

In the Apostle’s Creed we confess: “He ascended into heaven and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.” Christ’s ascension is a core belief of Christian faith; it completes his earthly ministry – incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension.

So we can understand why the apostles are standing there looking up; Christ ascending into heaven; yes, that is something to see! But they are looking in the wrong direction. Christ’s ascension isn’t about who we will meet in heaven; it’s about how we can live on earth.

So two men in white robes (one writer persuasively suggested they are Moses and Elijah and that this event parallels the Transfiguration) appear to re-direct us: *Acts 1:11 (NRSV)* “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”

On the one hand, why are we standing here looking up? Jesus just ascended to heaven; that is something to see! But the point is well-taken: The same Jesus who ascended will descend again, and we have work to do here on earth until he comes again. Don’t just look up; look out! The task is at hand. Don’t be afraid! Be confident! We can handle whatever comes our way.

We honor the fearless confidence of our ancestors this morning; after all, what are a bunch of Berks Countians doing celebrating Scottish Communion? This just in – Berks County isn’t in Scotland! Ah, but by the power the ascended Christ gives; the power of the Holy Spirit, a bold bunch of Scots set out several centuries ago with the vision of a new world. They looked out and got going. They looked out, and here we are.

And if we simply look back, if we simply allow today to be an exercise in nostalgia, pomp and circumstance that stirs our spirit but does not stir us to action, then we’ve missed the point. But if we allow today to change the way we look out; the way we look at our neighbor; the way we look at our circumstances; the way we look at our society; if we allow today to change us and set about working for change, then Moses and Elijah, then John Calvin and John Knox and our Scottish ancestors will be rightly honored.

We have our challenges. We are in the midst of another Reformation; ours is an age of transformational change in the Church and in society. We don’t know what the outcome will be or where that will lead. We feel the tension in our homes, at work, and in worship. Change dictates the agendas of Borough Councils, Church Councils, and School Boards.

It’s not easy, and when we’re having one of those days, we may look up to heaven to see if today’s the Day. That’s OK. Take that break; take a deep breath; look up, and then re-focus, look out, and deal with the task at hand.

John Calvin, the great Reformer, offers us the following reflection on Christ’s Ascension that offers us the renewal we need to re-focus and look out:

“Thus, since He has gone up there, and is in heaven for us, let us note that we need not fear to be in this world. It is true that we are subject to so much misery that our condition is pitiable, but at

that we need neither be astonished nor confine our attention to ourselves. Thus, we look to our Head Who is already in heaven, and say,

Although I am weak, there is Jesus Christ Who is powerful enough to make me stand upright.

Although I am feeble, there is Jesus Christ who is my strength.

Although I am full of miseries, Jesus Christ is in immortal glory and what He has will some time be given to me and I shall partake of all His benefits.

Yes, the devil is called the prince of this world. But what of it? Jesus Christ holds him in check for He is King of heaven and earth.

There are devils above us in the air who make war against us. But what of it? Jesus Christ rules above, having entire control of the battle. Thus, we need not doubt that He gives us the victory.

I am here subject to many changes, which may cause me to lose courage. But what of it? The Son of God is my Head, Who is exempt from all change. I must, then, take confidence in Him.

This is how we must look at His Ascension, applying the benefit to ourselves.¹”

The task is at hand. A new world awaits. Don't be afraid. Be confident! Christ ascended into heaven and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. We can handle whatever comes our way! Don't just look up; look out! Amen.

¹ <http://pjcockrell.wordpress.com/2008/05/05/calvin-on-applying-the-ascension-of-christ/>. John Calvin, *Deity of Christ*, pp. 238-239, quoted in [Jesus Ascended: The Meaning of Christ's Continuing Incarnation](#) by Gerrit Scott Dawson, pp. 181-182