

### **Not Far, Not Away**

Thursday is Ascension Day; a strange event to celebrate, one might think, the departure of our Lord Jesus from our world. Would we not much rather have Him here with us? Would it not be so much better for us? Does He not see that?

"It is to your advantage that I go away", our Lord Jesus said to His Apostles prior to His death; and like so much of what the Apostle John remembers and relates our Lord Jesus having said, this refers as much to His ascension into heaven as it does to His death. If we listen, we will see that!

And our Lord Jesus having gone away does not really mean that He is gone. On the contrary, in fact; although it does mean that we no longer see Him.

"God raised Him from the dead," writes the Apostle Paul, "and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion. And He put all things under His feet and gave Him as Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, and His fullness, who fills all in all." So far from being far from us, He lives in His Church, and fills her with Himself! He lives in His Church, and gives Himself to those sinners who are His Christians, with His Word of salvation. And with His Word He gives Himself, also, to those sinners who are not yet His Christians, and makes them to become that, when they hear His promise, and take it to heart.

It is good for us that our Lord Jesus has ascended into Heaven. It means that He is not far from us. He is here for us, with His salvation. And that means that we are not left to our own devices when it comes to our salvation. To "be saved" is not to find Him in our own hearts; and that is good, also, for we would never find Him there, nor in our prayers, or in any other of our own doings. Rather, in His Word of His love and what His love has done for us, proclaimed by His faithful Church, He comes to us with His promise of salvation, and gives Himself to us, with His salvation. Although there are preachers who are always eager to frighten you by talking about how useless it is to go to church and hear the Word of God, exactly that is what it means to be saved: to live with Him, in His Word of salvation, and find our salvation not in ourselves, but in Him who promises us sinners His salvation, and gives Himself to us, and His salvation, with His promise.

*Pastor Jais H. Tinglund  
Grace Lutheran Church, Greybull/Zion Lutheran Church, Emblem*