

Homily
June 1, 2025
The Ascension of the Lord
27:30 – 35:27

In television or in movies, if there is a sequel, or one of those hateful “To Be Continued...,” there’s always a moment in either one where there is a reminder of something from before. Either it’s one of those, “At the last episode...” Or you get some sort of an image musically, as in a movie. Or someone in the movie recalls something that happened before. It’s even worse when there’s three episodes! And you go, “Oh, not again!”

What we have today is just such a scriptural doublet, if you will. We hear of the same event from Luke in the Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles, the instruction of the disciples and the Ascension.

Now Luke – those two books take up 26% of the New Testament. We all think it’s Paul who wrote the most. No. It’s Luke. It’s not even John. It’s Luke.

He uses this event to tie the two books together. Because you see, at the end of the Gospel of Luke, there’s the Ascension. At the beginning of Acts, there is the Ascension. But they’re both written to the same person, Theophilus.

Well, who is Theophilus? Theophilus, the name itself, means either “Beloved of God,” or “Friend of God.”

Now scholars tend to think about, well, who was this guy? Well, at one point he’s known as “Your Excellency.” So he could have been an important person in the Roman government, that Luke would call him that.

However, I have a feeling there’s more to it than that.

Do you remember in John's Gospel account, the "Beloved Disciple?" That disciple is never named. Most scholars believe that Beloved Disciple is **all the believers**, from the time of Jesus onwards.

I have this hunch that Theophilus, the "Beloved of God," or the "Friend of God," is **US**. Luke not only wanted whoever Theophilus was to listen, but he wanted all that came after – all of us – to listen and know of the wonder of Christ. The wonder of Christ as laid out in the Gospel. And the wonder of the Early Church, as laid out in the Acts of the Apostles. They are connected by the event we celebrate today.

The wonder and power of Jesus Christ did not come to an end at the Ascension. Yes. It was a "commencement," the end of his earthly reality, but also the beginning of his reality through the Spirit in the Church. That's why Acts continues to reveal how, as we heard last week, the Spirit moved among the disciples, the Apostles, indeed the whole faithful, in making some decisions.

We're still a part of that. Just because the Acts of the Apostles comes to an end when Paul is carried off to Rome, doesn't mean the story is over. For you see, we are disciples of that same Jesus, are we not? And by the Word, he has revealed and continues to teach us.

Just as at the end of Luke's Gospel, Jesus is teaching the disciples about what is to come, in the Ascension, as depicted in Acts, he even expands it more. He continues to teach them. Just like us.

Think about it. Are you not beloved of God? Are you not a friend of God? Are you not a disciple to receive? And then as the early Church – **to proclaim** - to spread, not only in word, but in action. Because you know sometimes words don't work very well. But Gospel-led actions and values...ah! They are noticed. They are a proclamation of "I believe. And my life reflects it."

So the Ascension, even for us, is the "commencement" of our life as the Church. It's our beginning. Oh. It's true. Next week we're going to celebrate Pentecost, when the Lord

came down upon the disciples in Jerusalem in the Upper Room because they were there and they were afraid. We'll talk about that next week.

But it is here in both Luke and the Acts of the Apostles that the mission is spoken very clearly. They were sent. We are sent.

We're not waiting just for the wonder of Christ coming back as we heard in the Letter to the Hebrews. We're living what we have heard and seen, and witnessed, even – in our own lives, in our own Church, our own community, our own family.

Are you ready? (Yes! – a young child offers) Thank you. (Laughter) Out of the mouths of the babes!

Are you ready?