

Look at that little congregation, that little group departing from the place where Jesus ascended. Do you see them traveling on the road to the holy city? Do you see them on the way to Jerusalem’s holy place?

You might expect to see the body language of sad people, for Jesus was "parted from them and was taken up into heaven." But no, look at their faces as they go. The disciples journey with great joy, or as the original text says, "mega-joy." How is that possible?

Well, they had been properly taught by Jesus. After His resurrection, He gave them a crash course in who He was and what He had done, and Luke makes sure to tell us they *understood* all these things He had told them. As it says in Acts, "to them [Jesus] presented Himself alive after His Passion by many proofs, appearing to them during the forty days, and speaking of the Kingdom of God." (1:3)

So, they would be filled with Mega Joy as they returned to Jerusalem because: Jesus taught them the truth concerning who He is...that Bethlehem's Baby is the I AM of the Burning Bush ... that Galilee's prophet is the Exodus Rock...that Calvary's Crucified is creation's Creator...that David's Son is David's Lord...that this Risen Rabbi is Israel's Messiah..."that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (John 20:31). He is the Word made flesh and telling them the truth.

"Then He said to them, ‘These are My Words which I spoke to you, while I was still with you, that everything written about Me in the Law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled'" (Luke 24:44).

The disciples were filled with Mega Joy because Jesus had explained His Mission to them. From Verse 26: "'Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into His glory?' And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead'." (Luke 24:26-27)

There was Mega Joy in this action, that, "lifting up His hands, He blessed them." While the Scriptures do not record the specific words of His blessing, we do know what His hands looked like. On the eighth day, Jesus had said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see My hands." (John 20:27) The hands of Jesus bore the prints of the nails, a visual preaching of the Gospel.

And, there was Mega Joy for this little church because of an amazing promise. The Ascending Jesus gave His Word, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). While Jesus "blessed them, He parted from them and was carried up into heaven." In a way only He can explain, Jesus is both ascended and truly present with His own. He is both ruling from heaven’s throne, and actively working through His Church in this world. And that leads to still more Mega Joy.

The disciples had learned they were involved with Jesus' activity. "...Repentance to the forgiveness of sins should be preached in His Name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem." They would be the ones to do the preaching. The mission of Jesus was now their mission as well. They now knew exactly what their purpose was.

So, now, here we are. Look around and see: the members of the Ascended Christ's congregation have gathered again, today, right here. Do we gather in Mega Joy?

That depends, doesn't it? Do we come believing and confessing that Jesus is "true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary"? When we gather, do you hear of the life's work of Jesus—His atonement for all sinfulness of all people and all sins of each person, and His victorious risen life? Is the message you hear one of "repentance leading to the forgiveness of sins"? Do we make confession of our sins and experience the forgiveness of all our sins at His Table? Are you shown the nail prints in the hands of Jesus and hear the LORD's Word of blessing? If by God's grace the answer is yes, then there is Mega Joy to be found, because our deepest problem has been addressed by Jesus. Your sins are forgiven and the perfect righteousness of Jesus has been credited to you.

And that's not all. Jesus' promise to His Church remains true. Though risen and ascended, He is nevertheless with us in His Word, with us at His Table, with us in each other, actively working through us to extend His Kingdom. Repentance to the forgiveness of sins still needs to be preached in Jesus Name to all nations, beginning right here. We are the ones to do it. The mission of Jesus now our mission. If you're looking for meaning and purpose in life, here it is. And there is something about knowing that Jesus is alive in you, actively serving people with your hands and your heart and your voice that gives a great joy, unmatched by anything the world has to offer.

Look at that little congregation, in the wake of Jesus' ascension. Look at this congregation. We know Jesus—we know why He came—we know His blessing, His presence, and His purpose. In the face of many intimidating, seemingly impossible challenges, Jesus goes with us. And so we go in Mega Joy.