

SERMON - ASCENSION SUNDAY - 4 MAY 2008
St. John's Anglican Church, Greensboro, North Carolina

1 Peter 4:7-8 (KJV)

But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer. ⁸And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.

If you are familiar with some of the more modern Eucharistic liturgies, there is a place in the service when the celebrant says, "Therefore, we proclaim the mystery of faith." Then the celebrant and congregation reply,

"Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Christ will come again."

Christ will come again. Jesus Christ who ascended into the heavens and who now sits on the right hand of God the Father, will come again.

But to look at the whole picture, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, the Ascension, we have to have faith that these events did happen in order to believe that Jesus Christ will come again.

We have to have the faith that the reports, the witness that the early Church provides through Holy Scripture is true. We have to believe in the truth of Holy Scripture.

We have to have faith.

Again, let us listen to words found in Hebrews Chapters eleven, ***Hebrews 11:1 (KJV)***
Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Or as the newer English Standard Version translates it, ***Hebrews 11:1 (ESV)*** *Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.*

I like the term assurance. We have the assurance of things hoped for.

Faith.

Hope.

Along with faith, we have to have hope. Now hope as it is used in this sense, means to *expect* or *confide*, to have confidence.

We then have the faith, the hope, the assurance, the confidence, that Jesus Christ did ascend into heaven and that this same Jesus Christ will come again,

We have to have the faith that Jesus Christ is our savior, that He died on the Cross for our sins, and that He rose from the dead to destroy death and give us the hope of eternal life.

Because, without this faith we are no better off than if He had not come at all.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, God the Son, came to save us from ourselves, but if we do not have the faith to believe all this then we are as dead as all those who rejected him when he was on earth the first time.

Then, we are no better off than those that felt salvation came from an observance of the Law. Then, we are no better off than those that cling to a strict obedience of externally imposed rules and regulations, following the letter of the law instead of the spirit.

Because, as Paul tells us, ***Galatians 2:16 (KJV)*** *Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.*

Faith, we have to have faith.

But along with faith, along with hope, we have to have charity. Charity, which is oftentimes translated as love, is the glue that holds all this together.

Paul tells us *1 Cor. 13:13 (ESV) So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.*

Saint Peter tells us, *1 Peter 4:8 (ESV) Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.*

Out of love, God sent His only son to die for us, *John 3:16 (KJV) For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

Jesus hung on the Cross out of love for us.

All he asks in return, is that we have faith and hope, but more especially to have the love that puts God first and each other secondly as the center of our individual lives.

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

Amen.