



Ascension window, Grace Episcopal Church, Ponca City, Oklahoma. "And someday, just as you saw him go, he will return!" So we will hear Sunday in our observance of the Ascension of Christ on the 40th day after Easter.

Be Ready to Give an Answer Why You Believe, But Also to Live What You Believe

"In today's epistle lesson, the writer exhorts his readers, . . . 'If you are asked about your Christian hope, always be ready to explain it,' " the Rev. Dr. Brook Thelander said in his sermon Sunday.

"This is a needful thing," Pastor Thelander said, "because the culture in which Christians try to share their faith often responds in one of two ways: with indifference, or with hostility.

"Sometimes the surrounding culture is indifferent to the claims of the faith. Words that matter to Christians, such as sin, salvation, discipleship, resurrection, are alien terms to the culture. The terms, and the realities they describe, do not resonate with our pagan culture.

"On the other hand, sometimes attempts to live for Christ are met with hostility and opposition, as was the case for the readers of today's epistle. Christianity emerged into an empire that was built on hierarchical relationships, relationships that depended upon the subservience of slaves and women. When you stand up in that kind of climate, as the Apostle Paul did, and say, 'In Christ there is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female,' you are the epitome of subversion, and you are going to pay a price for it."

"And so," he continued, "the writer of the epistle admonishes his readers to be 'apologists,' to be ready always to give an answer to the question, 'Why are you a Christian?'

"And this admonition is addressed to us, also. . . . It is for all of us who want to be faithful followers of Jesus Christ. . . .

"But how do we do it? . . . I offer you two suggestions this morning. . . .

"First, you can become an apologist simply by knowing *what* and *why* you believe—and you don't need a Ph.D. in theology to answer this. I recommend keeping it simple. But, as Christians, we should know what we believe and why we believe it. We should be able to sit down and write on a piece of paper the phrase, 'I am a Christian, because _____' and fill in the blank. . . .

"But there is a second, perhaps more important, way in which we witness to the faith. It has to do not just with *what* you believe, but with *how you live* what you believe.

"The most effective apologists are those whose lives are intimately rooted in Christ. . . . This truth comes more forcefully to us from our Gospel lesson today. This familiar text from John's Gospel has an almost mystical quality to it. Using the metaphor of a vine and branches, Jesus describes the kind of intimate relationship he desires for us." The best way, Pastor Thelander said, for us to witness to our faith "is to live so closely to Jesus that when other people look at us they don't see us, but him! For ultimately, our ability to give a reason for the hope that lies within us comes more from our *lives* than our *words*."

Editor: Box 972, Boise, ID 83701. 208-336-3951, harbingermail@aol.com

Pastor: The Rev. Dr. Brook Thelander, epworthrector@msn.com

On the Web: www.epworthchapelonthegreen.org

Sundays

10:00 a.m.: Word & Table service

11:30 a.m.: Refreshments, conversation

11:45 a.m.: Post-service discussion

6:00 p.m.: (First Sundays only) Evensong, then tea & refreshments

Thursdays, 7:00 p.m.: Evening Prayers

For the poor: Meat; fresh produce; canned fruits and vegetables; dairy products; peanut butter; cooking oil; pancake mix; syrup; spices; diapers; baby wipes; bathroom tissue; for personal care: soap, shampoo, conditioner, razors, shaving cream; new underwear (adults and children); cleaning supplies; bleach.

Readings, 5/4, 10 a.m.: Acts 1:1-11; Ps. 110:1-5; Eph. 1:15-23; Luke 24:49-53. **5/4, 6 p.m.:** Ps. 46 (sung); Ex. 3:1-12; Heb. 12:18-29. **5/11:** Acts 2:1-11; Ps. 104:25-37; 1 Cor. 12:4-13; John 14:15-26.

Prayer Emphases: Nigeria; Pentecostal Church of God; First United Methodist Church, Lexington, KY, and the Rev. Paul Branstetter; Perkins School of Theology; parishioners on Larch Street.

From Hail the Day That Sees Him Rise, Processional Hymn This Sunday (Omitting Alleluias:) "See! The heaven its Lord receives, Yet he loves the earth he leaves: Though returning to his throne, Still he calls mankind his own. See! He lifts his hands above; See! He shows the prints of love: Hark! His gracious lips bestow, Blessings on his church below. Lord beyond our mortal sight, Raise our hearts to reach thy height, There thy face unclouded see, Find our heaven of heavens in thee."—Charles Wesley, 1739

**Sunday, May 11:
Pentecost Picnic**