

## Devotion Week of May 22, 2022 – Sixth Week of Eastertide, 2022

Rev. Jeanne Simpson

Jim asked me how many times in the gospels Jesus appeared before his Ascension, 40 days after his death. He heard my sermon Sunday about some of them, but then he got curious. So this week, here's a little theology lesson below for you to think about. Here goes:

**Mark:** none. Mark really ends at 16:8, with the angel at the tomb telling the women that Jesus is not there and they need to go tell the disciples that he has gone before them to Galilee, where they will see him. And it says the women are terrified and they don't say anything to anybody, because they are afraid. A later addition to Chapter 16 recites post-resurrection appearances: to Mary Magdalene, to the 2 disciples walking to Emmaus, and to the 11 apostles while they are eating – a mixture of Luke and John stories.

**Matthew:** The same story of the angel at the tomb that Jesus is not there and they need to go tell the disciples that he has gone before them to Galilee, where they will see him. But while the women are returning to tell the disciples (instead of not telling anybody), they meet Jesus on the road. He reiterates that they are to tell the disciples to go to Galilee where they will see him. Then later the 11 disciples go to the mountain in Galilee where Jesus had directed them and saw him. Jesus gives them the commandment to go and make disciples of all nations.

**Luke:** The women see 2 angels at the tomb, who tell them Jesus is risen. Then two followers on the road to Emmaus walk with Jesus and recognize him when he breaks bread with them. The two run back to Jerusalem and tell the other disciples, who inform them Simon has also seen Jesus that day, and in the middle of the discussion, Jesus appears among them and asks for something to eat. Then Jesus leads them a little way out of town, to Bethany, blesses them, and ascends to heaven. This is the ONLY account of ascension in the gospels, but it is repeated at the beginning of Acts (really part II of the gospel of Luke).

**John:** Mary Magdalene goes to the tomb by herself and finds the tomb empty, runs back to tell Peter, and they return. Peter leaves but Mary, weeping, encounters two angels and then Jesus, who she doesn't recognize until he calls her name. That evening Jesus appears before the other disciples and breathes the Holy Spirit on them. Thomas is not there, so 8 days later, Jesus appears again. Later he appears to the disciples by the Sea of Galilee. They are fishing and haven't caught anything, so he tells them to throw the nets on the other side of the boat. They catch fish and have breakfast together. Jesus asks Peter 3 times if he loves him, and tells him to feed his sheep.

So the accounts are all slightly different, which merely tells us what was important to the author of the gospel, or perhaps what the author knew and didn't know. Luke carries on the story with the book of Acts, where the believers receive the Holy Spirit and the church begins. And thanks be to God for Pentecost, so that we can all belong to the church of Christ!

*Jeanne*