

Gaines Congregational United Church of Christ

May 21, 2023

1st Reading; Acts 1: 1-11

Responsive Reading; Psalm 93

Epistle Reading; Ephesians 1: 15-23

Gospel Reading; Luke 24: 44-53

Sermon Title:

May the Eyes of Your Understanding be Enlightened

By Rev. Jim Gardner

Summary; It all comes together now. See it. Rejoice in it.
Proclaim it.

“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.”

This is Ascension Sunday. This is the day that God gave His final proof that Jesus was totally God, just as He was also totally Man. On the cross He proved that He was totally Man when He died in plain view of hundreds if not thousands of witnesses.

On the third day He made a pretty impressive showing that He was God, but then this was not quite definitive proof as others had been raised from the dead. There was Lazarus, the son of the widow, and the little daughter of the leader of the synagogue. This may be true but each one of these did die eventually but Jesus never did. Instead of getting old and dying, Jesus was lifted on a cloud up into heaven.

In our Gospel lesson we are told that before Jesus ascended He talked to His disciples and He said to them, “These are the words which I spoke to you, while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.”

Notice that Jesus includes the Psalms. Too often we relegate the Psalms to be limited to just the period of the Old Testament in which they were written. We seldom put the Psalms in the same category that we ascribe to Isaiah, Jeremiah and other prophets. Psalm 93 does not stop at the earthly mission of Jesus but goes beyond to the second coming that cannot be accomplished until the norms of society are radically changed.

We as humans have been screwing up things since Adam and Eve with our conquer-by-power mentality. God knew that it would never work but He let us see for ourselves the futility of going about it in this way. God not only let us see how it was not working, God, at a prescribed time, put in motion an

alternative model. Theologians say that the mighty and noisy waters are the Gentiles, or non-believers, that do their best but cannot come close to drowning out the majesty of God and His eventual total reign.

God got together with Himself and Himself, i.e. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and said, "OK, this is the plan, at a certain time after people have proved that they can not get it right on their own, I, We, Us will send I (Jesus) down to teach a better way and serve as a role model that shows them that it can work. I, He, Jesus will teach a small group to teach others and plant what I, We, will call churches that will plant other churches. And oh yes, let's send out some guy named Paul who will work with the really stubborn ones. Let's give it a few thousand years to infest the world with "Love Plan" pandemic that will totally consume the world with a love that passes all understanding. When that is done, we will all get together in a New Jerusalem and I, We, Us, will have an eternal heavenly party with our beloved children." "OK, hands together and Win on Three. One, Two, Three, WIN!"

This is where Charlie, at the Manor House, would say, "OH LORD! Please help Jim."

Maybe I am beyond help but I got this Knee Mail when I was down on my knees getting cramps along with this message, I was told to read to you. Some of it may sound familiar.

I, Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God. To the saints who are in Gaines Congregational UCC and are faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of your Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed you with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose you in Him before the foundation of the world, that you should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined you to adoption as sons and daughters by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will. In Him you have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace. In Him also you have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will. In Him you also trusted, after you heard the of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, THE EYES OF YOUR UNDERSTANDING BEING ENLIGHTENED; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in

the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward you who believe, according to the working of His power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in heavenly places. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen”

Some of the wording of the Bible is time sensitive to when Jesus and the prophets walked the face of the Earth but much of it is specifically aimed through the millennia directly to us. The Ephesians were not perfect, nobody is, but they tried to do it right. I believe that Paul would see the same quality of worship in this very congregation.

It all comes together now. See it. Rejoice in it and Proclaim it!

Hallelujah and Amen!