

**I was trying so hard to find it... but I was looking in the wrong place....**

**I was feverishly going through a dresser drawer of mine...rifling through miscellaneous papers, handout, pamphlets, letters...and who knows what else.....trying to find my passport....which I really needed to find for Ole and I's upcoming interview with USCIS....for his green card application....It was something really important...and I could not find it...**

**Now, it is true....I have not always been the most organized person in the world....I like things neat....for the most part...but neatness....does not always...equal organized....just because things look tidy....does not always mean....that there is easy access to important documents... and it doesn't always mean that I know exactly where to look....**

**Then...as so often happens...I just looked in the drawer right next to the one I had begun to frustratingly empty....and of course...I moved a few papers out of the way....and there it was...my passport...in the protective zip-lock bag I had placed it in....**

**It's just...when I first started searching for what I was looking for...I was looking in the wrong place....and that made it hard to find....**

**It is the 40th day after Jesus has risen from the dead...and after much eating on the beach, forgiving of sins, offering peace, breathing on his disciples and giving them the Holy Spirit, walking through locked doors... interpreting the scriptures, meeting strangers along the road, and all in all showing himself as alive with many convincing proofs...he testifies to what will come for us too... in 10 days....when the Holy Spirit that he has breathed on the disciples in an upper room where the doors had been shut...will be set loose beyond any bricks or boundaries or borders....and will be poured out on all flesh.... how you and I will be witnesses to these things....And, with that....he was lifted up and a cloud takes him out of their sight....**

**The disciples do what any of us would do...they start looking for where Jesus had went....and instinctively look up...into Heaven...staring at where it seemed Jesus had been taken.... Away from them....and now somewhere else....As they are looking toward the skies...two men in white robes...appear...and just as two men in white robes appeared 40 days ago....at the tomb that was now empty....telling the women who had come to attend to his body....that if they were trying to find Jesus...they were looking in the wrong place.... For he had gone ahead of them....**

**These same messengers...in white robes show up again...and tell those sky gazing disciples the same thing...they told the women who came to the empty tomb....that if they are trying to find Jesus...they were looking in the wrong place.... For he had gone ahead of them....**

**And, yet, who can blame them for looking up into Heaven....it seems on the surface that is where he has gone....I think that is where we all instinctively look today....after all...the Psalm puts it this way:"God has gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet...." Paul writes....in Ephesians: "God put this power to work in Christ when God raised him from the dead and seated him at God's right hand in the heavenly places...."**

**And Luke in his gospel: "While Jesus was blessing them, Jesus withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven...."**

**It just makes sense....if we were trying to find Jesus post ascension.....we would lift our eyes up...to the heavens....because Jesus...has been lifted.. "Up there..."**

**But, still..I hear those messengers in white robes...imagining that if they had come to visit us....they would tell us the same thing they told the women at the tomb...and the same thing they told the disciples....looking up at the sky....**

**If we are trying to find Jesus...and we are simply looking up...we are looking in the wrong place.... For he has gone ahead of us...**

**Where would those messengers...point...if it's not just...only...up?**

**In the Nicene Creed, which we will confess together in a few minutes...we say...."He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father...." Geographically and theologically...we are still trained to think up for that....and yet, it was Martin Luther who said, "The right hand of God...is everywhere...." If we just look up...to find the presence and body of the ascended Jesus....we are looking in the wrong place....**

**Jesus has ascended...but the ascension is not his escape from the world or his final exit....his ascension...which we celebrate tonight as one of the principle feast days of the church...is about his promise...to be with us always as we heard in the gospel acclamation tonight...even to the end of the age...his promise to never leave us...his promise to embrace this world...our time and our space and making it holy...his promise to abide with us...ascension is about the God who has come to make God's home with you and I....forever....and about making that promise known to the ends of the earth.....We are witnesses to these things....**

