

May 17, 2026 Ascension Sunday – Leader’s Guide

Acts 1:1-14 “Christ is Reigning”

The disciples expected the kingdom of God to arrive in political and immediate ways, but Jesus redirected their expectations toward his reign, the coming of the Spirit, and their calling to bear witness. This week we reflected on the Ascension not simply as Jesus “going away,” but as Jesus taking his throne and reigning over heaven and earth. The church is called to become a signpost to that reign as we await his return.

Read Acts 1:1–14

1. The disciples ask Jesus, “Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6). What assumptions or expectations seem to be underneath their question? In what ways do people today still misunderstand what the kingdom of God looks like? (vv. 6–7)

Invite the group to notice the shape of the disciples’ kingdom expectations: political, nationalistic, immediate. Consider how we often want Jesus to reign through power, control, or immediate results rather than through the way of the cross.

2. Why do you think the angels tell the disciples to stop “looking into heaven” after Jesus ascends? How does this reshape the way we think about the Ascension? (vv. 9–11)

The Ascension is not mainly about where Jesus has gone spatially, but about his current rule and authority. Jesus ascends to reign. The Christian hope is not escape from the world, but the return of Christ and the renewal of all things.

3. Jesus does not encourage us to look at circumstances as the primary evidence of his reign, but at his people: “You will be my witnesses.” What do you think it means for the church to become evidence of Christ’s reign? (v. 8)

The early church became a signpost to Jesus’ kingdom through mercy, generosity, care for the poor, valuing human life, and sacrificial love. Their witness was not merely verbal argument, but communities shaped differently under the reign of Jesus.

4. Which example from the early church in the sermon stood out most to you, and why? What might it look like for Christians today to recover that kind of witness?

You may want to revisit some of the examples mentioned: caring for the poor, rescuing abandoned children, honouring women, mercy toward the vulnerable, or sacrificial generosity. Invite the group to reflect on what kinds of “signposts” our culture most needs today.

5. In the sermon we were asked two questions. What does the reign of Jesus look like in the ordinary fabric of life? Where in my life am I functioning as though something other than Jesus is reigning? What comes to the surface for you in those questions?

Possible areas include looking at our work, relationships, spending and investing, neighbourhood and city - what does the reign of Jesus look like here?

In some areas of our lives fear, greed, resentment, self reign - How could I surrender this area to the reign of Jesus.

Encourage honesty and reflection without rushing to easy answers.

6. Jesus says, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses.” Why is it important that witness is presented here as a promise and not a command? (v. 8)

Witness flows from the empowering presence of the Spirit of Jesus rather than anxiety, guilt, or pressure - which is often how the invitation to witness is presented. This invites us to a deepening trust and reliance upon the Spirit alone in our lives as Jesus followers.

7. Near the end of the sermon we heard a prayer: “Come Holy Spirit — give us more of Jesus - bring your truth home to our hearts in power” What do you think it looks like for a church to be rooted in both truth and power — both Word and Spirit?

Acts begins with Jesus teaching about the kingdom and promising the power of the Spirit. Healthy Christian witness needs both deep grounding in truth and dependence on the Spirit’s transforming power. Consider where you personally or the church as a whole may tend to lean too heavily one direction or the other. Our hope at little t is the we would be a church both of word and Spirit power and gifting.

Close by praying together for the filling and empowering of the Holy Spirit — that our community would become a visible signpost to the reign of Jesus in the ordinary fabric of life.