

Ernest Hemmingway was a famous writer, but you might not know many details about his life. Hemmingway was a great storyteller. Many of his books are considered to be classics. *The Old Man and The Sea*, a story he wrote while living in Cuba reveal his genius. He was a Nobel Prize recipient. From the very early years of his life he was a person who went for it all. He was a newspaper reporter and an ambulance driver during WWI. He was involved in the Spanish Civil War. He had friendships that ranged from bullfighters to authors.

Whatever he did, he went for it all, he was having a lot of joys in his life. But there came a day when those joys ran out. Carlos Baker records in the biography of Hemmingway that one bright, cloudless Sunday morning, Ernest shot and killed himself. There are times when joy runs out. What do you do when you feel that joy runs out?

Today is the Ascension Sunday. On the day Jesus ascended to Heaven, 40 days after His Resurrection, His followers stood on the Mount of Olives grief-stricken. Their Easter-joy seemed short-lived. However, the bible tells us, “And they worshiped him, and^[9] returned to Jerusalem with great joy”(Luke 24:52) After Jesus died on the cross, the disciples went to Jerusalem, had hidden in their houses and were afraid of the Jewish leaders. Their joy ran out with Jesus’ death. However, Jesus left them again and then they returned to Jerusalem as before, but they were different. They had joy. We see them out in public, worshiping Jesus, filled with joy. Why the big change? They had just seen Jesus victoriously ascend to his heavenly throne. There was no doubt in their minds anymore that Jesus was the God of the universe, the King of Heaven and Earth. That’s what filled them with joy.

St Augustine reflects the benefit of the Ascension to us in a prayer: “You ascended from before our eyes, and we turned back grieving, only to find You in

our hearts.” The Ascension proved to be a blessing as it prepared for the coming of Jesus’ spiritual presence, no longer confined to the limitations of time and of a physical body. Jesus is present in us, wherever we go. He is our constant Companion.

Author Philip Yancy says, “the Ascension represents my greatest struggle of faith—not whether it happened but why...by ascending, Jesus took the risk of being forgotten.” Like the disciples, we really don’t want Jesus to go. We feel detached from Him. We’re looking up into the blank sky, wishing Jesus were closer to home. Even though we may not feel His presence, we are assured that He will never leave or forsake us!

If you’re looking for a sense of joy in your life, a deeper, longer-lasting sense of joy, look where the disciples looked. Look to Jesus as Lord, as Conqueror of sin, death, and the grave. There will be times in your life when you are upset. Things will happen that will anger you, sadden you, depress you. But for a Christian, underneath that anger or sadness, you will find a layer of joy that the world can’t take away. A Christian says, “I know God’s not punishing me, all my sins have been taken away by Jesus. I know I’m forgiven. I know that God will work this problem out. I know that God will give me the strength I need. This world isn’t all there is. That’s Christian joy. The disciples had such a joy after they saw Jesus ascend. May God give the same kind of joy to you.