



St. Stephen's Traditional Episcopal Church

11856 Mays Chapel Rd., Timonium, MD 21093

The First Sunday After The Ascension, May 20th, 2012

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.

When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: and ye also shall bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.

On Thursday, Ascension Day, we celebrated the fulfillment of Jesus Christ's incarnated ministry to the world. All things necessary for the redemption, salvation and perfection of mankind have been accomplished. "It is finished." and "Into thy hands I commend my spirit." were Jesus' last two words from the cross and now the risen and ascended Christ enters into

the Glory of the Father which was always his.

What does the Ascension mean? Jesus could just as easily left this world and returned to the Father without any witnesses or appearance of movement. He chose instead, to ascend in the sight of the Apostles so that they would see that not just "spirits" but human bodies raised from death and sanctified by God have a place in heaven before the Father's throne. Christ's Ascension is a promise to the faithful that we will one day follow him where sinful, unredeemed man has no right to go. Christ's Ascension also promises the faithful that he will return, as he had

left, in glory, a glory that transcends all human understanding. It demonstrates that Christ participates in the divine “wholly other.”

He is not the Jesus of sentiment and feeling that we experience briefly then ignore until life gets difficult and we need a favor. He is not Jesus, the moral policeman, who validates our concepts of social and political correctness. He is the risen and ascended, living Christ the Son of God.

In today’s Epistle lesson, St. Peter tells us “*the end of all things is at hand.*” But something’s being “*at hand*” does not necessarily mean that we have the ability to grasp it. Indeed it is not until Pentecost, and the gift of the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, that the disciples began to understand the implications of their peculiar relationship to Jesus, the special gift

of being in his earthly presence, and having thereby a unique knowledge and love of God.

Jesus declares that he will send the Holy Spirit to us and the Comforter will bear witness to the truth of God’s unfailing love to us. But this will be an internal witness to us. We, in turn, must bear witness in the world that God loves, to that truth, by the conduct of our lives, by all that we say and do, rejoicing in the power of the Spirit.

St. Peter calls for sobriety; not just moderation in alcohol, but being in control of ourselves in all ways; watchfulness in prayer; constancy in our sharing of God’s love with one another and all mankind; being ungrudgingly hospitable; and generously using our gifts and abilities for the glory of God through Jesus Christ.