

Sixth Sunday after Resurrection/Ascension Sunday

Lectionary Title 24: **Glorification of the Crucified Messiah**

Old Testament: Isaiah 52:13 (NRSV,1989)

The Suffering Servant

¹³See, my servant shall prosper; he shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high.

New Testament: Acts 1:6-11 (NRSV, 1989)

The Ascension of Jesus

⁶So when they had come together, they asked him, 'Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?' ⁷He replied, 'It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.' ⁹When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰While he was going and they were gazing up towards heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. ¹¹They said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up towards heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.'

General Concept: Jesus' ascension has opened up our own destiny to share in his glory.

Key Concepts in the Different Age Levels in Sunday School

N/K/YE: **Jesus goes up to heaven.**

ME/OE: **Jesus goes up to heaven victoriously.**

Y: **Jesus' ascension has opened up our own destiny to share in his glory.**

A: **Jesus' ascension has opened up our own destiny to share in his glory.**

Exegesis of the Biblical References

The Hebrew word Messiah is referring to the anointed one of God whose main concern is to fulfill the liberating task assigned to him by God. Around 540 BCE, the Israelites in Babylon were nearing the end of their exile as the once mighty Babylonian empire begins to collapse following a series of defeats in the hands of the rising Persian Empire under the mighty king Cyrus. An atmosphere of uncertainty is beginning to cause confusion and demoralization even among the exiles. But then, an unknown prophet from among the exiles whom scholars could only identify as Deutero or Second Isaiah since his oracles became part of the book of the prophet Isaiah, rose to the occasion and began to speak words of hope, comfort and restoration to his fellow exiles.

His collection of oracles of hope and salvation are located in chapters 40-55 of Isaiah and he is widely considered as truly a follower of the continuing Isaiah prophetic tradition wanting to pursue and reinterpret for his own generation the teachings of the prophet who proclaimed God's words of judgment some 160 years earlier in Jerusalem. Most of the oracles of Deutero Isaiah are delivered in beautiful, lyrical poetry-song and the prophet wrote four special compositions referring to the servant of the Lord and one of his poetic compositions is known as the Song of the Suffering Servant in Is. 52:13-53:12 with which our text is closely connected.

Being a Jew himself the writer of Second Isaiah is quite knowledgeable in the Jewish cultic worship traditions and one of them is the sacrifice of animals or holocaust for the forgiveness of the sins of the Jewish believers. It may be seen as expressive of a distinct understanding of divine forgiveness. In Second Isaiah's view, however animal sacrifice is not actually effective in the forgiveness of sins since people may just rely only on this ritual act as a purely mechanical means of seeking forgiveness devoid of real sincerity. Instead, he introduced the image of the suffering servant offering himself as an innocent sacrifice for the sins of the many as the most effective means given by God for the forgiveness of not only the Jewish community but also of all people. Here, the suffering of God's servant is clearly not to be seen as punishment for sin as traditionally understood by the Jews, but the suffering of the innocent servant is now revealed as a part of the divine plan towards forgiveness and reconciliation of the whole world to God the redeemer and reconciler.

This image of a suffering, innocent, non-resisting, totally submissive servant has become definitive for the kind of ministry and mission that Jesus would then carry out. In contrast to popular understanding, this image defined how Jesus as messiah is to be understood later on and how his mission is to be carried out. The image of this suffering servant became the template by which Jesus as the messiah is to be understood by his followers.

The time came when people from different parts of Judah and Jerusalem heard a voice in the wilderness near the Jordan River. The voice touched the hearts of many people as it called for repentance and baptism in the river Jordan. John was initially suspected as the Messiah but he denied it, proclaiming that he is only preparing the way of the Lord who is coming. When Jesus appeared on the scene of the Jordan River, John the baptizer was so amazed and immediately he announced that Jesus is truly the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

Around 33 CE, Jesus began his ministry and preached about the kingdom of God. In faithfully doing so, he disturbed the comfort zone of the religious leaders of his time as well as the Roman authorities. It became inevitable that he was arrested, condemned as a rebel, tortured and crucified but on the third day he rose from the dead. His followers were then reminded of what Jesus himself said to them earlier that his suffering is for the reconciliation and forgiveness of the sins of many people.

