



The Parting Gifts



A Sermon By
The Rev. Amanda A. Akes

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Grace Episcopal Church
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The Feast of the Ascension
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Have you ever been to a going away party for someone? Maybe one of your friends moved to a new city or a different state. When I was 11, my family moved to a different country. We moved to England. After we announced that we were leaving, some of our family friends threw us a going away party. The party was wonderful. There were balloons, streamers, all our favorite foods, and our favorite people. It was really cool, but at the same time it was sad because we wouldn't see these friends for a while.

That's what our celebration today reminds me of – a going away party. Today we remember the day that Jesus left his disciples, and went to be with God in heaven. It's sort of a strange day to celebrate. After all, Jesus is leaving his friends. His best friends - who lived with him, taught with him, healed the sick in his name, these best friends would be separated. How would you feel if your best friend, who you loved, was going away?

Sadness is part of the Ascension Day story. But it's not the whole story. Jesus and his friends knew they would be together again one day. But in the meantime, Jesus asked his friends to do something for him. Kind of like a parting gift.

Flash back to that going away party my friends threw for me and my family. Near the end of the party our friends presented us with gifts. What would you give your friend if they were going away?

Those are great gift ideas. We received stationary and pens so we could write our friends letters. The bible doesn't tell us if the disciples presented Jesus with a physical gift. But we know Jesus really didn't need a gift like that.

What Jesus wanted, as his parting gift, was for his friends to spread the word about him. That's what he asked them to do, until they were together again. He asked them to share God's love with people and to tell them about him.

And they did! The disciples shared their experiences of Jesus with others. They prayed for others. They healed others. They taught in Jesus' name. And they tried to love as Jesus loved.

These are the gifts the disciples offered to Jesus. And we are called to do the same. So this Ascension Day, as we remember Jesus' entry into heaven, We also remember and celebrate that we are part of his story, and we are called to share his story and ours, his love and ours with others.