

**MAY 17, 2026**

## **WHERE DID HE GO?**

*By Pr. Beate Chun*

### **A Child, a Bar of Soap, and a Disappearing Mystery**

Grace to you and peace  
from the one who is  
and the one who was  
and the one who is to come.

Our little grandson - he is 4 years old - loves soap.  
Specifically, he loves small bars of hand soap.  
It all started last summer  
when we were trying to get him  
to wash his hands and brush his teeth.  
He stays with us every other weekend,  
and washing hands and brushing teeth  
are rituals that come up during those visits.

He didn't like to wash his hands,  
so I said, How about you pick your own soap?  
I offered three choices  
of little hotel soap bars.  
He loved all three,  
and he spent a long time  
washing his hands with each little bar.

This is how it began.  
Now he has a growing collection  
of little soap bars,  
in all colors and shapes.

For a long time  
one of his favorite was  
a small green bar in the shape of a leaf.  
One night he took a bath  
and played with the green leaf soap  
for a long time.  
He loved how slippery it was  
and how it would slide from his  
hands and he would have  
to fish for it in the tub.

Then he cried out:  
Look, Oma, look!  
It is getting smaller and smaller!  
Of course it is,  
it has been in the water for a long time,  
it is dissolving.

Look Oma,  
look, it is getting so small!

Oma! It's gone!  
But where has it gone?  
Where is it now?

## **The Disciples Look Up: The Shock of the Ascension**

I imagine the disciples  
were equally puzzled  
when Jesus suddenly disappeared  
from their sight.

One moment they  
were discussing the  
timetable of the coming kingdom of God  
and the next moment,  
Jesus “was lifted up  
and a cloud took him out of their sight.”

And the disciples were  
left standing,  
staring up to heaven,  
puzzled and perplexed.

Jesus had disappeared!  
Just like that!  
Disappeared into the clouds  
like some sort of 1st century astronaut!

This moment is described  
in our first reading for today,  
the first chapter from  
the Book of Acts.  
The church refers  
to the disappearing of Jesus  
to it as the “Ascension of our Lord”.

Very few details are given  
about what exactly took place,  
but we get a sense of  
the bewilderment of the disciples.

They kept staring fixedly up to heaven,  
trying to process what just happened,  
just as our grandson was trying  
to figure out where the soap had gone.

## **Not Gone, But Everywhere**

Actually, these two events are not  
that different.

I explained to my grandson:

The soap is not gone!

It is still there

is is in your whole bath tub,

it is all around you,

you are literally sitting

in your soap!

In the same way,  
the disciples discovered over time  
that Jesus had not disappeared!  
He was still there,  
only in different form.

Instead of being physically present  
in a human body,  
he was now spiritually and powerfully  
present to them.

Not confined anymore  
to one place,  
one body,  
one moment in time.

But present everywhere.  
Present with all of them.  
Present with us.

## **Prepared in Love: Jesus' Farewell Promise**

Jesus had been preparing them  
for this moment.  
In the Gospel of John  
we read how carefully  
and tenderly he prepared  
them for the time  
when he would no longer  
walk on the earth in a physical body.

The setting was the last supper,  
the last time they were together  
and shared a last meal together,  
and with infinite care  
Jesus washed his disciples' feet.

You are mine, he said  
and always will be mine.

I will be in you,  
and you will be in me,  
just as the Father is one with me  
and I am one with the Father.

But soon I will no longer  
walk on this earth  
in human form.

Soon I will no longer be  
in the world in that way.  
But you will be in the world.  
From now on you will be my hands and feet.  
Theresa of Avila  
captured this in a beautiful poem:  
Christ has no body now on earth but yours...

Christ has no body but yours,  
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,  
Yours are the eyes with which he looks  
Compassion on this world,  
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,  
Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.  
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,  
Yours are the eyes, you are his body.  
Christ has no body now but yours,  
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,  
Yours are the eyes with which he looks  
compassion on this world.  
Christ has no body now on earth but yours.

## **You Will Be My Witnesses**

You will be my witness..  
Jesus said,  
because from now on  
it is your bodies  
not mine  
who will be walking in this world.

You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem,  
in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

And now, presumably, we too,  
are his witnesses.

But what does that mean?  
What does it mean to be a witness of Jesus?

