



Sunday, May 17, 2026
Luke 24:44-53 (Seventh Sunday of Easter)

Ascension Lutheran Church
Pastor Tony Acompanado

About three weeks ago I began feeling some pain in my right foot and with a sabbatical schedule of family time, international adventures, dream races, and rest on the horizon, I decided it'd be best to take a week off of running and see if things got better. A week later I didn't notice much improvement, so I took another week off and then a third – but something still felt off. So, I went to see my doctor.

Well, a couple fractures and ligament tears later along with an appointment to see an orthopedic surgeon – here I am with a new high tech training accessory.

And ever since this since all this came to light in the last few days I can't help but think about how an immobilizing boot is basically the complete opposite of the Ascension. Jesus rises effortlessly into heaven, and I need 10 minutes and the handrail to get up and down a set of stairs.

But oddly enough, injuries make you pay attention. And that may just be the gift of this Sunday too. After the joy of Easter, before Pentecost arrives, the church enters this season of learning how to walk faithfully again.

Christ is Risen! The Easter season always carries us forward. Resurrection is never *only* about one morning, one garden, or one empty tomb. Resurrection moves. It sends. It lifts up.

And in today's Gospel, Jesus gathers the disciples after a series of resurrection appearances that must have felt overwhelming, confusing, beautiful, and terrifying all at once.

Jesus opens their minds to understand the scriptures. He reminds them that suffering and resurrection are *both* part of God's redeeming story. And then, as he ascends, he *blesses* them.

The last image the disciples have of Jesus is with open hands. Hands lifted in grace. Hands raised in peace. Hands extended in love. And this is important because the disciples didn't have everything figured out. They were *still* afraid. *Still* uncertain. *Still* grieving. *Still* learning how to live in a world filled with violence, division, poverty, and fear. And yet, Jesus entrusts them with hope anyway.

And that's good news for us too. Because we also live in uncertain times. We live in a world where wars continue to destroy nations and families. Children suffer from violence and hunger. Refugees search for safety. Political division hardens hearts. Where racism still tries to diminish human dignity and immigrants and marginalized communities are too often treated as burdens instead of beloved children of God. Where many people carry anxiety about jobs, healthcare, finances, housing, safety, and the future.

Some among us are exhausted. Some are grieving. Some are lonely. Some are wondering how to keep going. And into *this reality* – not a perfect world, or an easy world – Jesus speaks a blessing. Because if we simply picture the Ascension as Jesus floating up like some kind of spiritual hot-air balloon disappearing into the clouds, then we miss the deeper meaning entirely.

The Ascension *isn't* Jesus leaving and abandoning the world. It's Jesus *filling all things* with his presence. It's Jesus taking humanity itself into the heart of God. It's God declaring that no corner of creation is forgotten. Not Waukesha. Not Gaza. Not Ukraine. Not Sudan. Not neighborhoods wounded by violence. Not families carrying grief. Not immigrants wondering if they belong. Not those struggling with mental illness, addiction, loneliness, fear, or poverty.

And that's important for us to hold on to. Because we're living in a time when many people feel exhausted. Divided. Cynical, and afraid. Nationally, we see polarization that tears relationships apart. Globally, we see wars that devastate innocent lives. Economically, many are stretched thin. Emotionally, many are barely holding on.

And for those who are oppressed or marginalized – for people pushed aside because of race, immigration status, language, gender, poverty, disability, or identity – the world can feel especially heavy. But the Ascension of Jesus speaks of a radical truth that brings hope. And this means Jesus isn't limited to a hillside in Galilee or a road outside Jerusalem. Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus is present wherever people gather in mercy, justice, compassion, forgiveness, and love.



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That means Jesus is present in hospital rooms and classrooms. In kitchens and factory floors. In protests for justice and prayers for peace. In songs sung in different languages. In tears and laughter. In ordinary people trying to live faithfully day in and day out.

And this especially matters for us here at *Ascension Lutheran Church* in Waukesha, Wisconsin. Because our very name tells a beautiful piece of God's story. As a congregation we've embraced this in the words that guide us – ***Together We Rise – Juntos nos Levantamos***. Not some rise. Not the powerful rise. Not the wealthy rise. Not those who only look alike rise. ***Together*** we rise.

Black and white. Latino and Asian. Immigrant and lifelong resident. Young and old. Those full of faith and those barely hanging on. ***Together we rise***. This isn't merely a tagline, it's the Gospel. Because the kingdom of God has *always* been multilingual. Multicultural. Multiethnic. The Spirit of God has always crossed borders that humans try to build. And in a world determined to divide people into categories of fear and suspicion, the church becomes a living witness that another way is possible. Not because we're perfect. But because grace is.

The Ascension reminds us that Jesus doesn't reign through power and control but through love. Christ rules not by crushing enemies but by reconciling humanity. The throne of heaven is occupied by the crucified and risen one who still bears the scars of that reconciliation.

That means suffering isn't ignored by God. If you're carrying grief today, Jesus sees you. If you're struggling with depression or anxiety, Jesus walks with you. If you feel invisible, Jesus calls you beloved. If you're oppressed, excluded, or pushed aside, Jesus stands alongside you just as he always has stood with the marginalized.

And yet the story doesn't end with pain. Because Luke tells us the disciples returned to Jerusalem "*with great joy*." Think about that for a moment. Jesus has ascended. The world is still dangerous. Rome still occupies their land. The future is uncertain. And still they're filled with joy. Not shallow happiness. Not denial. Joy. The kind of joy that comes from knowing that death doesn't win. Fear doesn't win. Hatred doesn't win.

Our Savior Reigns. And because he reigns, we're free to live differently. We can practice compassion in a cruel world. We can tell the truth in a world of lies. We can welcome strangers in a culture of exclusion. We can forgive when bitterness feels easier. And we can choose hope when doubt seems trendy.

That's an ascension way of living. And I think hope is what the world desperately needs right now. Hope that says God isn't finished with this world. Hope that says justice matters. Hope that says peace is possible. Hope that says love still has power. Hope that says communities like this one matter.

A hope where every meal is shared. Every child is welcomed. Every prayer is spoken. Every act of mercy and every effort toward racial healing and reconciliation is taken. Because every time we say ***Juntos nos Levantamos – Together We Rise***, we proclaim the kingdom of God.

And maybe that's what people need most right now. Not louder outrage. Not more fear. But instead more communities of hope. Communities where people can breathe again. Communities where differences aren't erased but embraced. Communities where grace is practiced daily. Communities where people *know* they're loved.

That's exactly what the disciples became after the Ascension. And that's exactly what we're called to become now.

The ascended Jesus still blesses the world through ordinary people like us. Through our kindness. Through our courage. Through our generosity. And through our refusal to give up on one another. So today, as we celebrate the Ascension, remember this – Jesus didn't leave the world behind. Jesus lifted up the world toward God. And now Jesus sends *us* into the world carrying blessing, hope, peace, and joy.

To Waukesha. To Wisconsin. To Tanzania and El Salvador. And to every neighborhood and nation that longs for healing. ***Juntos nos Levantamos – Together We Rise***. Thanks be to God! Amen.