Almost 577 years after the Song of the Suffering Servant was composed by the writer of Second Isaiah, it found its proper place and meaning in the life and mission of Jesus Christ. And before the sight of his disciples Jesus ascended right toward heaven but he assured them not to be worried because God will enable them to be empowered by the Holy Spirit. Jesus also instructed his disciples before his ascension to be his witnesses not only in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, but also to the ends of the earth. Here, the disciples are already witnessing Jesus' own glorification, his own complete vindication for his total submission and faithfulness to his mission as the messiah sent by God. Now Jesus is offering his disciples the opportunity to share in this glorious moment, to experience also the kind of glory and vindication accorded to all those who faithfully follow and carry out the mission of Jesus.

Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users

Jesus' ascension to heaven is the sequel of his resurrection in which his glorified body does not remain in the old creation which is subject to corruption and decay (Romans 8:19-23). One man's victory over a whole establishment of evil – the political and spiritual dominion of the evil Roman Empire – signals a cosmic event in which creation, too, will be liberated from its subjection to corruption and decay. This refers to the ultimate overcoming of the great divide between heaven and earth, between immortality and mortality, between God and creation. In the Book of Revelation, this is depicted as heaven coming down to earth as God will make earth his very dwelling (Rev. 21:3). It is a poetic rendition of the Christian vision of what awaits the new life in Christ – a new creation, a new heaven and a new earth.

Central to the Christian understanding of reality is that the incarnation of the Son of God has activated God's original design to heal creation's alienation from the Creator as a result of sin. The dialectic of salvation is this: what the incarnate Son accomplished on earth is certified in heaven such that an earthly event translates into a cosmic event. The earthly arena consists of the political and spiritual dimensions which permeate one another. Thus, Jesus' confrontation with the forces of the Empire was also a cosmic confrontation between God and the devil, and his moral and spiritual victory was meant to yield political dividends and vice-versa. Consequently, the struggle for political justice is at the same time a struggle in the spiritual realm. In the end, God's justice would translate into earthly justice – the kingdom of God wherein God's will in heaven would also be done on earth (the Lord's Prayer), and a new social order would correspond to the new being in Christ. And God would accomplish a full-dimension reconciliation of creation to one's self. Despite all signs today that point to humanity's bitter end, the Christian faith is sustained by the hope that God is at work to reverse history's march to creation's total destruction. This assurance should not make the church complacent, for it is called to participate in this work.

Nursery/Kindergarten/Younger Elementary Levels

I. Objectives

At the end of the session and with the consistent example shown by parents and other significant adults, the children will be able to:

1. listen to how Jesus went up to his father in heaven;
2. talk about how obedient Jesus was to his father, and
3. show simple ways of being obedient to one's parents using the example of Jesus.

II. Concept: Jesus goes up to heaven.

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (NRSV), song chart, balloons, strips of paper, markers, activity sheets

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time: Greet the children warmly as they arrive. Give them the envelopes for the special offering.
2. Opening prayer: "Dear God, here we are again in Sunday school to learn more about Jesus and his good deeds for us. We thank you for the experience of knowing you more and how to live as good children to our neighbor. Thank you too to our classmates and especially to our teacher who patiently guides us to understand so many good things. We pray in the name of Jesus our Lord. Amen."
3. Tell the children to sing some greeting songs.

B. Getting Ready

- N/K** 1. Prepare inflated balloons in different colors. Give each child an inflated balloon. Let them say something about their balloons.
2. Go out of the classroom and let the children release the balloons.
 3. Discuss what happened to the balloons and how they felt during the releasing of the balloons.

YE: 1. Prepare strips of paper and write in each strip anyone of these sentences. Let them read their sentences and tell if they agree or not.

- a. Jesus Christ is risen.
 - b. Christ is God's expression of love for us.
 - c. Jesus is supreme.
 - d. The earth belongs to God.
 - e. Knowing Christ, we can tell others about the Good News.
2. Tell the pupils to make balloon mobiles. Give each child a deflated balloon and a strip of paper. Let them inflate the balloon and tie the strip of paper at the end of the inflated balloon.
 3. Let the class release the balloons outside the classroom.
 4. Process the activity and encourage the children to say what they feel as they see the balloons go out of sight.

C. Learning Time

1. Tell the story.

Jesus Goes Up to Heaven

(Based on Acts 1:6-11)

The disciples were so happy. Jesus has risen. Jesus is the Savior. He is the Christ. Jesus' disciples ask Jesus Christ, "Is it time to restore the kingdom to Israel?"

Jesus answers, "It is only the Father who knows the time when the kingdom is restored. He alone has the power to do it."

