

20th May 2020

Dear all

Tomorrow is Ascension Day (golly – doesn't time fly!). In more recent times, the feast has somewhat faded in significance. For a while it was transferred to the nearest Sunday, though recently, it has been reinstated on the 40th day after Easter (always a Thursday).

The feast marks the ascension of Christ to heaven at the end of His earthly ministry. It may be considered the final part of the great Good Friday – Easter Day – Ascension trilogy... the purpose of the Incarnation. The Book of Acts records *...when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" He replied, "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. They said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven." (Acts 1: 6-11).

Ascension Day celebrates Christ's exaltation. While on earth, He was a servant. Now in heaven, He is the ruler and Lord of all. By entering heaven as the representative of mankind, He completed the work of our salvation and guarantees the eventual glorification of all who love Him.

The Importance of Jesus' Ascension is that the ascended Christ pours out his Spirit on the church. Jesus himself had told his disciples that it was good for him to go away, because only then would he send them another Helper, the Spirit of truth (John 16:7-16). And that's exactly what happened on the Day of Pentecost, ten days after Jesus' ascension.

Also, the ascended Christ applies the blessings of salvation – as Peter says in Acts 5:31: *God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.*

Just as Jesus went into heaven, so will all Christians. Those who are dead will rise first; those who are living will be caught up to meet Him in the air, according to Paul, writing to the church at Thessalonica. With this hope in mind, some Christians traditionally conclude their meetings with the words "Maranatha", "Come Lord Jesus."

It has been a tradition for Christians to celebrate Communion on the feast of the Ascension. **We will therefore be having a 10.00am livestreamed communion service on Facebook, tomorrow (Thursday).** Do please join us if you can, or catch up later in the day. The words of the service are [attached](#) – which will also be used on Sunday.

Our bishops have posted the following prayer which you may find helpful:

A prayer for communion in separation

Lord Jesus Christ, life-giver and good physician, here you meet me in our need.
In a world marred by corruption and marked by death, draw me into true life.
By your selfless sacrifice, help me to live for others and not myself.
May I, who cannot now receive you sacramentally, embrace you more fully in my heart, mind and soul.
Help me unite myself to you in spirit, so that I may be drawn closer to those from whom I am isolated in body.

Through sharing your life given up in death for us all, may we grow together in love into a richer and more profound communion of life.

Amen

For the last few years, the Church of England has encouraged members to follow the ***Thine is the kingdom*** initiative. The CofE website notes *Thy Kingdom Come is a global prayer movement that invites Christians around the world to pray between Ascension Day (21 May) and Pentecost (31 May) for more people to come to know Jesus.*

Praying for people to come to know the love, hope and peace found in Christ is at the heart of Thy Kingdom Come.

Daily Prayer for Thy Kingdom Come is a great way to set up regular, daily patterns of prayer to hold these people in prayer – whether you are doing so on your own, as a household, or joining with a small group or as a church virtually.

Resources, including an app and podcasts are available at:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/church-resources/thy-kingdom-come>

You can download a PDF of the 5 ideas for your family here.

<https://www.thykingdomcome.global/sites/default/files/2020-04/Five%20Ideas%20for%20Families%20.pdf>

I thought I'd add a few links to Ascension anthems:

Ascendens Christus in altum by Tomás Luis de Victoria.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4GuksCqe3bs>

God is gone up by William Croft

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7yT45eE3dTM>

O clap your hands by Ralph Vaughan Williams

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oinhRp67cf8>

Just a quick 'pupdate' – Nugget is recovering well after the amputation of her leg, and is learning to manage well with just the 3. She is perky, and this morning leapt up when I said I was going to say Morning Prayer in the church. She gave up halfway across the lawn – “the spirit was willing, but the flesh was weak!”



Stay safe

Blessings and love

Mark