

Ascension of Our Lord, Gospel Year B

A Shut and Open Case

Luke 24:44-53

Ascension of Our Lord

Analysis by Glenn L. Monson

44 Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled." 45 Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, 46 and he said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, 47 and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things. 49 And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

50 Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. 51 While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. 52 And they worshiped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; 53 and they were continually in the temple blessing God.

DIAGNOSIS: Shut Tight



Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem): Doubt and Disbelief

The women at the tomb have given their report, Peter has witnessed the empty tomb, Cleopas and his companion have reported their encounter with the Risen Christ, and now Jesus, himself, has appeared to them. Yet they (and we) “are startled and terrified, and thought that they [we] were seeing a ghost.” Doubt is a powerful force. Fear is even more powerful. We exhibit both with regularity.

Step 2: Advance Diagnosis (Internal Problem) Closed Minds

Everything written about Christ in the law, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled? we ask skeptically. Certainly, we have some freedom to decide for ourselves what’s true and what’s

not. A closed mind? Me? No way. I am open to any reasonable explanation about God's ways in the world. Certainly, God's ways are our ways. Aren't they?

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem): Closed Hearts

Sure, I have read the Scriptures and heard the reports about the Risen Christ, but I am not an eyewitness to these things. Wait to be "clothed with power from on high"? That's not for me. I prefer to believe in what I have seen, and I definitely prefer to depend on my own power to find my way in this world. Thanks for the offer, God, but I'll take it from here, if you don't mind. What's that you say? I might find the going a little tough apart from you? Relax. I've got this. Or not.

PROGNOSIS:

Opened

Wide



Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution): Christ's Heart

Everything about Christ in the law, the prophets, and the psalms is fulfilled on the Cross. He does suffer. He does die. He is raised on the third day. God's ways, it turns out, are not our ways, and we are saved. Our doubts and fears, our closed minds and hearts, are no match for the Risen Christ. He comes right through the walls we create and blesses us with peace and wisdom. Even our hubris is no match for Christ's Spirit.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution): Christ's Gifts

Much to our surprise, we are witnesses of the Risen Christ. We can't always explain it, but the peace he gives us, and the food he feeds us with, gives us life. He is the Word of Life, the Word made Flesh. We find that our joy cannot be contained.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution): Christ's Spirit

Look at us now! We are continually praising God. We have

received “the power from on high.” Now we know what it means to be a witness. The Ghost we are seeing now is none other than the Paraclete of God.