While the disciples are thinking about what he said, he continues, "When I go back to the Father, the Holy Spirit will come. The Holy Spirit will give you power to be witnesses to others. You will tell everyone about the Good News."

Then the disciples see Jesus being lifted up to heaven to return to his Father. Then a cloud takes away Jesus from their view. Looking up, they bid Jesus goodbye. Together they say, "We will wait until Jesus comes back again."

The disciples go back happily knowing that they can tell others about Jesus Christ and his Good News.

2. Relate the story with their experience in releasing the balloons.

D. Deepening Activity/ Sharing Time

Ask the following questions:

1. Who are the characters in the story? (Jesus and his disciples)
2. Why are the disciples happy? (Jesus Christ rose from the dead.)
3. What did the disciples ask Jesus? (Is it time for Jesus to restore the kingdom of Israel?)
4. How did Jesus answer the disciples? (It is only the Father who knows the time and has the power to restore the kingdom.)
5. The word ascension means being lifted up to heaven. Can we say that Jesus ascended to heaven? (Yes) Why? (Jesus was lifted up to heaven to return to his Father.) Can we say that Jesus went up and away? (Yes)
6. How did the disciples feel after seeing Jesus ascend to heaven? (Happy) Why? (The disciples knew Jesus will come back again.)
7. What did Jesus promise the disciples? (The Holy Spirit will come and give them power to tell the Good News.)
8. What do you think the disciples did? (They told people about the Good News.) disciples do?

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Say: "Jesus was obedient to his father all his life. That is why Jesus was raised up by God from the dead. Ask: "Do you believe Jesus was obedient to his father?" Why?

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Teach the memory verse: "This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven." (Acts 1:11)
2. **N/K:** Ask: "Are you obedient to your parents?" (Yes)
3. **YE:** Give each child a checklist. Tell the children to answer each thing they can do to show simple ways of being obedient to their parents using the example of Jesus. Let them write a check inside the right box.

a. Love other children	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sometimes
b. Pray everyday	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sometimes
c. Be friendly to others	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sometimes
d. Share food with the hungry	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sometimes
e. Go to church with parents	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sometimes

G. Closing Worship

1. Offering: Use the envelopes for the special offering.
2. Tell the children to sing good-bye songs.
3. Closing prayer: Dear God, Jesus ascended to heaven to go back to you. We learned he was obedient to you and we thank him for the very good example he left to us little children. Help us now to be more obedient to our parents as we continue to honor you when we attend Sunday school. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen."

Middle and Older Elementary Levels

I. Objectives

At the end of the session, the learners are expected to:

1. describe how Jesus went up to his father victoriously;
2. discuss the character of Jesus related to his obedience to his father, and
3. list ways by which one obeys or follows one's parents, teachers, and other persons of authority.

II. Concept: Jesus goes up to heaven victoriously.

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (NRSV), song chart, song chart, two-column paper activity sheet

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time: Smile and greet the children as they come. Check the attendance.
2. Opening prayer: Dear God, here we are again in Sunday school to learn more about Jesus and his good deeds for us. We thank you for the experience of knowing you more and how to live as good children to our neighbor. Thank you too to our classmates and especially to our teacher who patiently guide us to understand so many good things. We pray in the name of Jesus our Lord. Amen.
3. Opening song: "The Hands of God" HFJ # 295

B. Getting Ready

Ask the children about their feelings regarding the following situations:

1. When they are left at home with their siblings
2. When parents go to an important event
3. When they cannot be accommodated in the first bus and need to ride in the second bus

C. Learning Time

1. Tell the class to read Acts 1:6-11 responsively.
2. Let the learners read the following sentences and assist them in explaining the meaning of the underlined words or phrases.
 - a. "Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" (That Jesus declares himself King of Israel)
 - b. "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority." (The Father alone has the authority to know the time that Israel is saved)
 - c. "you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (That the Holy Spirit will come and empower the disciples to preach, teach, and heal God's people)
 - d. "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up towards heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven." (This is the vertical perspective of people who look up to God in all circumstances in life; the anticipation of the Second Coming of Jesus)

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

Ask the questions below. Instruct the learners to read the verse that contains the answer to each question.

