



## ASCENSION OF OUR LORD

### FIRST READING: Acts 1:1-11

A reading from Acts.

「Luke writes:」

<sup>1</sup>In the first book, Theophilus,  
I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning

<sup>2</sup>until the day when he was taken up to heaven,  
after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit  
to the apostles whom he had chosen.

<sup>3</sup>After his suffering he presented himself alive to them  
by many convincing proofs,  
appearing to them during forty days  
and speaking about the kingdom of God.

<sup>4</sup>While staying with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem,  
but to wait there for the promise of the Father.

“This,” he said, “is what you have heard from me;

<sup>5</sup>for John baptized with water,  
but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

<sup>6</sup>So when they had come together, they asked him,

“Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?”

<sup>7</sup>He replied,

“It is not for you to know the times or periods  
that the Father has set by his own authority.

<sup>8</sup>But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you;  
and you will be my witnesses  
in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

<sup>9</sup>When he had said this, as they were watching,  
he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.

<sup>10</sup>While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven,  
suddenly two men in white robes stood by them.

<sup>11</sup>They said, “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.”

The word of the Lord.

or

Word of God, word of life.

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#### FIRST READING *Theophilus = thee-OFF-il-us*

The reader might wish to throw caution to the wind here and begin the reading with verse 1 rather than the proposed clarification of authorship, “Luke writes.” Launch into the reading with all the energy invested in writing to a dear friend. Then allow the story to unfold to the wonder and mystery of verse 9. Set that verse apart from all the others. Verses 10 and 11 might provide a kind of ironic epitaph.

## PSALMODY: Psalm 47 or Psalm 93

### SECOND READING: Ephesians 1:15-23

A reading from Ephesians.

<sup>15</sup>I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus  
and your love toward all the saints,  
and for this reason <sup>16</sup>I do not cease to give thanks for you  
as I remember you in my prayers.

<sup>17</sup>I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory,  
may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him,  
<sup>18</sup>so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened,  
you may know what is the hope to which he has called you,  
what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints,  
<sup>19</sup>and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe,  
according to the working of his great power.

<sup>20</sup>God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead  
and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places,  
<sup>21</sup>far above all rule and authority and power and dominion,  
and above every name that is named,  
not only in this age but also in the age to come.  
<sup>22</sup>And he has put all things under his feet  
and has made him the head over all things for the church,  
<sup>23</sup>which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

The word of the Lord.            *or*            Word of God, word of life.

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#### SECOND READING    *Ephesians = eh-FEE-zhunz*

This reading too will profit from the energy associated with an enthusiastic letter writer. With that initial direction, consider this word of caution: these sentences are long, loaded, and nuanced. The wise reader will map them out mentally before beginning to read them aloud and will want to read them aloud more than once in preparing to share them with the assembly.

## **GOSPEL: Luke 24:44-53**

The holy gospel according to Luke.

<sup>44</sup> Jesus said to the eleven and those with them,  
“These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—  
that everything written about me  
in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.”  
<sup>45</sup> Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures,  
<sup>46</sup> and he said to them,  
“Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer  
and to rise from the dead on the third day,  
<sup>47</sup> and that repentance and forgiveness of sins  
is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations,  
beginning from Jerusalem.  
<sup>48</sup> You are witnesses of these things.  
<sup>49</sup> And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised;  
so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

<sup>50</sup> Then he led them out as far as Bethany,  
and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them.  
<sup>51</sup> While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them  
and was carried up into heaven.  
<sup>52</sup> And they worshiped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy;  
<sup>53</sup> and they were continually in the temple blessing God.

The gospel of the Lord.

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### **GOSPEL**

Allow a sense of awe to color every aspect of this reading—not merely at the aerodynamics of the ascension, but at Jesus’ opening of minds, at the implications of being witnesses, and at the conferral of the apostolic mission. Color it all with awe, and with great joy.