**Luke 24:46-51 46Then He said to them, “Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, 47and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48And you are witnesses of these things. 49Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.” 50And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. 51Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven.**

This morning, we are 35 days from Easter. 35 days have passed since we gathered on this parking lot and celebrated Easter sunrise. Nearly 1/10th of a year! It may have been 35 days, but we’re still celebrating the Rising of our Savior Jesus Christ!

If we were able to transport back to the time of Jesus, we’d see that things have been happening! Jesus met Mary at the tomb, walked with His followers along the road to Emmaus, met with His disciples, had Thomas touch His wounds, and restored Peter over breakfast by the sea. He’d appeared multiple times. The Risen Christ was not absent during these 35 days, but very, very present – still teaching, still encouraging, still blessing.

Now, we approach the time of His ascension. The Ascension is a key part of our faith! We know Jesus didn’t simply die again, but was taken up! We celebrate that! In our scripture this morning, we read verse 46 - *Then He said to them, “Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day.* We know that Christ had opened the disciples understanding from verse 45. Many in Christianity today never really connect the Old and the New Testament. They treat the Bible as though it’s two pieces that happen to come inside the same cover. But, the Old Testament reveals the coming Christ. The prophets and the psalms reveal Jesus. It was the plan from the beginning that the Christ must suffer and die. Listen to Psalm 22:16-18, written about a 1000 years before Jesus was crucified - *For dogs have surrounded Me; The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet; 17 I can count all My bones. They look and stare at Me. 18 They divide My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots.* We will never have a complete understanding of Jesus until we have that Holy Spirit given understanding of the scriptures. We can quote the red letters until we’re blue in the face, but we will never fully understand Jesus without a God given grasp of the Old Testament.

Verses 47 & 48 should look very familiar to us - *and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48And you are witnesses of these things.* This is the Great Commission! We are to go and teach all nations, calling on them to repent, helping them to believe that Christ is King. Remember that this is not the Great Suggestion! Christ didn’t tell us that He hoped we’d go and make disciples… He said Go. And just as He promised, we see that indeed the Holy Spirit came and Pentecost started in Jerusalem in Acts 2. He calls us witnesses in verse 48. Not judges, not prosecuting attorneys, not pickers and choosers of who deserve to hear the Gospel, but witnesses – John 7:38 says  *He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.”* That Living Water is the Holy Spirit living in us. How are we pouring out life giving water to those around us? We ask ourselves that daily to be sure our water hasn’t become polluted by the world.

Verse 49 -*Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.”* We see that Promise fulfilled in Acts 2:2-4. Remember that the devout men of every nation were there and some thought the disciples drunk, because the Galileans were speaking to them in their own language… the very reverse of the tower of Babel… each understanding – saying, *we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.* And thus begins the preaching of Jesus name to all nations, just as Jesus said.

Luke 24:50 *And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them.* Bethany is 1.5 miles from Jerusalem. Jesus led them to this place and blessed them.

35 days from Resurrection. Acts 1:3 says *to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.* We know Jesus remained 40 days. Then in Luke 24:51 we read *Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven.* In Acts 1:9 we read - *Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.* In a few short days, our hearts will celebrate the Ascension of our Savior. How glorious the Truth! He ascended and the Bible tells us that He will come again in like manner.

The same Jesus will return, but He won’t look like He did when He left. He won’t look like the suffering servant. No, He’ll look more like He did on the Mount of Transfiguration over in Luke 9:29 *As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe became white and glistening.* Revelation 1:13-14 gives us an even better look - *and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. 14 His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; 15 His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; 16 He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength.* This is the Jesus we’re waiting for! This is the Jesus we’re talking about in Advent. This is the Mighty Savior, King of kings, Lord of lords. We celebrate Ascension anticipating the King who will return. Acts 1:10-11 *And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, 11 who also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.”* He ascended, He sits at God’s right hand, and He confirms in Revelation 22:12 *“And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.*” It sounds like we’d better be witnessing.

This week, think about Jesus ascension into heaven. As Stephen confirmed in Acts 7:55-56 *But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, 56 and said, “Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!”* Celebrate this week, understanding that the Death of Jesus was necessary so we might have reconciliation with God. Celebrate His sacrifice and celebrate His promised return. The ascension of Jesus started the timer for His return – and it draws closer each day. When He comes quickly, what will He find us doing? Witnessing, loving, helping, overflowing with living water? Or will He find us condemning and judging, living for Him in word only, and not in work? He says *And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.*” At this time of Ascension, let’s examine the work He will find when He comes to us. If change is needed, now is that moment.