

Ascension Day

Morning Prayer

First Lesson: Dan 7:9-10, 13-14

Second Lesson: Eph 4:1-16

Evening Prayer

First Lesson: Is 33:5-6, 17, 20-22

Second Lesson: Hebrews 4:14-5:10

Homily

*"When he ascended up on high,
he led captivity captive,
and gave gifts unto men."*

For the last several months,
the church has been following
the earthly life of our Lord and Savior.
He, the Almighty, by whom all things were made,
came into His own creation,
was born of a humble virgin,
grew to manhood in subjection to mortal parents,
wandered the land with very human needs,
preached a message few wanted to hear,
was despised, tortured, and killed.
They buried Him and that should have been that,

except, that was the Creator,
or, at least, an inseparable third of the Trinity.
Shouldn't the whole universe
have winked out of existence?
Life is more powerful than death.
The infinite life of the infinite God
could not be held prisoner by death,
and Jesus rose from that grave,
and walked on the earth again,
and taught his disciples for forty days more,
and then, a wonder on top of wonders,
they watched Him taken into the heavens,
lifted symbolically upward and out of sight
to take His place, as we proclaim,
at the right hand of the Father,
where he reigns with Him as King of kings,
and stands before Him as our High Priest.

We have many images of the Christ.
We see him as a babe in the manger,
or in His mother's arms.
We see Him as a boy in the Temple,
or as a wise and caring Teacher.
We see Him (Oh how we see Him!)
hanging on a Cross, writhing, suffering,
breathing His last.
We see Him, somewhat less distinctly,
risen and walking again on the earth,

but we see Him then
 pretty much as we saw Him
 before the cruel Cross.
 We have not much trouble seeing,
 envisaging, imagining
 the humanity of Our Lord and Saviour,
 but we do not easily see beyond that.

He was all those things we so easily see,
 but He is Lord.
 In Morning Prayer today we hear Daniels's vision:

*I saw in the night visions,
 and, behold, one like the Son of man
 came with the clouds of heaven,
 and came to the Ancient of days,
 and they brought him near before him.
 And there was given him dominion, and glory,
 and a kingdom, that all people,
 nations, and languages, should serve him:
 his dominion is an everlasting dominion,
 which shall not pass away,
 and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.*

At Evening Prayer we hear Isaiah:

*Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty:
 they shall behold the land that is very far off.*

This day directs us to an eternity
 that we cannot really imagine,
 that we can see openly as He reveals it to us.
 This is not the Jesus meek and mild
 whose lap was a friendly place for children.
 This is the majestic Lord who rules
 and who shall be our Judge.
 There is awe, yes, indeed, fear,
 if we realize what Presence it is that we approach.
 He is Lord and our destiny is in His hand,
 and we know that we deserve no good thing

But at Morning Prayer we hear the words of St. Paul:

*"...he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets;
 and some, evangelists;
 and some, pastors and teachers;
 For the perfecting of the saints,
 for the work of the ministry,
 for the edifying of the body of Christ:
 Till we all come in the unity of the faith,
 and of the knowledge of the Son of God,
 unto a perfect man,
 unto the measure of the stature
 of the fulness of Christ:*

As Lord, He rules a Church,
 and in that Church provides all that we need

to become what we are not
 and to receive what we do not deserve,
 for, as the author of Hebrews tells us,
 he is our priest
 and continually offers sacrifice for us:

*Seeing then that we have a great high priest,
 that is passed into the heavens,
 Jesus the Son of God,
 let us hold fast our profession.
 For we have not an high priest
 which cannot be touched
 with the feeling of our infirmities;
 but was in all points tempted like as we are,
 yet without sin.*

He knows us, loves us,
 and stands before the Father Almighty,
 continually offering that Sacrifice one offered,
 continually, presenting His Cross and Death,
 Himself in His infinite entirety,
 for our salvation, for our sanctification,
 for our eternal, vibrant, joyful life.

*"...He ascended into heaven,
 and sitteth on the right hand of the Father..."*
 Let us therefore rejoice!

Let us pray.

Thou art worthy, O Lord,
 to receive glory and honour and power,
 for thou hast created all things,
 and for thy pleasure they are and were created.
 Worthy is the Lamb that was slain
 to receive power, and riches, and wisdom,
 and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.
 Blessing, and honour and glory, and power
 be unto him that sitteth upon the throne,
 and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. Amen.

Homily above

As I was preparing it seemed appropriate to weave the lessons of both offices into a single whole, thus the one homily appropriate to either.

Note that some of the Homilies for the Sunday after Ascension (now in preparation) use some of the above Lessons, and may also be used on the Day.