

**The Right Hand OF The Father
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I think I'm ready now to preach a sermon on marriage.

Thank you for your advice, support, and encouragement as Tracy and I moved through a dating relationship to engagement, and now marriage.

Today we continue our series, based on the Tim Keller book, *Encounters with Jesus*

Our scripture this morning comes from Acts 1:9-11

“After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

¹⁰ They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. ¹¹ “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”

We take the Ascension for granted. We hear this story, and we just nod our heads and continue on. We react as if we have been told that a balloon got away from a child and went up into the air until it was hidden in the clouds.

Tim Keller writes, “And for us, the question is not so much “What happened?” as “Why did it happen ?”

God could have planned numerous different exit strategies; why this?

It communicates something. Christ is ascending to something.

Keller points out that when we use that word with people we use it carefully. I don't ascend a ladder, but the queen? At her coronation ceremony She ascended to the throne.

The word ascended gets across more than a change in elevation. She is not just physically higher than everyone else— she has a new relationship to others and has new powers and privileges to exercise authority. The steps and the higher chair are symbolic.

When we see Christ ascend into heaven; we know that he has ascended to a throne as well.

Matthew 26:64

“But I say to all of you: From now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

Acts 2:33-36

³³ Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. ³⁴ For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said,

“The Lord said to my Lord:

“Sit at my right hand

³⁵ until I make your enemies

a footstool for your feet.”^[a]

³⁶ “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.”

I like how Paul puts it in Ephesians...

Ephesians 1:20-22

...he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹ far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. ²² And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

Christ ascends into heaven to communicate to us that he is King; and not just king of Israel, but he is King of EVERYTHING. This ascension is his coronation.

But it's more than that; it's more personal than that.

John 20:

20 Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance.

¹¹ Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb ¹² and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

¹³ They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." ¹⁴ At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

¹⁵ He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?"

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "Mary."

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher").

¹⁷ Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father.

Was she not suppose to touch Jesus because he was to holy?

No, Jesus is touched by Thomas.

Hold onto me has a deeper meaning. The word he uses means, "to hold onto tight."

It's as if he's saying that Mary has grabbed hold of him with all of her might, she has lost him, but she's not about to lose him again.

When Tracy and I were on our Honeymoon in Hawaii we saw a demonstration of a Tahitian Wedding Ceremony.

"Will you ever leave your wife?" No.

Mary wants that kind of commitment from Jesus.

But he says, let go of me, because I have not ascended to the Father. Let go of me, because I have something better to offer you.

You can hold on to me here, but as long as I'm here I can only be here. I need to ascend, because when I ascend I will truly be with you always.

You see, when Jesus ascends he does not just ascend into heaven, but by some mystery he ascends into our hearts.

Augustine: “You ascended from before our eyes and we turned back grieving, only to find you in our hearts.”

because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. - Romans 5:5

Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

Romans 8:34

Because of the Ascension we have access to Jesus always.