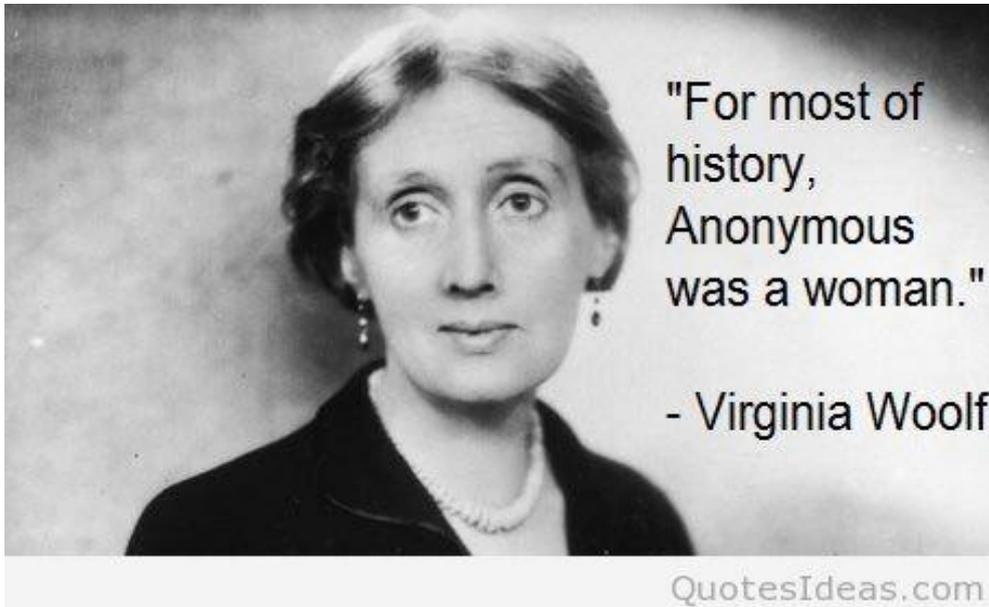




Sunday of the Ascension Sunday, May 13th, 2018

In Celebration of Women and Womanhood



Today the secular calendar celebrates "Mother's Day" and the Christian calendar, Ascension Sunday. The fact that the two correspond is a happy state of affairs.

Ascension Sunday is difficult, but nonetheless an extraordinary day for Christians. It is that day, when we celebrate the ascension of the risen Christ, his return to the Father. For modern minds, shaped by science, this is a difficult idea to grasp, not least because we don't think in metaphysical terms any longer: the idea of Jesus returning into the clouds to sit on 'Dad's right hand', no longer persuades.

That said, the Ascension of Jesus is important, because it speaks of a God who vacates the field, leaving us human beings free to get on with the job of shaping the world, building society, making community. The English political thinker Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), was a good enough theological thinker, to grasp this point. For him, quite rightly, Christianity was all about freedom, about a God who trusts us enough to leave us to build a world which reflects the values of the Kingdom. God is not one who seeks to control us, who treats us as children. Rather, we are invited to celebrate 'our own ascension' in a manner of speaking, our own autonomy, our own 'coming-of-age'.

Turning to Mother's Day; in a sense, it has historically been an attempt to dignify women, but it has not been enough, largely because it has been interpreted to reduce women to a biological function. One of the great marks and achievements of secular modernity has been the commitment to understanding and appreciating women more broadly and comprehensively as multi-faceted human beings. We do not have to go back too far in the Gospel to see Jesus doing precisely this: taking women seriously, and in John's Gospel in particular, casting women as leaders. Today we celebrate Mother's Day broadly, as we celebrate women and womanhood.

GATHERING

Our Sunday Morning Group members will be handing out flowers to our female members of the congregation as they enter.

Announcements

Greeting

Christ is risen!

Sing a new song!

Sing praise to our still-laughing Easter God;

who has rolled away the limitations of yesterday.

Immerse your anxiety and despair in the fountain of resurrection;
for God takes ordinary things;

and makes them extraordinary.

We turn our eyes to the Paschal Candle

We light the candle knowing that our faith in Jesus
and what he represents

is sometimes strong,
sometimes elusive,

Easter is the season when we thoughtfully celebrate

Christ breaking the bounds of death

Hymn: Praise to the Living God (TiS 102, Leoni, from the Jewish Yigdal)

The Peace

Christ is risen!

He is risen indeed!

An Opening Prayer to set the tone for Ascension Sunday and the 'earthiness' of the Gospel

Ascension Sunday is not about Christians intently gazing up to heaven as Jesus sets himself down next to the God the Father, for the rest of eternity. Rather, Ascension Sunday is about God vacating the field a little, leaving history open for human beings, for us to shape, to develop, to progress.

“We Can’t Cling On”

We can’t cling on
with eyes focused exclusively toward heaven alone;

Jesus points us to reality not away from it.

We can’t cling on
preoccupied with what happens after death, while
ignoring what happens here and now.

Jesus invites us to be people of the Spirit
***generating life amid the shadows that threaten all people,
in particular women and children***

We can’t cling on
with eyes focused exclusively toward heaven alone.