Interestingly, Jesus has given very few  
instructions of what to say  
or what to preach.  
He left no doctrines  
and no sermon samples.

In fact, he even said  
they should not worry about what to say,  
it would come to them in the moment.

What what he did say was this:  
You must love one another.  
By this the world will recognize  
that you are my disciples.  
Speak the language of love.

## **Speaking the Language of Love (In Action)**

Which means many times  
we don't need to speak,  
but rather, we need to act.  
Because in many cases  
the language of love  
is not words but actions.  
Sometimes even very small actions.

There might be a neighbor next door  
who is very annoying...  
she is lonely and has no one to talk to  
and as soon as you step out of the door

she will buttonhole you  
and start a conversation,  
even though you are in a hurry  
already a little late for your  
doctor's appointment.

But what if....  
sometimes you leave early  
and allow some extra time  
and make sure you have time to listen to  
the lonely neighbor?

Or there is the person  
at the grocery store  
fumbling with coupons  
holding up the line  
and everyone is sighing  
and looking at their watches  
and shifting impatiently  
from one foot to the other.

And what if  
instead of joining the impatience  
you simply wait  
and offer a small smile  
a word of kindness  
a moment of grace.

Or the co-worker  
who is always difficult  
always critical  
always finding fault  
and everything in you  
wants to withdraw  
or respond in kind.

But what if...  
you choose patience instead  
or offer help

or simply refuse  
to return harshness for harshness.

Or the friend  
who is going through grief  
and there are no words  
no explanations  
no easy fixes.

And what if  
you simply show up  
sit quietly  
and stay.

## **The Gift of the Spirit**

Jesus spoke about  
going the extra mile,  
being generous,  
patient, kind, and forgiving,

- forgiving even those  
who hurt us!

Being “little Christs” for others.

That is a tall order!  
After all,  
we are only human,  
we get tired  
and exhausted  
and weary  
and some have aching backs  
and bad knees.

And sometimes  
our patience runs out  
our kindness wears thin  
our love feels very small.

And here is where the second part  
of Jesus instructions come in:

Wait and pray.

You will receive  
the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit will guide  
you in all things.

The disciples, after the ascension,  
did not rush out immediately.

They returned to Jerusalem.

They gathered together.

They waited.

They prayed.

They allowed themselves to be filled.

## **Christ Is All Around Us**

After all,

when we live out acts of love  
and kindness

it is not us who do these things,  
it is Christ who works  
through us with the help of the Spirit.

Christ who is all in all,  
who fills the universe  
and who lives deep in our hearts  
and who lives in the world  
through our faithful actions.

Like the soap  
that seemed to disappear  
but was actually everywhere.

So also Christ is not gone!

Christ is here.  
Christ is in you.

Christ is in your hands  
and in your voice  
and in your presence.

Christ is in the small acts.  
The quiet acts.  
The unnoticed acts.

Christ is all around us.

We are, quite literally,  
sitting in Christ...

### **Let us pray.**

Where did you go, O Christ?  
Out of sight,  
and yet not gone.

Gone... or everywhere?  
Hidden in plain sight,  
poured out into the world,  
dissolved into every corner of our lives.

No longer here—  
and yet here.  
Not gone, but present.  
Christ beyond sight,  
and yet closer than our own breath.

You who are the Ascended Christ among us,  
immerse us in your presence.  
Let us be held in your Spirit,  
filled with power from on high,  
that we may live as your presence in this world.

For now we are your body.  
Now we are the ones who remain.

We are your hands,  
your feet, your voice.

Teach us to wait,  
to pray, to receive.

And then send us—  
to be your witnesses,  
to the ends of the earth,  
in small acts,  
in quiet love,  
in faithful presence.

Until all the world  
is filled with you,  
and we discover  
that we have always been

immersed in you.

**Amen.**

**Sermon for Sunday, May 17th, 2026**

**7th Sunday of Easter**

**Presented at St. Matthew's Lutheran Church San Francisco**

**Texts: [Acts 1:6-14 NRSVue - The Ascension of Jesus - So when they - Bible Gateway](#) and [John 17:1-11 NRSVue - Jesus Prays for His Disciples - After - Bible Gateway](#)**

**Tags: Ascension | The Holy Spirit | Theresa of Avila**