**May 21, 2023 SPIRIT OF WITNESS**

This Sunday we will be meditating on the story of the ascension, there are a few things, which I think are important to know in this Story. The first reading for this Sunday is from Acts 1: 6-14, in verse 8 we read “You will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” This verse is one of my favorite verses in the Bible. Jesus advises his disciples what they got to do at the time of the arrival and receiving of the Holy Spirit. Jesus wants his disciples to be witness at their home, in their community, in their country and to the entire world. Jesus advises not only disciples but also all of us to be witness at our home, community, nation and all over the world when we receive the Holy Spirit.

We need to stop staring at the sky for Jesus to return! We need to stop making the things of this world the center of our lives and attention. We need to stop thinking about the decorations of heaven and start thinking about heaven. As children of God, we have joy in this world that the people of the world cannot fathom. By Jesus dying on Cross, we are released from the bondage to sin. We are released from the guilt of sin. We are released from the wages of sin and the wage of sin is spiritual, eternal death.

When Jesus ascended and disappeared, the disciples Knew they were still linked to Him. At the very moment the disciples felt they needed Jesus he disappeared into the clouds. But they knew they were still connected to God. They knew that Jesus may have gone away physically, but he was still with them. This sense of God's presence with them gave them a great feeling of confidence and boldness. The disciples didn't really know what the future held, but they were convinced that they still had a relationship with the one who held the future.

Well, Jesus may have disappeared into the clouds, but we can still feel him connecting on the strings to our lives. We may not be able to see him, but we are still linked to him. God is present with us. God is in our lives. God is still connected to us through his love for us in Jesus Christ.

When Jesus ascended and disappeared, the Disciples were bound together in faith. I think it is important to notice that not only did the disciples feel a link to Jesus after the ascension, but they also felt a bond of faith with one another. During the three years they had traveled together as the disciples of Jesus. They were bound together in faith because of their love and commitment to be the witnesses of Jesus Christ throughout the world.

The greatness of this church is that we are bound together in faith with men and women who dared to take the risk and become involved in the mission of helping the poor, frightened and run-away slaves escape to freedom. Isn't that what a church ought to be doing? We ought to be bound together in the faith and mission of Jesus Christ in this world.

When Jesus ascended and disappeared, the disciples were in a spirit of anticipation. Luke tells us that two men in white garments said to the disciples, "Men of Galilee, why are you standing there looking up at the sky? This Jesus who was taken from you into heaven will come back in the same way." After the ascension, the disciples could look at the future in a different way. Instead of fear and doubt controlling their lives, they could look at the future with the anticipation of his coming again. They knew Jesus was coming back. They knew Jesus had not forsaken them. They knew they were not alone.

The Holy Spirit is necessary in our Christian walk. He is the power source that drives us in our daily walk. It’s also the Holy Spirit that convicts us of our sins, and it is Him that draws unbelievers to Christ. If you would like to know more about the how the Spirit of Witness works, please join us in our Sunday worship at 11:00 AM.

Peace!

Rev. Dr. Christopher Ponnuraj

Minister

West Center Congregational Church.