



Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Who do you look up to? That is the question I would like for us to think about on this special confirmation Sunday, as we also celebrate the ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ. So, who do you look up to? I know you English teachers out there are probably uncomfortable with ending a question with a preposition, but this question is important to all of us. And I don't know a better way of asking: Who do you look up to? For many of us this question leads us to think of who we value and admire. Not only do these folks portray what we would like to be, but also what we believe is good in life.

As a child I think we can all agree that we looked up to our parents. They were the ones who were the center of our world, providing everything we needed. They held all the power and wisdom, at least in most cases. They always seemed to know the right thing to do, answers to problems and could avert or overcome a crisis. They are also the ones who brought most of us to the baptismal font.

Growing up, I was always enamored by the fact that my dad seemed to be able to solve problems around the house, with the car, and later on even with my calculus homework. Mom was the infinite source of comfort and super entertainer, always ready to create a meal or snack for my friends and anyone who dropped by. As children we looked up to our parents and even tried to imitate them. Did you ever play dress up trying on mom's high heels or your dad's hat and tie? I know I imagined being just like my dad when I grew up. He was my hero.

As we get older our circle of idols grows to include grandparents, aunts, and uncles. And when we get to school, we include teachers and neighbors and friends in those we look up to. How many of you at some point in your formative years wanted to be a teacher? That was a profession we were exposed to, and we wanted to be just like those that taught us in school. I remember Mr. DeRosier. He was my band director in high school. I wanted so much to be just like him. He was the teacher I most looked up to. And then there was Ms.

Oliver, she was my American Government teacher who was elderly and had that grandmother way about her. I just loved her and think that she had a special place in her heart for me, especially since I was very interested in civic responsibility.

In college, I had many teachers that I put on a pedestal. These folks were smart and excited about learning. I so much enjoyed reading the thoughts of the Greek philosophers, but Descartes was my favorite. "Cogito Eros Sum" was his mantra, I think therefore I am.

Who are some of the individuals you can remember looking up to as a kid? I would guess there were many. And as we age, we become more selective, if you will. The influence of not only education but experience broaden our horizons. Maybe you wanted to be like Albert Schweitzer or Florence Nightingale or President Kennedy, or Louie Armstrong. The list for me is long: Barbara Streisand, Thomas Jefferson, Martin Luther, Debbie Macomber and Johan Sebastian Bach are a few. Someday take time to make a list and read their biographies and you might find the essence of what you believe and value and how it is personified in these people. But as we do that, sooner or later we find something about those idols that tarnish their image. They become painfully human as we see their shortcomings. And folks, that reminds us of the fact that they are human just like us. We all have flaws and sin. That is the human condition and even our heroes are subject to that fact.

Who do you look up to? That is the question. And the problem is whether your heroes are presidents, teachers, inventors, scientists, musicians, missionaries, actors, or pastors, they are all subject to the same stigma of human sinfulness. They all fall short of the glory of God.

So, who can we look up to? The Christian faith has the answer, the right answer; Jesus Christ. He was way more than a great teacher, a prophet, a miracle worker, or a saint. He is the Son of God, who died for all of us and rose again, to cleanse the human condition of all our sin and have the promise of abundant and eternal life secured.

And folks that is what we celebrate today. Jesus who walked the earth with us, died on the cross has ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of God the Father Almighty and reign over all of creation as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

The Good News of the Bible tells us that Jesus is the only person we need to look up to. He will never forsake us, never disappoint us, never ever let us down. As it says in Hebrews 13:8. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." Our faith should be anchored in that fact. His promises are secure, and we can be assured of God's love through His Word, Jesus. And today we mark the day when Jesus left earth. Scripture tells us that He will come again to judge.

That is not to say that we will not see Jesus before we grab hold of his promise of eternal life. We see Jesus in the faces of not only our friends, our heroes but also the least, the lost

and the lonely. And once we are able to look up to Jesus, our faith makes it possible to see Him in the faces of those around us.

We witness Jesus all around us and our reading tells us that we are to be witnesses to His ascension. We are to proclaim repentance and forgiveness of sins to all the world. God is very present in our world today, even if sometimes it does not seem so. He is working through us, with us and for us.

Verse 52 says, "And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and they were continually in the temple blessing God." Jesus has shown us clearly who he is, what he expects of us, and how he will empower us to continue His ministry here on earth.

And confirmands, Lyla, Zoey and Harrison, I hope that over the last two years you have spent Wednesdays with me and Mrs. McCullough. That this is what you have learned. Your faith statements were wonderful and genuine, and I hope that you will keep a copy of it, dig it out and read it 20 years from now. I pray that you will continue to grow in your faith and that you will not be strangers to the church. I also pray that you will join us in always looking up to Jesus. I hope you will always feel free to return, just as the apostles did and do it with great joy while praising and blessing our God. **AMEN**