

---

*Ascension – Christ Unlimited – When heaven and earth meet*

---

On at least 11 different occasions in the 40 days from Easter morning, the risen Lord Jesus Christ had met with confused, fearful, anxious disciples: unexpected at the cemetery, behind locked doors in Jerusalem, on the road out & at a meal, to a crowd of more than 500 people, when they were fishing & back on shore, on a hillside – those meetings offered encouragement for us in last 15 months. A time when we have needed to be met in our disorientation & anxiety & be given the peace He promised. Today, on the Sunday after Ascension Day, (last Thursday), when we remember that Jesus left His disciples & “ascends” to His Father, how do we not experience His going as a loss? And haven’t we experienced too much loss lately?

**If we understand heaven as being somewhere else, distant and far from us, we might think of this as an ending but the gift of the Ascension is that Jesus does not go to leave us but to bring us closer to God, to take our human lives, our fears, failures, confusion and worry into God’s heart; to bring us to heaven. As He goes to be with the Father, Jesus brings us closer to God than we ever thought possible, so that we can experience His grace, His constant loving kindness for ever. In the ascended Jesus, we are in touch with heaven.** And He promises all His followers, all who trust in Him, the gift of the Holy Spirit, God’s power and presence with us and in us. Poured out first for Christ’s Church at Pentecost, which we will celebrate next Sunday.

In the upper room on the last night of His life, Jesus told his friends, *“Because I live, you also will live. On that day, you will realise that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you... Peace I leave to you. My peace I give you.”* (John 14: 16-22, 26-27)

Prayer: Lord Jesus, we do not see You and yet we believe in you. Show us the loving face of God. In Your glorious Ascension, bring us close to the Father’s heart. Be with all those moving heaven and earth to care for others at this time; at this anxious time and at the end of this Mental Health Awareness Week, bring peace to troubled minds; and give to each of us such a sense of your continual presence today and through this coming week that our hearts might be at home with you. Amen.

---

*Reflection: Christ ascended but not absent...Thy kingdom come*

*..... – Acts 1:1-11; Matthew 28:16-20*

---

**What do we today make of Christ’s Ascension**, 40 days after Easter? For the 1<sup>st</sup> disciples it was confusion again: ***What now! Where do we look for Christ our King? & What’s going on?*** - questions as much for us in 2021 & for disciples in AD 30 .

It was well nigh impossible for Luke to try to put into words what happened. It is hard for us to picture: a mixture of Captain Kirk – *Beam me up, Scottie!* - & of Dr. Who with his or her phone box dematerialising until next series or what?

All are inadequate pictures but the passages do teach us:

- 1) **The person we see in Jesus Christ is part of the godhead** that is over & above the universe. & God is not remote or detached or unaware of all it means to be human or unloving but is still Jesus. Mt. 28:16ff – *All authority has been given to me*
- 2) **Message of the two men in white / angels – God’s messengers: *Stop gawping /*** staring up into the sky, looking for Jesus & for inspiration. **Follow my instructions – JUST DO WHAT I TOLD YOU;** (Jesus had given His disciples some clear commands & promises & directions: Look at them yourself. **But HOW?** & ending with “*You go & wait for the Spirit, the power I will give you & you will be witnesses for me ...*”) That all happened after Pentecost 10 days later.
- 3) In Matthew 28:17, we are told that *even though some* - like many of us too today - **doubted, Jesus still told them, “All authority in heaven & earth has been given to me. Therefore you go & make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, of the Son & of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. and surely, I am with you always to the very end of the age.” All authority...make disciples of all nations... teaching them to obey all I have commanded you...& I will be with you always ..** A clear timeless commission with no if & buts.
- 4) William Temple, who was Archbishop of Canterbury in 1940’s wrote, *The Ascension of Christ is His liberation from all restrictions of time & space. It does not represent His removal from earth but His constant presence everywhere on earth.* Like loved ones we are separated from at this time – Out of sight, out of touch but not out of mind. **Ascension is not a call to look upwards; it is call to trust that Christ’s promise & presence is down – & in –& around - & amongst us. Seeking to be aware of Jesus at work is not the same thing as focusing on earthly things. Often we can best focus on things above (Colossians 3:2) by looking to where Jesus is active all around us; & to where & how He wants us to put our faith in practice here & now,& then to play our part in building up of God’s Kingdom, making a difference for Christ’s sake & sharing His gracious love & truth by our actions & attitudes as well as our prayers..**

**We pray *Thy kingdom come....on earth....***during past 15 months & last few days as violent divisions flare up in Israel & Palestine, we may ask ourselves *how long? & when? & how?* **But when and how is up to God**

**Christ will return in glory to judge the world. In the meantime, may we recognise His rule & living presence in our lives & live lives that show that. AMEN**