

In this letter to the Ephesians, Paul is telling of the Glory of Jesus after his ascension. He is in heaven now, and is seated at the right hand of his father. But let us go back just a little bit in time.

The disciples have been through a tumultuous 40 days. They have witnessed the death of Jesus, the resurrection of Jesus, and on multiple occasions have been with Jesus. Now we come to the ascension of Jesus, where he leaves our world for that of his father. You would think that knowing that Jesus was leaving our physical world was not of comfort to his disciples.

But Luke 24: 50-52 tells us “Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. While he blessed them, he parted from them, and they returned to Jerusalem with great joy.”

I know that whenever I have lost someone important in my life, I have not been happy. But, I often feel the presence of those that have gone before me in my life. Often when I have least expected it, and especially when I have needed them to be there with me. Notice, I said with me, not for me. For us here on earth, the loss of a loved one comes with mixed feelings, feelings that can change over time. We might feel discomfort, sadness, and a sense of loss. But we often feel that our loved one is with us. I experience this most at times in my life when I need comfort.

I gain strength from all of those people who were important in my life, and indeed, are still important in my life. I know that my mother, though she passed away over 35 years ago, is still an important part of my life. I have asked for her guidance many times in my life. And I have asked her to travel down some of the paths in my life where I needed her to be with me.

The disciples knew where Jesus was going to be when he left them. He was to be sitting at the right hand of God, his father. This may have been of comfort to them, knowing that Jesus was going to join his father in heaven.

I struggled with an understanding of this concept, Joy, when Jesus leaves the disciples. It is not something I had felt upon the loss of someone close and dear to me. But then I remembered those times when I was overjoyed with the memories I had of someone who was no longer with me. Maybe I did not feel joy at the time of their passing, but I have felt joy. My feelings change with time.

We allow those who have gone before us to remain in our lives. We remember things they have said to us, conversations we have had. We let them be with us.

In the last words of Jesus recorded in the Gospel according to St. Matthew 28:19-20: Jesus says:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in¹⁹ the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

To the end of the Age.

Jesus is with us to the end of the age. Knowing that Jesus was always going to be with them could have also caused the disciples joy, rather than sadness. We can take comfort in that knowledge, that Jesus is with us always. With our baptism into the church, **we** become the disciples for Jesus.

Paul, the author of Ephesians, writes in Ephesians 1:20-23

“God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places,²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come.²² And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church,²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all”.

Although Jesus is gone from the physical world, he is available to everyone, everywhere and anywhere. Jesus is now present everywhere at once, to every person in creation, and to each person as though they were the only person in all of creation. There is no place without him.

I want you to take a look at the cover of your bulletin. If you don't have a bulletin, you can share with your neighbor.

Look at the cover of your bulletin, and you can see that there are angels. There are the disciples, looking up at the ascending body of Jesus.

What I want you to notice are the feet of Jesus in the clouds. Feet leave footprints, and we are to follow in Jesus' footprints. Jesus told the disciples to go out into the world and not only be disciples, but to make disciples in his name. The disciples followed in the footsteps of Jesus, just as we can follow in the footsteps of Jesus. We are all disciples in our own ways.

Sometimes the footprints of Jesus are hard to determine. It is easy to hear about and read about the teachings and doings of Jesus, but not as easy to apply in our own lives. We sometimes lose the path, and don't see the footprints we are to follow.

The roads that Jesus walked were rough, rocky, dusty roads. They were sometimes not more than a simple path. They were not as well defined as the paths we have today. They were nothing like the roads and sidewalks we have today.

So how do we see the footprints we are to follow? Can we look into our future, and not only follow the footprints, but make our own footprints? Can we not only walk in the footprints of Jesus, but can we walk with Jesus, beside him, and create a path with him?

When we follow the words of Jesus, to go out and make disciples of all nations, we are following in his footprints. When we show kindness, compassion, and respect for others we are following

in his footprints. When we are with Jesus, we are walking beside him, creating new paths with him.

Another place to look is at more recent footprints. At those of our loved ones who have passed beyond the veil of death. Today being Memorial Day, it is a fitting time to do so—

We remember those who have set examples for us, those whose footsteps we follow. We can all think of those who left remarkable footprints for us to follow. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Sister Theresa are two such people for me.

You can all name people in your lives whose footprints you have followed.

Perhaps your own mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and Friends.

And what about those who are no longer with us, but have been a part of this church? I urge you, after the service concludes, to go outside, and walk through the memorial garden. You can honor those from this church who have gone before us.

Those whose footprints are a part of this church. We honor those who have gone before us, just as we honor Jesus who has gone before us.

Those who have gone before us are not the only ones that leave footprints. Those we greet with the passing of the peace each Sunday leave footprints. We can see the footprints of Jesus guiding them and us. We don't come to worship to gaze up at the sky—we come to be with our brothers and sisters in our community.

With all of the others gathered who follow the footsteps of Jesus. And those who make paths into their futures, looking ahead and making plans.

Paul echoes Isaiah in Romans 10:15—"How beautiful are the feet of those who bring Good news!" In short—our feet can look like Jesus' feet. Our feet can become his feet. We need to keep the tracks fresh so that others may follow! We need to share the Good News!

Bring forth the Good News—this is what Jesus proclaims before he ascends to heaven. The Disciples were those who followed Jesus. But they were with him 2000 years ago. We are with him now, and we are all disciples. We can all bring forth the Good News!

What Paul tells the Ephesians can have meaning for us today, as though it was written more recently than 2000 years ago:

By His ascension, the church becomes the new eternal body of Jesus. The old body is dying in dust and is passing away, while the new body is experiencing its birth.

By his Ascension Jesus is made Head over all Spiritual Powers and Authorities – this is the truth that is emphasized in Ephesians. We are all disciples of Jesus.

I want to read you a prayer from St. Teresa of Avila, who was born in 1515, and died in 1582:

Christ has no body now on earth but yours,

No hands but yours

No feet but yours

Yours are the eyes through which Christ's compassion

Is to look out to the earth,

Yours are the feet by which He is to go about doing good

And yours are the hands by which He is to bless us now.

We are all disciples of Jesus, baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. We can all follow in the footsteps before us.

We can follow the footsteps into our future, our future with each other, the church, and with Jesus.

Our footsteps become the path for someone to follow.

We make our own paths with our own feet.