

The Last Thing He Did Was Bless

Luke 24:51

Sunday, May 21, 2023 The Seventh Sunday of Easter at The First Congregational Church of Marshalltown, Iowa

- Introduction: after graduation, a new chapter for a person

Across the country people will be graduating from high school or college or something similar and it is almost always the end of a chapter and the start of a new chapter in a person's life. For high schoolers, it is the end of taxpayer sponsored education and often means that they will soon leave home, either for more schooling or a career. Garrison Keillor, the fellow who created the "Prairie Home Companion" radio show, once told a story of an awkward teen soon to leave for college. The whole family is making the trip, including uncles and aunts. The soon to be college student seems cavalier about it all, but late in the evening before the trip he wakes up, quietly slips out of the house, and stands in the middle of the quiet street and stares at the neighborhood for nearly an hour. Most of his time is spent staring at his own house, attempting to memorize every detail and every feature. He knows that everything will change. A chapter in his life has ended and a new one is about to begin. He knows that he will not be living there anymore, and he wants to remember as much as he can. Finishing high school or college is one of those changes but there are others. Marriage, parenthood, change of location or career, retirement. There is lots of advice about changing a new chapter in your life. One writer made this list:

1. Have an Open Mind. Your life is filled with experiences, each one bringing with it a range of emotions and lessons learned. ...
2. Exercise Courage. ...
3. Take One Step at a Time. ...
4. Be Guided by Past Experiences. ...
5. Be Honest with Yourself.

- Set the stage.

The Christian church, many centuries ago went through something similar that is commemorated this past Thursday as the "Day of Ascension," where Jesus after residing with the apostles for many days following His Resurrection, led a group, possibly as many as 500 if I read 1 Corinthians 15 (verse 16) correctly, to the top of the Mount of Olives. There He reminds them of essentials; that all that happened was in the Old Testament, that Christ needed to die and rise again and repentance of remission of sins is to be preached to all nations, that the Holy Spirit will empower them, and that He will return and when He does, He will touch down on the top of the Mount of Olives, just where He left. The site is significant. The triumphal entry into Jerusalem commemorated on Palm Sunday started at the Mount of Olives (Matthew 21:1), His prophetic discourse was on the Mount of Olives (Matthew 24:3), His ascension to Heaven was from the Mount of Olives, and Zechariah 14:4 tells us that He will return to the Mount of Olives, and when His foot touches the ground the site will cleave in two and form a great valley. Everything for the Church of Jesus the Christ will be different from this point on. It is the end of a chapter and a new one is about to begin. There is so much to consider here, but for today, please note this detail, the last thing Jesus did before He left was to bless the people.

- **Main Point:** The last thing He did was bless.

the blessing continued into priesthood Hebrews 4:14-16

The last thing Jesus did was bless. Actually, the language implies that He was in the process of blessing His followers as He was taken up into heaven. It's fitting because much of what He does in heaven follows that blessing, for He continues to pray for the people. Hebrews 4:14-16 reveals to us what He has been doing. It says:

"Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." In His ongoing intercession for us, He continues to bless constantly, and it is as the Great High Priest that we can approach Him boldly for grace. John 14 tells us that He went to prepare a place for us, and this passage tells us that He ascended to be always the great High Priest and our access to God in prayer. A chapter has ended and a new one began on that day.

- **Application:** Be a Blessing

The application is to know that Jesus ascended, closing a chapter in history, and starting a new one; that He is the great High Priest who always prays for us. To understand the importance of that, ask yourself, "How does it feel to know that people are praying for you?" I found this entry in a blog, written by a young mother who suffered from depression: "There's a lot of talk about what good are prayers right now. I wanted to share a quick experience I had dealing with postpartum depression. After I had my second baby my first baby was only 18 months old, I was in a dark place. I remember feeling kind of desperate but afraid to reach out for help. I ended up posting on a mom message board asking for prayers. Many people replied saying that they would pray for me and shared their experiences with similar situations. Maybe I just felt better getting it out there, or maybe it was knowing there's people out there that knew and cared. But I felt a new strength throughout that week. I really truly felt like I could feel their prayers buoying me up. I've had a few other experiences like when my brother passed away, then I just knew I was receiving help beyond my own."** There is comfort knowing that people are praying for you. In this chapter of the life of the church, we have the great comfort of a High Priest, who always prays for us.

- **Conclusion**

In conclusion, there are chapters in people's lives where life changes and the old ways, the old routines move to the past and make way for new opportunities, new life situations. The new chapters can be very exciting, and the old chapters can be mourned. Graduation is one of the most potent of those chapters. There are chapters in the life of the church as well, and historically, one of the greatest new chapters was when Jesus left His followers and ascended to heaven. He was no longer with them. That chapter was over. They were now left to wait in Jerusalem for the new chapter, and the power that came with it, to begin.

*https://www.reddit.com/r/latterdaysaints/comments/7xz98t/have_you_ever_felt_different_as_a_result_of/