

Observing Ascension
May 28, 2017

Text: Acts 1:1-11
Theme: "Our Time"

It's that time of the year, time to get started. What do you mean? It's summer, Memorial Day weekend. It's time to slow down. And that is true. This is the time of the year where the pace may slacken a little. But this is also the time of years when graduates are ready to move on, maybe to more training or education, or maybe to that first job. This is what such a person has been preparing for, been equipped with the tools for success.

"Let's do this. It's your time." "It's our time," if you are that group. It is time to put into practice what you have been learning under the guidance of the masters. And truly is, time to be into practice what has been learned from the Master. Today we observe Ascension Day. Jesus' followers have been at His feet learning for three years, on the job training experience like no one else had ever had. As He is going up into the sky He has left them with the plan and the tools to get the job done. Well, almost, they are to wait for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and that wait won't be long.

It was time to be about the work and it still is. It's our time, time to put our hands to the building of the kingdom. "Well, I don't know about this. There are a lot of other things out there calling my name." No, it is not easy. There are plenty of obstacles, lots of distracting attractions and there is no guarantee of looked for results. But it's still time, our time.

Today is the day to build. We have everything we need. Think in terms of building a house. You need plans. Here, I have a set. You need materials. I have a few here, see

some nice cedar planks. I have some nails, so we are ready to go. Just think of these as representative all that is actually needed—sheetrock, framing materials, trim work, electrical, plumbing, mechanical systems, the whole nine yards. Plans, materials, and of course you need tools. Here I have saw, a hammer, a tape measure, combination square, and a paint brush. Yes, I realize I have no power tools here like circular saw or miter saw, or nail gun, but you can think of all those when you look at these.

Also we need workers, and not just one trade, all that it takes to complete the task. We will need plumbers, carpenters, sheetrock hangers and finishers, painters, electricians, HVAC folks, and just plain ol' laborers. And maybe we need one more thing—authorization, a building permit. Here, I have a simple one, “Building Permit,” “You Got It! Go for It” All is in place. It's time to build.

Our time, our time to build the church. All the preliminary work has been done. God has been revealing and working his plan down through the ages. He called a people for Himself to be a nation of priests from all the nations. As they walked in His ways there would be an outstanding, actually, a standing out people. They were to be a magnet attracting by their righteousness. This people often failed miserably, but God continued to work His plan to save through them. He revealed that He Himself would come to bring salvation and He did.

Immanuel arrived right on time, Jesus, the Lord is Salvation. He completed the work for which He came. His personal work has been completed. He lived the perfect life of no sin and then He offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice for all sins. He suffered, was crucified and was buried. But He rose again on the third day. He showed Himself alive by many proofs making appearances to His apostles (and others) over 40 days.

He is the Master builder. He has laid out His plans. He taught many, many multitudes but He taught a smaller group, 12, much more intimately. Blessed were the eyes that saw what they saw and ears that heard what they heard. They were eye witnesses from His baptism by John to the day of His ascension. They, the eleven remaining ones, are standing there looking up, staring, at the end of those 40 days following the resurrection. They will be the foundational builders.

The needed material for building is available. That material is people. They are fit together to be a temple for God. There are many more out there available for the expansion. They are found in all nations, in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth. They are the lost, those dead in their transgressions and sins. God desires for them too to be living stones built on the Corner Stone. Their present lives may be quite full, yet they are very empty. All is vanity, vanity of vanity under the sun for those who do not know the Son.

The needed tools for building are at hand—God’s written Word of the Scriptures and God’s visible Word of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Jesus says it’s time to use the tools, “teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you (Matthew 28:20),” “repentance and forgiveness of sins to be proclaimed in His name (Luke 24:47).” “Make disciples by baptizing and teaching...” (Matthew 28:20) Jesus tells His disciples not to depart from Jerusalem but wait and after not many days they will be baptized by the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:3). And on the day that happens, one so baptized proclaims, “Repent and be baptized, everyone one of you in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins and **you** will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:38) And of His Supper Jesus says, “do this in remembrance of me,” and as we do so we proclaim the Lord’s death until He

comes. The Lord's Supper is not for new construction but for building the strength of those already built on the foundation.

Yes, there are workers, all are needed to do the work, not all the same work but working for the same Master. There is quite a variety of workers with different gifts for doing the work. No one worker does it all. The workers have been authorized. "Go make disciples. (Matthew 28:20)" "You are my witnesses. (Acts 1:3)" "Declare the praises of the One who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." (1 Peter 2:9) Why are you standing there staring into the sky? "You've got it (authorization). "Go for it!"

Yes, our time, this kingdom building the work of those who know the king.

"Our time, no, maybe it's your time." Is this not why we have you, Pastor, to get the message out and to get onto those folks over there who aren't doing their fair share! You, you over there, he's talking to you. You need to let go of some of that money that I'm pretty sure you have. It's pretty evident to me that you have the flexibility of schedule to be after it. So why are you staring at me? It's your time!

We may be afflicted with some of the same issues as the friends of the Little Red Hen. You remember the story. She asks help from her friends and they look at her and say, "your time, dear." She asks for help in planting the wheat, hoeing the wheat, harvesting the wheat, taking the grain to be milled, and help in making the bread. The answer she get's is no. When it comes time for the eating they are ready, "Yes, our time." And her reply is, "I don't think so!"

"Our time, yes, our time to be fed." It's easy to fall into this consumer, even freeloader mentality. We can be tempted to be faith consumers only. Tell me how much God loves me. Tell me how He will help me through this difficult time, but give of what

He has given me; walk by the light of His Word in all my life—no, back to your time, not mine.

But we could also envision a different response from the hen's friends (which would be a different story). Could we imagine the response of, "what if I plant and it doesn't come up?" "What if I hoe out a few stalks?" "What if I crush some of the kernels in harvesting?" "What if I spill the flour or mess up the bread?" "Maybe it's my time, but I'm afraid to fail." Do we know that feeling?

It's our time. It flows according to God's time. Jesus has completed His in the flesh work here below. He has finished the work we could never do, that of our redemption. All our work apart from Christ only makes filthy garments filthier and raggedy garments yet more raggedy. When it comes to righteousness and forgiveness we are total consumers. We have the need and nothing to offer. And God gives it all to us free. He gives us the waters and bread of life without cost. He washes our sins away and clothes us in the splendid garments of Christ, baptized into Him we are clothed with Him. We are given the faith to receive all this wonder through the Holy Spirit.

This is all ours through the completed work of Christ. Now He is at the right hand of God. Paul writes, "And He [Father] has put all things under His feet and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all." (Ephesians 1:22, 23) Jesus can say, "I've got this. I've got you. I'm working all for your good, and your good is not just for you it is so you can do my good for others."

We, brothers and sisters in Christ, are the only body Christ has for doing His work in this world. We don't all do the same task. We are not all pastors. And we are not all hands, or feet, or eyes, or ears, or teachers, or exhorters, or leaders. Jesus works through

us as He has given us gifts to pray, support, serve, give answer, call to account, and speak the word of the Gospel in our various stations in life. As we do so the church is built.

Think of the Red Hen's friends again. They could have put their hands (paws) to planting, weeding, harvesting, grinding, or baking and they could have experienced some failures in doing so. But if there is no work, there is no harvest and no bread.

Jesus has ascended. He is at God's right hand. He has given us the plan, the tools, and the material for us to work with as builders, and He has authorized us to be about it. It's our time. We do the work. The results are in His hands. For His sake. Amen