

Sermon Transcript

Not An End, But A Beginning

Acts 1:1-11 | Ascension Sunday | June 1, 2025 | Pastor John Klawiter,
preaching

Grace and peace to you my friends in Christ,

Advice for high school graduates from the Old Guys:

- **Enjoy the next four years, they're the best of your life**
- **Don't use your intelligence as a weapon. Always be kind**
- **Don't let classes get in the way of a well-rounded education**
- **Take chances**
- **Here are my mistakes—don't do what I did!**

Then, someone said, I can tell my kids what to do and they'd just do the opposite.

The Women of Wisdom also had this to offer:

- **Don't be afraid to ask for help**
- **A Golden door doesn't open when you graduate—you have to work**

Jesus has given his disciples some advice for when he's no longer with them. Help is on the way through the power of the Holy Spirit, but when and how does that happen?

How does Luke end the story of Jesus in his gospel?

It's not with the resurrection. It's with the Ascension. The Spirit is coming!

This matters because it demonstrates the present moment. It means that Jesus has handed us the torch, given us the responsibility. We are the ones to be the body of Christ in the world.

Instead of digging deep into the cosmic realm today and trying to explain how the DNA of Jesus is now in heaven, what really resonates with us is why does the ascension matter to us.

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As Matt Skinner from Luther Seminary reminds us, “it’s less about location and more about authority.”

Jesus, now seated at the right hand of the Father, isn’t done with us. In Luke, Jesus last words are:

“You are witnesses of these things and see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised.”

You are witnesses. Jesus, whose no longer here, gives us the authority to tell. We’re not going emptyhanded; we have the confidence that the Holy Spirit goes with us.

In Acts, Jesus says that after the Holy Spirit arrives... “you will be witnesses in Jerusalem, and to the ends of the earth.”

You will be witnesses.

What does it mean for the disciples to be witnesses?

Jesus makes it fairly clear. If they aren’t telling the story of what happens, how will the world know? To the ends of the earth. What do we learn about Jesus?

Karoline Lewis says “the Ascension is connected to mission.”

This story doesn’t just matter as a way of solving where does the resurrected body end up. This story is about our the mission that Jesus Christ has put into the hands of his disciples. It’s the mission that we wear on our hearts to this day.

The task is daunting for the disciples—yet after they’ve received this word, that’s what they do. The Holy Spirit will arrive on Pentecost—ahem, next week—but the fear doesn’t prevent them from witnessing to the world.

What does it mean for us to be witnesses?

One of the Old Guys asked, “how will kids graduating now see how we’ve lived our lives?”

Does it make a difference how we behave? Our works don’t matter for salvation, but our works—the ways that we live in this world—certainly influence how the world perceives Christ.

If faith is central to our lives, but we continue to behave in ways that are contrary to treating others with respect, kindness, compassion, and care, what does that say about our faith to others?

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The advice, now reflecting on the lesson of Luke about witnessing, suddenly took a unique twist. Looking back, one gentleman commented that, “What I’ve done is more important, and in many ways, stuck with my kids, more than what I’ve said.”

It really does come down to relationships and to cultivating trust—with those that we surround ourselves with. Deepening those relationships isn’t just for fun—it’s those relationships that are embodiments of our faith.

Being a witness isn’t just saying the wise thing—that might sound great, but can be difficult to live up to. Being a witness is walking the walk.

As the confirmation year ended earlier this month, I noticed that my pace at church changed, yet the pace of witnessing for family ascended.

May is the month of activities. The school year comes to an end and a lot happened.

I found myself witnessing A LOT of things:

Band concerts. Orchestra concert. Piano recital School field trips to Feed my starving children and Como Zoo.

Many baseball games —three this week in the rain, but not quite ENOUGH rain to cancel it.

Ultimate frisbee games and state tournament finals, as we speak.

Last night was an epic dance recital.

I noticed something.

My kids have worked really hard. They practice and value the activity that they’re doing.

I was proud of them, over and over again. I realized that many of the things that we’ve taught them over the years, they take to heart. They are learning and growing and trying new things.

This week, my oldest graduates. This is the first time graduation Sunday at Faith hits THAT close to home. I’ve been more sentimental. I’ve been more aware of what’s at stake.

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My advice has been to enjoy what you're doing. Stop worrying about what you think others expect and fill your time with the activities and relationships that bring life.

I could say that to my daughter who's a senior, but I could say it to my younger kids, too. I could say that to you. I could take that advice to heart for myself.

Jesus is telling the disciples about what a gift their witness to the world will be.

Jesus isn't asking the disciples to save the world. He already did that.

He's deploying them into the world to share what they know and own the story. What is your experience with Jesus? Tell THAT story.

Our current high school graduates had a unique confirmation experience. Much of their time was during Covid—where interactions were different.

But what I remember is that confirmation was a getaway from a lot of the stresses that were found at school.

This group bonded—through bonfires and board games, through canoe trips and faith conversations. They are a unique group of kids that I'm proud to witness to you.

They will help take care of this world. They'll be leaders who've experienced difficult and challenging circumstances, yet they had to overcome that.

How will their faith keep them centered?

How will Christ remind them that they are now witnesses for those around them?

What I saw was how important my presence is to witness. To demonstrate support.

Just showing up tells someone you care.

We are witnesses at Faith... when we share our stories of belonging at a school board meeting, serve a meal to a grieving family, plant crops to share the abundance with neighbors, give time to hear someone's story and be present.

We are witnesses. This isn't Jesus telling you what to do. It's Jesus telling you how to be.



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Be a witness to the transformative power of God's grace through the love of Jesus Christ who ascended into heaven... and gave us the authority to keep telling, or even singing, the story. Amen.