our offerings express our care for one another and our commitment to serve the world in the name of Christ. Help us to use well all the resources you entrust to us. Equip us, as forgiven and forgiving people to carry the good news to people we meet every day as well as to unknown siblings who live in desperate circumstances we can scarcely imagine. May our gifts and our lives praise you. Amen.

CLOSING HYMN *Be Not Afraid (verses 1-2)*

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BENEDICTION

One: The risen Jesus appeared to friends in many ways. Christ is seen by persons today in people like each of us.

Many: The life and teachings of Jesus point us to God's reign. God promises to empower our witness.

One: Our worship sends us out to work and witness. We scatter to continue our worship through service. Let us commit ourselves to care for all of God's creation. In the name of God our creator, Jesus our redeemer, and the Holy Spirit our empowerer, may you be blessed as you are a blessing to others. Amen

Announcements

Please watch your mail for a survey we are sending out to all members and friends of Hope UCC. Your confidential responses will help us to determine how our congregation will move forward as state and local guidelines allow us to safely and slowly return to in person worship and gatherings at church. Fill in the survey and return them to church in the self-addressed stamped envelope that will be included with the survey. Surveys will be mailed out week of May 25. Thank you for your feedback!

How Firm a Foundation

Isa. 43:2-5; 2 Tim. 2:19; Heb. 13:5

"K" in John Rippon's Selection of Hymns, 1787; alt.

1 How firm a foun - da - tion for you has been laid,
 2 "Fear not, I am with you, oh, be not dis - mayed,
 3 "When through the deep wa - ters I call you to go,
 4 "When through fi - ery tri - als your path - way shall lie,
 5 "The soul that on Je - sus has leaned for re - pose,

by God in the Word, in the sac - ri - fice paid!
 for I am your God, I will still give you aid;
 the riv - ers of woe shall not o - ver you flow;
 my grace all - suf - fi - cient shall be your sup - ply;
 I will not, I will not de - sert to its foes;

What more can God say than to you has been said,
 I'll strength - en you, help you, and cause you to stand
 For I will be with you, your trou - bles to bless,
 the flame shall not hurt you; for I have de - signed
 That soul, though all hell should en - deav - or to shake,

to you, who for ref - uge to Je - sus have fled?
 up - held by my gra - cious, om - ni - po - tent hand."
 de - liv - er - ing you from your deep - est dis - tress."
 your soul to make pure just as gold is re - fined."
 I'll nev - er, no nev - er, no nev - er for - sake!"

In 1787, John Rippon, English Baptist clergyman, identified the author of this hymn as "K"; no one has yet verified a complete name. The pentatonic melody has been known by several names since it first appeared in Funk's Genuine Church Music (1832).

Tune: FOUNDATION 11.11.11.11.
 Early United States melody
 from Funk's Genuine Church Music, 1832
 Alternate tune: ADESTE FIDELES

VERSE 1

1. You shall cross the bar-ren des-ert, but you shall not die of
 1. thrist. You shall wan-der far in safe-ty though you do not know the
 1. way. You shall speak your words in for-eign lands and all will un-der-
 1. stand. You shall see the face of God and live. _____ to Antiphon

ANTIPHON

Be not a-raid. I go be-fore you al-ways.
 Come fol-low me, and I will give you rest. _____ *Fine*

VERSE 2

2. If you pass through rag-ing wa-ters in the sea, you shall not
 2. drown. If you walk a-mid the burn-ing flames, you shall not be
 2. harmed. If you stand be-fore the pow'r of hell and death is at your
 2. side, know that I am with you through it all. _____ to Antiphon