1. What did the disciples ask Jesus when they were together? (verse 6: They asked if it were the time Christ would restore the kingdom to Israel.) If the kingdom of Israel means the reign of God, what do the disciples expect to happen? (That Jesus

- proclaims his being the King of Israel.)
2. How did Jesus reply to the disciples' question? (verse 7: Jesus said it was not for them to know the times or periods but God would be the one to set according to his authority.) When Jesus points to the Father's authority, what is Jesus trying to tell us? (Jesus is obedient to the Father's will. The Father is the all-knowing God; all-present God, and all-powerful God.)
 3. What did Jesus say further to the disciples? (verse 8: Jesus said that the disciples would receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon them and they would be witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.)
 4. Who appeared to stand by the disciples while they were looking up to see Jesus go? (verse 10: Two men in white robes.)
 5. What did the two men tell the apostles? (verse 11: They asked the apostles why they were standing and looking up towards heaven and told them that Jesus, who has been taken up from them into heaven, would come in the same way as they went into heaven.)

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: How did Jesus show obedience to his father? (Jesus submitted himself to his Father's will.)

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Teach the memory verse: "This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven." (Acts 1:11)
2. Distribute copies of the two-column notes (see below). Tell the learners to fill up the appropriate actions to show obedience to persons listed: parents, teachers, and other persons of authority.

Persons	Ways to show obedience
1. Parents	(Study hard.)
	(Eat healthy food.)
	(Respect the elderly.)
2. Teachers	(Do your homework.)
	(Listen attentively.)
	(Participate in class discussion.)
3. Medical persons	(Take prescribed medicine on time.)
	(Eat healthy food.)
	(Have a regular check-up.)
4. Church workers	(Be just in dealing with others.)
	(Share blessings with others.)
	(Attend Sunday school regularly.)

G. Closing Worship

1. Memory verse: Galilee, why do you stand looking up towards heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.' (Acts 1:11)
2. Offering
3. Closing song: "The Hands of God" HFJ # 295
4. Closing prayer: "Dear God, we learned Jesus was obedient to You and we thank Jesus for the very good example he left to us. Help us now to be more obedient to our parents and other persons of authority as we continue to honor You when we attend Sunday school. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen."

Youth Level

I. Objectives

At the end of the session, the learners are expected to:

1. describe how Jesus is obedient to his Father as he ascended to Him and its impact on the disciples' life;
2. explain the significance of Jesus' ascension in relation to coming back to God in a glorified body, and
3. make commitments to obey persons of authority using Jesus' example of obedience to his Father.

II. **Concept:** Jesus' ascension has opened up our own destiny to share in his glory.

Materials: The Holy Bible (NRSV), hymnal, activity sheet, song chart, index cards, pens.

III. Learning Experiences

A. *Opening Worship*

1. Welcome time
2. Opening prayer: "Dear God, we thank you for the experience of knowing you more and how to live as good neighbors to others. We appreciate well being with other young people searching for life's purpose and meaning. Thank you too to our teachers who patiently guide us to understand so many good things. We pray in the name of Jesus our Lord. Amen."
3. Opening song: "The Hands of God" HFJ # 295

B. *Getting Ready*

Tell the class to share their experiences on being abandoned by loved ones and friends.

C. *Learning Time*

1. As a background, read aloud Philippians 2:5-9. After reading it, say: Jesus submitted himself to the father's will all his life, hence, God glorified him and ascended to heaven victoriously.
2. Ask the learners to read silently Isaiah 52:13 and responsibly Acts 1:6-11.
3. Add this to stress further Jesus' ascension: Jesus' ascension to heaven is the sequel of his resurrection in which his glorified body does not remain in the old creation which is subject to corruption and decay (Romans 8:19-23). One man's victory over a whole establishment of evil - the political and spiritual dominion of the evil Roman Empire - signals a cosmic event in which creation, too, will be liberated from its subjection to corruption and decay. Jesus completely submitted himself to God in humble obedience to God's will. Therefore, God glorified him.

D. *Deepening Activity/Sharing Time*

1. Group the learners into three groups. In 15 minutes or less, challenge the learners to prepare a creative presentation depicting the Ascension story of Jesus based on Acts 1:6-11. Presentation may be in the form of skit, song, news and other methods. Appreciate the learners after the presentation.

2. After the presentation, process the activity by discussing the following:
 - a. How the disciples reacted when they saw Jesus ascending into heaven
 - b. How the disciples felt abandoned as Jesus left
 - c. How the disciples made a resolution as a result of Jesus' ascension
3. Ask: How would you compare/relate what Isaiah 52:13 says to what Acts 1:6-11 tells?

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: "How can you follow Jesus in his obedience to God? What is the significance of Jesus' ascension to us?"

