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St. David's Anglican Catholic Church
Charlottesville, Virginia

May 17, 2012

SERMON FOR MORNING PRAYER
Ascension Day

The Rev. Warren E. Shaw, Priest-in-Charge

Lessons:¹

The First Lesson: Here beginneth the ninth Verse of the seventh Chapter of the Book of Daniel.²

“I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened. ... 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.”

Here endeth the First Lesson.

The Second Lesson: Here beginneth the fourth Chapter of the Epistle of Blessed Paul the Apostle to the Ephesians.³

“I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. But unto every one of us is given

¹ *Psalms and Lessons for the Christian Year* (1943), THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xxv (PECUSA 1928, rev. 1943).

² Daniel 7: 9-10, 13-14 (KJV).

³ Ephesians 4: 1-16 (KJV).

grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.) And 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: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

Homily:

Abraham Lincoln’s Secretary of War, William Stanton, is alleged to have said when the President died, “Now he belongs to the ages.” What he may have said was, “Now he belongs to the angels.”

Either statement would apply, because Lincoln’s legacy endures to this day, even if Southerners think of it as negative, and he was escorted by angels to the throne of judgment. But both would apply even more to the Ascension of Our Lord.

The Second Person of the Holy Trinity was for a time confined by time and space to a small portion of the world and active in that space for only a few years. Since His death and

Resurrection, however, He has ascended far above all heavens in order to fill all things, as St. Paul says, and truly belongs to the ages. He was, in fact, “begotten of the Father before all worlds” and has been exalted to the right hand of the Father from where, as St. John says, He will reign for ever and ever.

Jesus does not exactly belong to the angels. But like Lincoln, He was escorted by the angels into the presence of the Father. We do not know how Lincoln was received by The Father, but we do know how Jesus was received. The Old Testament lesson from Morning Prayer today describes the scene. Let me read it to you in case you missed it:

“I saw visions in the night 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 unto 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.”

Truly Jesus, since His brief confinement to First-Century Palestine, now belongs to the ages. He was accompanied in His Ascension to the Father by angels, who will also accompany Him when He returns in all His glory to the world of time and space. So say the two angels in St. Luke’s account, which serves as the Epistle for Holy Communion today: “This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.”

In the meantime Our Lord comes to the world of time and space in the form of the bread and wine that we bless. He belongs to the ages and the angels are His companions whenever He comes.