

Ps 47; Ac 1:1-11; Eph 1:15-23; Lu 24:44-53
Ascension of the Lord - 7th Sunday of Easter

There is a song that was used as a wake-up call for the crew of Apollo 10. May 22, 1969, the historic day marked the first time that the Lunar Module flew solo in lunar orbit as it made man's closest approach to the lunar surface to date. (Wikipedia) The name of the wake-up song? *The Best Is Yet to Come*. Everybody was singing that song 40-odd years ago. And it is still true!

By the foolishness of preaching (1 Cor 1:21) many Jesus-followers are told to look back to the glory of God's kingdom – to look back at God's mighty acts – and to remember what Jesus has done for us. Well, we do grow in faith and endurance as we learn from God's Word. But, Jesus has established a precedent that opens a way for us into a wonderful future. We haven't seen anything yet!

All things – ***all things*** are “summed up in Christ.” (Eph 1:10) That is, all things in heaven and all things on earth. Jesus is the culmination. Yet, some believers confine their associations and

their activity to a very small set of things. The promise – the inheritance we have in the God-Man who is in heaven – is not limited to a narrow set of thoughts or a narrow set of actions – commonly thought of as “church.” The best is yet to come as the Holy Spirit leads godly people to accomplish new things – glorious things in the name of Jesus. This does not have to do with rule-keeping or isolation from the world. Part of our legacy in Jesus Christ is the working of His Spirit in our midst such that powerful witness and powerful transformation happen – often without our planning or our “starting a program” or “organizing a movement.”

I recently met a man named Wade. He grew up in an intensely religious and narrow church – his family’s church. No dancing, no tv, only KJV Bible. There was no associating with those beyond this group who claimed to be the only ones going to heaven.

When his father, as a leader in the congregation, questioned a fellow leader about sexual misconduct, he was told to keep quiet and mind his own business. He persisted in his questions, and at last was kicked out of the church. So, to

young Wade it seemed he and his family were condemned to hell.

Time passed. Wade completed high school in that community and packed up to head off to college. He was very low. But, he decided to be faithful. He located a fellowship of the same church he had been part of back home. He felt more and more isolated and lonely as the weeks passed. Then new friends at college invited him to an Inter Varsity Christian fellowship on campus. He became more and more disillusioned with the church he was attending. At last, the teaching and Bible study and fellowship he experienced among his college crowd began to soak into his soul.

“One evening as Wade sat eating fast food, he got the image of a mountain in his mind. All his life in the church he had grown up in he was told that he had “arrived” – in other words, “He was on top of the mountain with God.” But that day, it was like the clouds rolled back to reveal that he was NOT on top of the mountain, but rather on a ledge far from the top. These thoughts did not drive him further into despair. It was the

lightbulb moment for Wade that changed everything! The reason he was so empty and alone was because there was so much more room for him to GROW in his relationship with God! It changed everything!” (<http://mystory.me>)

Paul tells us:

“I *pray that* the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. *These are* in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly *places...*” (Eph 1:18-20)

Resurrection power is also ascension power. We are given a changed heart by the working of the Holy Spirit within us – a changed mind again and again as the Lord Jesus beckons us to step out for Him. There is no formula – no secret word – no magic. There is nobody in or out of the church who knows who are God’s favorites and who are not.

Paul wrote to a church that was beginning to struggle within the cult of Gnosticism. Some preachers and teachers travelling the Roman roads were bringing a mythology opposed to the Genesis account of creation – and opposed to the Biblical claim that God – the Holy One of Israel – the God of Abraham – is the supreme Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer of all things in the cosmos.

So, do we show up in the halls of theological seminaries and universities? Do we mount an intellectual argument to win the hearts and minds of our family, friends and neighbors – to win the world to Christ? Not at all.

Rather, we seek this transformation of our hearts and our minds – so that we share the Good News – so that we praise and worship Jesus – under whose feet God has put everything that is.

And here is the final promise of the passage we are reading this morning: Jesus Christ is “the head of everything in the church, which is His body. His body, the church, is the fullness of

Christ, who fills everything in every way.” (vv 22-23)

Be sure you get this point: “The church...is not peripheral to the world; the world is peripheral to the church. The church is Christ’s body, in which he speaks and acts, by which he fills everything with his presence.” (vv 22-23 MSG) You and I are to be humble, not proud in this. Christ works many times in spite of what we **think** we do.

As Jesus rose into the clouds and the disciples were staring toward the heavens, two men in white were standing next to them. They said, “You Galileans!—why do you just stand here looking up at an empty sky? This very Jesus who was taken up from among you to heaven will come as certainly—and mysteriously—as he left.” (Acts 1:11 MSG)

The very power and goodness that lifted Jesus back up to His heavenly home, is always able to transform our hearts and minds so we the hands and feet of our Lord until He returns. Amen.