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Direct the class to their first activity on abandonment. Ask them to relate this abandonment to how the disciples felt, how the hope in Jesus helped them cope with it, and the resolution they can make to share this success of feeling loved and cared for with others.
2. Tell the learners to prepare commitment cards. Distribute three index cards to each learner. Instruct them to write down their statement of commitment to obey three persons of authority.

G. Closing Worship

1. Memory verse: "See, my servant will act wisely; he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted." (Isaiah 52:13)
2. Offering
3. Closing song: "The Hands of God" HFJ # 295
4. Closing prayer: "Creator God, we continue to commit ourselves to obey you like Jesus Christ who lived in obedience to your will and purpose. May we continue also to discern your will and purpose for our lives as we strive even harder to be obedient to persons of authority. But most importantly may our obedience to you bring us even closer to our family and neighbors serving them in all humility. May your name be praised and glorified through us. This is our prayer in Christ's name. Amen."

Adult Level

I. Objectives

At the end of the session, the learners are expected to:

1. explain how the OT text is fulfilled in the ascension event in the NT;
2. discuss the implications of Jesus' ascension to God's people;
3. point to the fact that in Jesus' ascension, believers can fulfill their destiny to share in God's glory, and
4. make commitments to do what is right in accordance to God's will as one awaits the fulfillment of one's destiny to share in God's glory.

II. Concept: Jesus' ascension has opened up our own destiny to share in his glory.

Materials: The Holy Bible (NRSV), hymnal, activity sheet, song chart, manila papers and pentel pens.

III. Learning Experiences

A. *Opening Worship*

1. Welcome time
2. Opening prayer: Sustainer God, we know you are here through the empowering Holy Spirit to teach us the way, the truth and the life. As we come today to learn new revelations from your word, may we be in tune with your liberating will and purpose for all creations. Adults as we are we have tendencies to disregard the value of humility and obedience and how they build communities and nations. We humbly pray in Christ's name. Amen.
3. Opening song: "The Hands of God" HFJ # 295

B. *Getting Ready*

Tell the class to share their experiences on how they help their children or friends from overcoming feelings of abandonment or depression.

C. *Learning Time*

1. As a background, read aloud Philippians 2:5-9. After reading it, say: Jesus submitted himself to the father's will all his life, hence, God glorified him and he ascended to heaven victoriously.
2. Ask the learners to read silently Isaiah 52:13 and responsibly Acts 1:6-11. Discuss them and encourage the class to share their insights.
3. Point out that Jesus' ascension to heaven is the sequel of his resurrection in which his glorified body does not remain in the old creation which is subject to corruption and decay (Romans 8:19-23). One man's victory over a whole establishment of evil - the political and spiritual dominion of the evil Roman Empire - signals a cosmic event in which creation, too, will be liberated from its subjection to corruption and decay. Jesus completely submitted himself to God in humble obedience to God's will. Therefore, God glorified him.

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

Ask these questions:

1. How would you relate Isaiah 52:13 to the ascension event in Acts 1:6-11?
2. Do you fully agree that Isaiah 52:13 is fulfilled in the ascension event in Acts 1:6-11? Why?
3. What is the implication of Jesus' ascension to God's people?
4. What does it mean for you when we say, "In Jesus' ascension, believers can fulfil their destiny to share in God's glory?"

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: "What practicable moves we can do to fulfil our destiny to share in God's glory?"

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

Challenge the learners to write one or two commitment to do what is right in accordance to God's will as one awaits the fulfilment of one's destiny to share in God's glory. Write on manila paper before the following heading: MY COMMITMENT TO SHARE IN GOD'S GLORY. Ask the learners to read the following sample commitment:

We are destined to share in God's glory, by doing what is right.

We commit ourselves anew to obey God like Jesus Christ who lived in obedience to God's will and purpose.

We failed to radiate God's glory in lives before, but today and the rest of our lives, we live to do what is right and be merciful and just in dealing with our neighbors and to all God's creation.

G. Closing Worship

1. Offering
2. Closing song: "The Hands of God" HFJ # 295
3. Closing prayer: "God our parent, help us to live out what we have just affirmed. Give us the courage to be firm and still in our witness of your glory. Holy Spirit our counselor and teacher, help us remember our destiny-to share in God's glory. And so in the here and now, we continue to become channels of your mercy, justice, and love. Not only that, here and now, we say "NO!" to all forces of evil that are against Your will and purpose for the whole world which you love so dearly. We pray in the precious name of Jesus our Lord and Savior. Amen."