

Our Sunday Service Together

May 21st 2023

An Easter Acclamation

Praise be to God in the highest. It is our duty and our joy, always and everywhere to give you thanks, almighty and eternal Father, and especially in these days of Easter to celebrate with joyful hearts the memory of your wonderful works.

For by the mystery of his passion Jesus Christ, your risen Son, has conquered the powers of death and hell and restored in men and women the image of your glory. He has placed them once more in paradise and opened to them the gate of life eternal.

And so earth and heaven resound with gladness, while angels and archangels and the powers of all creation sing for ever the hymn of your glory.

Preparation

All: This is the day that the Lord has made.
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.
Through the brokenness of Christ, we become one body
as one body we now gather in the name of Christ to offer our praise and thanksgiving, to receive God's holy word, to pray for the needs of the world,
and to seek the forgiveness of our sins, that by the power of the Holy Spirit
we may give ourselves to the service of God.

Our Confession

Let us come to the light of Christ, confessing our sins in penitence and faith.

All: Jesus Christ, risen Master and triumphant Lord, we come to you in sorrow for our sins, and confess to you our weakness and unbelief.

We have lived by our own strength, and not by the power of your resurrection.
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.

We have lived by the light of our own eyes, as faithless and not believing.
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.

We have lived for this world alone, and doubted our home in heaven.
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.

Be still for a moment in confession and in receiving God's Grace in Christ

All: May Almighty God, who in Jesus Christ has given us a kingdom that cannot be destroyed, forgive us our sins, open our eyes to God's truth, strengthen us to do God's will and give us the joy of his kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Risen Lord. **Amen.**

The opening prayer

All: The night has passed, and the day lies open before us; let us pray with one heart and mind.

Silence is kept.

All: As we rejoice in the gift of this new day, so may the light of your presence, O God, set our hearts on fire with love for you; now and for ever. Amen.

The Psalmody Psalm 68.1-10 and 32-35 *We say the psalm aloud*

Let God arise and let his enemies be scattered; let those that hate him flee before him.

As the smoke vanishes, so may they vanish away; as wax melts at the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God.

But let the righteous be glad and rejoice before God; let them make merry with gladness.

Sing to God, sing praises to his name; exalt him who rides on the clouds. The Lord is his name; rejoice before him.

Father of the fatherless, defender of widows, God in his holy habitation!

God gives the solitary a home and brings forth prisoners to songs of welcome, but the rebellious inhabit a burning desert.

O God, when you went forth before your people, when you marched through the wilderness, the earth shook and the heavens dropped down rain, at the presence of God, the Lord of Sinai, at the presence of God, the God of Israel.

You sent down a gracious rain, O God; you refreshed your inheritance when it was weary.

Your people came to dwell there; in your goodness, O God, you provide for the poor.

Sing to God, you kingdoms of the earth; make music in praise of the Lord; He rides on the ancient heaven of heavens and sends forth his voice, a mighty voice.

Ascribe power to God, whose splendour is over Israel, whose power is above the clouds.

How terrible is God in his holy sanctuary, the God of Israel, who gives power and strength to his people!

Blessed be God.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,

as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen

Scripture Reading Acts 1.1-11

In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning ² until the day when he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. ³ After his suffering he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over the course of forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. ⁴ While staying^[a] with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. 'This', he said, 'is what you have heard from me; ⁵ for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.'

⁶ So when they had come together, they asked him, 'Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?' ⁷ He replied, 'It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸ 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.' ⁹ When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰ While he was going and they were gazing up towards heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by

them. ¹¹ They said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up towards 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.'

At the end of the reading we say:

All: This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Gloria

All: Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.

Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father, we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.

Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us; you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer.

For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

The Gospel Luke 24.44-53

⁴⁴ Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶ and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, ⁴⁷ and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."

⁵⁰ And he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. ⁵¹ While he blessed them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. ⁵² And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, ⁵³ and were continually in the temple blessing God.

at the end of the reading we say:

All: This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

A Reflection for the day

Revd John Webb writes

Last Thursday was Ascension Day when we remember Jesus' final departure after his resurrection appearances. Whenever I come to this time of year I have two distinct recollections. The first is the painful memory that it was on this 'Sunday after Ascension' many years ago that I preached my first proper sermon. I was still at college and totally unready, unprepared and a bag of nerves so it was a complete disaster. The only consolation was that the congregation were very kind to me and the Rector wrote me a kind thank-you letter finding something positive to say. Although that was nearly sixty years ago I still come out into a cold sweat whenever I think about it!

My second and rather happier memory was when I took a party of soldiers to the Holy Land when I was on a tour of duty with the United Nations in Cyprus. One day the guide took us to a little circular chapel in Bethany which is supposed to be the site of the Ascension. It was very small and only had a few tiny

windows so coming out of the bright sunshine we could hardly see anything at first, but as our eyes got used to it we could see a prominent rock at centre of the building in which there was a small hollow. The guide proceeded to remove his sandal and place his foot in the hollow explaining that it was made by Jesus 'pushing off' at the Ascension! This was greeted by some with gasps of amazement but an Austrian Padre next to me whispered in my ear 'I don't believe it' in his broken English which went echoing round the building! I agreed with him.

Both these memories illustrate the fact that the Ascension is a unique event in the life of Jesus and trying to present it in our usual language is doomed to failure. It seems that the Ascension must always remain a mystery because it attempts to put into words what is beyond words and describe what is beyond description. The Ascension represents the end of Jesus' resurrection appearances and the completion of his earthly ministry. It is as mysterious as the resurrection itself. I have come to the conclusion that the only way I can understand it is visually with the help of artists in a picture or a stained-glass window of Jesus saying his final farewell to his followers. As St Luke puts it 'While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven'. This is highly symbolic. The whole meaning of his life, death and resurrection is finally summed up in a blessing – what better summary could there be. 'The blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be with you now and always'.

The Creed

All: I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Prayers *We make our intercessions*

O God of peace, who has taught us that in quietness and confidence shall be our strength; help us, as we come into your presence, to be still and know that you are God. In the power of the Spirit and in union with Christ let us pray to the Father.

As we continue this season of Easter and mark the Ascension of Jesus let us pray that our faith will grow and develop. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.*

We pray for Bishops Michael and Ruth and all laity and clergy who seek to serve you in this diocese May they be filled with the Spirit and speak with authority. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.*

We pray for our King, Prime Minister, members of parliament and local councillors that they may have the Spirit of wisdom to lead us through this difficult time. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.*

We pray for all trade unions and their leaders that they may work for the good of everyone. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.*

We pray for all those who have suffered as the result of recent local flooding that they may get all the help and support they need. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.*

We pray for our families, friends, and neighbours that we may serve Christ in one another and seek the common good. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.*

We pray for the sick, suffering, dying and those who mourn and we give thanks and pray for those who care for them. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.*

Rejoicing in the fellowship of all your saints, we commend ourselves and the whole creation to your unfailing love.

And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and for evermore. Amen.

The Collect

Risen Christ, you have raised our human nature to the throne of heaven; help us to seek and serve you, that we may join you at the Father's side, where you reign with the Spirit in glory, now and forever. Amen.

Gathering our prayers and praises into one, let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us

All: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory
for ever and ever. Amen.

The Conclusion

All: Christ, as a light illumine and guide me this day.
Christ, as a shield overshadow me.
Christ under me, Christ over me; Christ beside me on my left and my right.
This day be within and without me. Amen