

Up, Up and Away



Theme: The Ascension of Christ (Ascension Sunday)

Object: A helium-filled balloon

Scripture: When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God. Luke 24:50-53 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. Acts 1:8-9

I love balloons. There are so many things you can do with balloons. Some people can make balloons into various shapes. That is fun to watch! There are also a lot of different games you can play with balloons. You can tie them around your ankle and play "Stomp the Balloon" or you can fill them with water and have a water balloon fight.

One of the most enjoyable things one can do with a balloon is to fill it with helium. I am sure you know that when filled with helium, a balloon floats in the air. If you don't want it to get away from you, it is a good idea to hold on tight or tie it around your wrist. But it is also quite enjoyable when it does float away from you. It is fun to stand and watch as the balloon floats higher and higher into the heavens until it totally disappears. The only way to experience that is to be willing to let it go.

When Jesus was ready to return to heaven, he took his disciples aside to make sure that they understood everything that had happened to him. He explained why it was important for him to be crucified and to be raised from the dead to fulfill what the Scriptures had said about him. He also told them that he was going to return to his Father in heaven, and that the Holy Spirit would come to be with them.

At first, the disciples were sad that Jesus would be leaving them, but then the Bible tells us that Jesus opened their minds so they would understand. Then, an amazing thing happened. The Bible tells us that Jesus lifted his hands and blessed his disciples. While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. (Release your balloon and watch it float to the ceiling.)

I don't know how all of this looked, but in my imagination I can see the disciples standing and watching as Jesus ascended higher and higher until he disappeared from view. Were the disciples sad? No way! The Bible tells us that when Jesus had ascended into heaven, the disciples worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. There they stayed continually in the temple, praising God.

We are here today for the very same purpose. We have come into the temple to worship him with great joy!

Dear Father, we thank you for sending Jesus, your only Son, to die for our sin. We know that he has risen from the dead and has returned to heaven. Bless us today as we worship him with great joy! Amen.

BALLOON BOPPING: Children can divide into teams and run a relay with bopping a balloon down to the far wall and holding balloon as they run back to the team, for the next player to bop the balloon and continue until all the team has run the balloon.

BALLOON STOMPING: Give each child a balloon to STOMP on and see who takes the longest to POP their balloons. Children could also play this game with stomping other's balloons and trying to PROTECT their own balloon, so then the game would be to see who can keep their OWN balloon from being popped the longest!

WATER BALLOON TOSS: The teacher can have a bucket of water balloons filled and children can divide into two teams and toss their water balloons back and forth to see who can keep their balloon from "splatting" the longest. Of course this will have to be played outside if that is available.

BALLOON VERSES: Have today's Bible verses (Luke 24:50-53) or (Acts 6:8-9), typed on slips of paper and placed inside balloons that the teacher/leader has blown up before class time. Children can then pop their balloon, retrieve the Bible verses and tape or glue onto a piece of construction paper. Then have children draw a big round balloon around the verses and cut the "balloon tracing" out. Add a curly ribbon to the balloon verse and hang on the classroom wall or take home, as desired. Let children take turns reading/reciting the verse together.

CHALK TALK: If children can go outside to a sidewalk or a parking lot, give each child a large piece of chalk and draw a very large balloon on various areas that are available. Give each child a different word to write inside their drawn balloon from today's lesson, such as heaven, Jesus, Holy Spirit; Ascension, power, etc. Then walk the class from balloon to balloon and let children tell a little bit about that word from what they have learned from the Bible story today!

CROSS PRAYER: Give children construction paper to cut out a large cross and add foam crosses to the cut out cross. Children can write or taped a typed out copy of part of today's prayer on the cross and place in their Bibles or hang from a ribbon for the wall.

BALLOON ART: Let each child write with a permanent marker on their balloon - such words from today's lesson as GOD'S POWER; PRAISE GOD; BE MY WITNESSES, THANK YOU JESUS FOR SENDING YOUR SON, etc. Then children can blow up their balloons and attached a curly ribbon to their balloons and take home with them. Encourage children to tell today's story if other's ask about their balloons as they leave class!

UP, UP AND AWAY BALLOON FLIGHT: At the end of class, let children blow up a balloon and place a small piece of paper inside that will say JESUS LOVES YOU. When all the class has gathered together outside, let all the balloons take flight at the same time and watch the balloons go higher and higher. Pray for people who might find the balloons and read the LOVE NOTE inside the balloon!