Amen

BREAKING OPEN THE WORD

A Poem by Lena Kim

Hero

She was...
She was...
a baby who became a child
a teenager
an adult
She was... very shy very calm very quiet very careful
She was
very good at all subjects,
a woman so beautiful that all boys chased her at all times
She was...
new at technology, never gives up, forgets
time to time
She was always honest never lies,
and brave

like a hero.
She was... ..my grandma.

Acts 1:1-11 (Good News Translation)

Sarah Kim

This is a story about the Ascension of Jesus: his apparent escalation, to the heavens, to God; a pictorial way of confirming the idea that God 'signs off' on the legitimacy of Jesus' life and actions. The idea is this: that Jesus' escalation serves to confirm the truth of his life...and so we are invited to live like him...truthfully. Accordingly, the disciples are redirected back to reality: With their "Why do you stand looking up into heaven?" the angels are smilingly saying "get on with the job!" The other thing that stands out here, is that these Galileans remain ordinary people...they have not become super-beings, they don't have wings and their face is set firmly toward their concrete situation. They were as we are, limited by time and space, vulnerable to prejudice and misunderstanding, but nevertheless people furnished with a new world view

Dear Theophilus:

In my first book I wrote about all the things that Jesus did and taught from the time he began his work ² until the day he was taken up to heaven. Before he was taken up, he gave instructions by the power of the Holy Spirit to the men he had chosen as his apostles. ³ For forty days after his death he appeared to them many times in ways that proved beyond doubt that he was alive. They saw him, and he talked with them about the Kingdom of God. ⁴ And when they came together,^[a] he gave them this order: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift I told you about, the gift my Father promised. ⁵ John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

⁶ When the apostles met together with Jesus, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time give the Kingdom back to Israel?"

⁷ Jesus said to them, "The times and occasions are set by my Father's own authority, and it is not for you to know when they will be. ⁸ But when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you will be filled with power, and you will be witnesses for me in Jerusalem, in all of Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." ⁹ After saying this, he was taken up to heaven as they watched him, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

¹⁰ They still had their eyes fixed on the sky as he went away, when two men dressed in white suddenly stood beside them ¹¹ and said, "Galileans, why are you standing there looking up at the sky? This

Jesus, who was taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way that you saw him go to heaven.”

The word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

Luke 24:44-53 (Good News Translation) Ashleigh Jacobsson

The Church lives in the in-between time, in a journey between the "already" of Jesus' birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension, and the "not yet" of his return. And yet that interim is not a passive waiting that is marked by inactivity, for the church is given a mission to be a witness to the world of the redemptive activity of God in Jesus the Christ. It is called to proclaim the good news of forgiveness and reconciliation, and the hope of newness that is given voice in the resurrection itself. It is a grand vision of being God's people, God's agents of transformation in the world. It will not be a popular message; it never was, if done well. And people will not be so eager to accept just anyone into their communities, church communities as well, as we learn all too quickly in the Book of Acts. The task will be far more enormous than anyone imagined, confirmed by the fact that the church still faces the same issues today, where Christian communities still reflect class, cultural and racial bias, not to mention, gender domination.

⁴⁴ Then he said to them, “These are the very things I told you about while I was still with you: everything written about me in the Law of Moses, the writings of the prophets, and the Psalms had to come true.”

⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶ and said to them, “This is what is written: the Messiah must suffer and must rise from death three days later, ⁴⁷ and in his name the message about repentance and the forgiveness of sins must be preached to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ And I myself will send upon you what my Father has promised. But you must wait in the city until the power from above comes down upon you.”

⁵⁰ Then he led them out of the city as far as Bethany, where he raised his hands and blessed them. ⁵¹ As he was blessing them, he departed from them and was taken up into heaven.^[a] ⁵² They worshiped him and went back into Jerusalem, filled with great joy, ⁵³ and spent all their time in the Temple giving thanks to God.

The Gospel of the Lord

Praise to you Lord Christ

Hymn: I will sing (TiS 233, Blaenwarn 590, Francis Harold Rowley)

A Story about Home: “Where the Wild Things Are” (Story and Pictures by Maurice Sendak, Red Fox Books 2007)

Read by Lena Kim and Chelsea Bae



Some Thoughts about Women and Womanhood

A number of women from our congregation shall reflect with us about their experience and insights

Offering

Doxology

*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,
praise him, all creatures here below,
praise him above, ye heavenly host,
praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.*

Prayer of Dedication

Prayers of the People

Emily Jacobsson

The one who prays after a series of petitions says, “Raise us Lord” and the people respond, “Make us a risen people”.

Closing Hymn: Great God, your Spirit like the Wind (TiS 416, Jerusalem, Alan Gaunt)

Blessing and Sending Out

Christ has ascended!

Trusting us to join him building a new world

Our service has ended

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord

In the name of Christ

Amen

Sung Blessing: You shall go out with joy (TiS 755, Trees of the Field, Steffi Greiser Ruben)

***You shall go out with joy
and be led forth in peace
and the mountains and hills shall break forth in singing
There'll be shouts of joy
and the trees of the field, shall clap, shall clap their hands
and the trees of the field shall clap their hands
and the trees of the field shall clap their hands
and the trees of the field shall clap their hands
and you'll go out with joy.***

(twice)

Musical Postlude

Pianist: Rosemary Osborne