**If we just look up...we are looking in the wrong place....**

**Theologian Willie James Jennings...puts it this way, "If the ascended Lord embraces our time as his time to be made known, then he also seeks to walk in the places of this world to announce his life as the life given for the world.....Jesus' ascension is in fact God claiming our spaces as the sites for visitation...announcing God's desire to come to us..."**

**If we just look up...to find the presence and body of the ascended Jesus....we are looking in the wrong place.... For he has gone ahead of us...**

**And...yes, however we find ourselves...wherever our journey is taking us....or the Spirit is leading us..... Whatever road we are walking tonight.....no matter its twists and turns....or bumps or barriers...the risen and ascended Jesus....has gone on ahead...and meets you here...**

**In his ascension the risen Jesus has now come closer than we could have ever imagined....and he is with us....in all times and all places.... And gives himself to us again and again.....as pure gift and as our salvation....**

**Those messengers in white robes....if they came to visit us tonight....would point us towards the places where Jesus now promises to take up residence.....because if we just look up....we are looking in the wrong place....**

**Paul says tonight...the church...is Jesus's own body...and Jesus's own presence fills it....all in all...those messengers...would point to you....and to your neighbor....the ascended Christ lives in you....Christ in you is the hope of the glory...the life you live now you live in Jesus Christ....you have been clothed with Christ...covered with the garments of salvation....this is what albs...represent....that in our baptism....our bodies are each a temple....where Christ's presence resides...and we get to witness to that presence... pointing to the presence of Christ in each other...and for each other....when we can't quite see it...because sin and death have blurred our vision...**

**I saw the presence of Christ in our Stephen Ministry leaders as they lifted up the need...and helped plan the service of lament we had last week... inviting members of our community who had lost loved ones this past year...or were going through a particularly hard time...to this time of lament, prayer, and healing...Those messengers would point to them....the ascended Christ was present....to all of us.....through them... and I bet you could point to others in your life who have shown you...in a time when you could not see on your own....that**

**Christ was there....and comes close to you.....and holds you in his hands.... And never lets you go....**

**You might notice when I am presiding....and offer a greeting like “the Lord be with you...” I bow...when you say...”and also with you....” the reason I bow is because...I bow...wherever the presence of the risen and ascended Christ resides....and you...the assembly gathered....are the holiest...element- physical thing in the liturgy....because Christ lives in you... you are the presence of Christ for each other and the world.....Those messengers would point to you...**

**You might notice that I also bow...at the reading of the gospel....and that’s because the risen and ascended one...has promised to come among us...and speak through the word....which is his own voice...that speaks to us the very words that re-orient us....the word that breathes into our weary souls..proclaims forgiveness....and raises us from our deaths..over and over again...those messengers would point to the word.....**

**You might notice that I bow...towards the bread and wine of communion....and that’s because the risen and ascended one...has promised to give his own body and blood as food and drink....at this table...in this time and in this place.....**

**When we take our place at his feast table tonight..Jesus is here as host, guest, and meal...and we hold him in our hands just as he holds us....those messengers would point here....**

**And...we all should bow when we encounter the outcast and strangers in our midst..... Those who are hungry, in prison, those in need of clothing, and those thirsting for water....because there...in the places that we would sometimes wish to turn away....the risen and ascended Lord...has promised to be present....too...and wherever those outcasts and strangers would take up residence....those messengers would be pointing there....**

**If we just look up...to find the presence and body of the ascended Jesus....we are looking in the wrong place.... For he has gone ahead of us...to meet us here...**

**I was looking in the wrong place....and so that inspired Ole to get me a filing cabinet for my birthday...so I knew...where to look....and it was an amazing gift....**

**And...that's the gift of this day...and the gift of those messengers...inspired by the spirit who point us in the direction of Jesus....and the gift that you and I get to give to each other: See, you and I get to be those messengers for each other too..showing each other where to look when it becomes too hard to see.....because Jesus is here.....sometimes we just need to know where to look.....**