

Ascension 2022 - Year C
Acts 1.1-11//Heb.9.24-28;10.19-23//Luke 24.46-53

→it sits like a gleaming little island right smack in the middle of the poorest neighborhood on the eastside of Cleveland...it is nothing really all that fancy,...just a short, square building surrounded by tall houses with broken windows and sagging porches

→yet, each brick of the Gospel Holiness Church looks as if it has just been dusted and shined and then carefully set into place.

→along the front walk...there is a tiny patch of green that defies the trash that blows down the rest of the street

→every Monday, a group of seniors from the church gather to prepare dinner for the neighborhood children and every Monday evening, nearly a hundred children come to this place where birthdays are celebrated...manners are taught...and empty stomachs leave feeling a bit less empty.

→a young woman in her mid-thirties is what the seniors call the “runner”...her task is to drop off a box or two of food each week that has been donated from the local grocery store.

--it is an easy way for a former girl scout to do a good deed while on the road to someplace else...in the midst of her busy schedule.

→some weeks there are boxes and boxes overflowing with good things...bread and potatoes and lettuce...bags of chips just past the expiration date.

→sometimes there are dented cans of fruit or ripe bananas---just beginning to turn...

→[and] **sometimes**, usually right after a holiday, there are decorated cakes and fancy pies that never made it to a Valentine's day party or a Memorial Day cook-out
→those are the days....when the ladies of the church swoop down ooohing and ahhing....laughing and smiling about all of the birthdays they can celebrate in style that week.....PAUSE.

→well.....on one such Monday...all the grocery store had to givewere dozens of hot dog buns...slightly stale and all a little squashed....

→[that week] the "runner" was a bit disappointed when she made her usual pick up for the church...so much so that she was tempted to stop and buy something else on her own...after all, it is kind of embarrassing to walk into that place where they are expecting enough food to make a meal and instead all that you can give them is nothing more than a few hotdog buns

→yet, when that box was unloaded...there was an awed silence...followed by shouts of "*Praise Jesus!*" and "*The Lord is surely good!*"

→you see that day, the ladies explained...someone had donated hot dogs, drinks, chips and cookies...and the only thing missing were the buns....

"we've been sitting here all day", they said, *"praying for hot dog buns...and look how good the Lord is."*

→quite a story...especially as most of us will probably have a hot dog with a bun this weekend as we celebrate the unofficial start of the summer season....

PAUSE

→now maybe you are like me...and never had to pray for hot dog buns....

→instead...often we pray for more significant desires.....like world peace or patience.....grace or forgiveness...those are often the subjects of acceptable prayers for most of us....selfish people sometimes pray for ponies and noble people pray for the sick to be healed...but no one I know has ever had to pray for hot dog buns

→and likewise, if you are like me, many times you also never see yourself as an agent of answered prayers...or at least if you are [on those rare occasions] the reason for an answered prayer...we tend to hope that it would be something big and dramatic.....[like] talking someone through a crisis or perhaps leading someone to a deeper of faith....but delivering stale hot dog buns as an answer to a prayer?
...PAUSE....I don't think so.....

→but you see...today.....Jesus sends us out into the world just as HE was sent...as teachers, and evangelists, and witnesses ...and yes, even as hotdog bun carriers to continue his work

→...as we hear today.....Jesus invites us to proclaim the Gospel to everyone....through our words and actions....through our willingness to be used...and through our trust that he is always with us.

→Jesus invites us to be his witnesses in Jerusalem, in Samaria, to the ends of the earth and just around the corner in our communities.

→and when Jesus ascended into heaven...he left signs that would accompany those who believe.....they would speak new languages.....they would pick up serpents with their bare hands and not be hurt.....they would lay hands on the sick and they would get well.....

→when you think about it...those are some pretty big signs....signs that would make an impression on even the biggest skeptic...

→but there are other signs as well...maybe not as big or as dramatic but every bit as powerful....signs that you and I have called to be about.....as we bring the gospel message to those in need...

→as we ourselves try to live the challenge of Christ

→and strive to become more like Christ in our every day routine lives.

PAUSE

→you see.....there is a little patch of manicured grass on the east side of Cleveland that sits on a street filled with trash....and every Monday a group of seniors pull hope out of a dented can of fruit

→[and] there is a girl former scout who discovered that she was an agent of answered prayers by simply delivering a box of hot dog buns...

→on this, the Feast of the Ascension.....when Jesus ascended into heaven...the disciples were looking intently at the sky....and suddenly....two men dressed in white garments stood beside them

→they said...."*why are you standing there looking at the sky?*"

→why indeed....

→[because you see] if we keep looking in the sky for signs of Jesus...we might just miss the signs he really wants us to see right before our very own eyes.