



One such Scripture that opens up the Christian's understanding of the significance of things like the Ascension is the Introit appointed for today from **Psalm 47**. Notice particularly vv. **5 and 7**, "**God has gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet. God reigns over the nations; God sits on His holy throne.**" In the Old Testament this was a Psalm of procession up to the Temple. But it has its greater fulfillment in Christ! For how can God ascend unless He also has descended to His people, which is exactly what happened at the Incarnation, which is what we celebrate at Christmas! Where Christ has ascended into heaven, He now reigns, but not as some distant, far off God. For remember, to be seated at the right hand of God is not some physical place, but a position of power. God is omnipresent. In His state of humiliation, the fullness of Jesus' divine nature was not manifest. By the mere eye it appeared only as if Jesus could reign wherever His body was visibly present. But in His ascension, with the eyes of faith we see that Jesus reigns everywhere, for His human nature cannot be limited by His divine. We could say that today we actually see Jesus fuller and better now than the disciples did then! He *is* the Word and Sacraments as much as He is in them!

And you see that's the joy of the Ascension. Jesus ascending did not mean that Jesus was leaving. No, it meant He was fulfilling His promise, "**Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age**" (Mt 28:20). Now instead of Jesus preaching on a hillside of Galilee, Jesus preaches throughout the world through all the pastors He Calls through the Church. Jesus preaches throughout the world wherever Christian moms and dads teach their children at home. Jesus preaches throughout the world wherever Christians bear witness to His name in their blessed vocations. For Jesus is just as real and present now in His Word as He was when "**He led [the disciples] as far as Bethany, and lifting up His hands He blessed them**" (Lk 24:50) before departing to the right hand.

Throughout the New Testament, the disciples never seemed to "get it"; if it were us back then neither would we. Neither will anyone unless God opens our minds to the Scriptures. But on the day of Jesus' ascension, they finally "got it"; they finally understood. For "**while [Jesus] blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven.**" Whenever a loved one leaves us, that usually makes us sad. But the disciples response was, "**they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God**" (Lk 24:51-53). They knew Jesus wasn't leaving! They trusted Jesus' promise; He would be with them always. And they knew where to find Him! In the temple, where the Word of God was preached! What great joy!

The same great news is for you, too. You want to see Jesus? Be at Church. You want to hear Jesus? Be at Church! For here, as Jesus said, "**repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all nations**" (Lk 24:47). And so they are. Christ is still risen! Christ is ascended! Because Jesus lives and Jesus ascended, so, too, through repentance and faith for the forgiveness of sins we shall live and we shall ascend to be with Christ for eternity! Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed! Alleluia! Christ is ascended! He is ascended, indeed! Alleluia! Amen!