

Read: Luke 24:44-53

The Ascension of Our Lord

Luke 24:45

Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Think of someone you have not seen in person for a long time. Perhaps a great distance or the pandemic have kept you from seeing each other. You long for the day when you can see one another again. In the meantime, you send cards, talk on the phone, or Zoom to keep in touch.

Now think about how Jesus' disciples must have felt when he ascended into heaven. Jesus had spent every day with them for the past three years. Then there was the gut-wrenching experience of his arrest, trial, crucifixion, and death. Then came the joyous miracle of his resurrection and the fellowship they shared together during the 40 days after Easter.

And then he was gone. Our reading says, "While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven" (v. 51).

Oh, how the disciples must have missed Jesus! But the Bible tells us something different. "Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy" (v. 52). Wait ... when someone you love leaves you, are you filled with joy? Typically, *no*. You are probably a bit sad that the visit is over. That is *normal* for most people.

Something powerful must have come over the disciples—something that would help them overcome all the typical human emotions. Today's word of God offers a clue: "he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures."

The Old Testament (that part of the Bible written before Jesus was born) is filled with promises of a coming Messiah (a Savior) and what he would do. During the three years Jesus spent with his disciples, he said and did things that proved he was the promised one. Little by little, the disciples began to see it. And in the days and moments before he was taken into heaven, Jesus continued to help them understand. Their minds were open to recognize that *Jesus belonged in heaven* because his work on earth was finished. He went there to reign over and control all things for us. That makes us happy!

Maybe you are missing a loved one. Maybe you are struggling with a health challenge or having difficulties with a friend. Maybe you are angry, lonely, sad, or confused. You may *feel* all those things. But remember what you *know* from the Bible: Your Savior promises to speak to you in

the Bible and invites you to talk to him in prayer—powerful communication tools until you finally see him in heaven.

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- Where is Jesus living right now?
- How can you keep close to Jesus even though you cannot see him?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- Why were Jesus' disciples filled with joy even though Jesus left them and went into heaven?
- Discuss two ways your family can have that kind of joy.

Questions for Middle School and Above

- In addition to God's Word and prayer, how can believers remain close to Jesus? (ref. 1 Corinthians 11:23-25, Matthew 18:20)
- Discuss how we as believers can properly balance what we *feel* about our relationship with God and what we *know* is true about our relationship with God.

Closing Prayer:

Dear Jesus, keep us close to you through the tools you give us, until we see you face-to-face in heaven. In your name we pray, Amen.

Hymn: CW 282:1,2 – Lord, Open Now My Heart to Hear

Lord, open now my heart to hear,
And through your Word to me draw near.
Let me your Word e'er pure retain;
Let me your child and heir remain.

Your Word inspires my heart within;
Your Word grants healing from my sin.
Your Word has pow'r to guide and bless;
Your Word brings peace and happiness.