

A Service of Worship for Ascension Day

Thursday 21st May

Welcome! Today we recall how Jesus left this earth and returned to his Father, ascending into heaven to take his throne over all dominions and powers. Trusting in his reign over all creation, and submitting to his kingly yet loving rule, we will hear the story of his parting and remind ourselves of his exaltation and glorification.



Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:9-11)

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Responsive Reading: Psalm 47:5-9 (NIV)

God has ascended amid shouts of joy,
the Lord amid the sounding of trumpets.

Sing praises to God, sing praises;
sing praises to our King, sing praises.

For God is the King of all the earth;
sing to him a psalm of praise.

God reigns over the nations;
God is seated on his holy throne.

The nobles of the nations assemble as the people of
the God of Abraham,
**for the kings of the earth belong to God;
HE IS GREATLY EXALTED.**

Hymn

"All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oMywo32hGII>

ALL HAIL THE POW'R of JESUS' NAME!

Let angels prostrate fall,
Let angels prostrate fall;
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him, crown Him,
crown Him, crown Him,
And crown Him Lord of all.

Ye chosen seed of Israel's race,
Ye ransomed from the fall,
Ye ransomed from the fall;
Hail Him who saves you by His grace,
And crown Him, crown Him,
crown Him, crown Him,
And crown Him Lord of all.

Let every kindred, ev'ry tribe
On this terrestrial ball,
On this terrestrial ball;
To Him all majesty ascribe,
And crown Him, crown Him,
crown Him, crown Him,
And crown Him Lord of all.

O that with yonder sacred throng
We at His feet may fall,
We at His feet may fall!
We'll join the everlasting song
And crown Him, crown Him,
crown Him, crown Him,
And crown Him Lord of all.

Edward Perronet (1726-1792)

Acts 1:1-11

In my former book, *Theophilus*, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach ² until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. ³ After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. ⁴ On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. ⁵ For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

⁶ Then they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"

⁷ He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸ 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."

⁹ After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

¹⁰ They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. ¹¹ "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

Hebrews 12:1-2

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the

cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

A Poem for Ascension, by Malcolm Guite

We saw his light break through the cloud of glory
Whilst we were rooted still in time and place
As earth became a part of Heaven's story
And heaven opened to his human face.
We saw him go and yet we were not parted
He took us with him to the heart of things
The heart that broke for all the broken-hearted
Is whole and Heaven-centred now, and sings,
Sings in the strength that rises out of weakness,
Sings through the clouds that veil him from our sight,
Whilst we ourselves become his clouds of witness
And sing the waning darkness into light,
His light in us, and ours in him concealed,
Which all creation waits to see revealed.

Malcolm Guite

Lifted Up to Glory and Power: An Ascension Day Reading in four voices

C: The apostle Paul wrote to the saints at the church in Ephesus:
(Eph. 1:1)

A: May God give you a Spirit of wisdom and revelation so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe. (Eph. 1:17-19)

B: God is king over the nations; God sits on his holy throne. (Ps. 47:8)

A: God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places. (Eph. 1:20)

B: The floods have lifted up, O Lord,
the floods have lifted up their voice;
the floods lift up their roaring.

More majestic than the thunders of mighty waters,
more majestic than the waves of the sea,
majestic on high is the Lord! (Ps. 93:3-4)

A: Christ is seated far above all rulers and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. (Eph. 1:21)

B: Clouds and thick darkness are all around him; righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne. (Ps. 97:2)

A: And God has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. (Eph. 1:21)

[pause]

A: The evangelist Luke wrote concerning the days of Christ after his resurrection:

C: In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning until the day when he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. (Acts 1:1-2)

B: If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father and he will give you another Advocate to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you. (John 14:15-17)

A: You will have pain, but your pain will turn into joy. When a woman is in labor, she has pain, because her hour has come. But when her child is born, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy of having brought a human being into the world. So with you; now is your time of pain; but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you. (John 16:20-22)

B: If the world hates you, keep in mind that it first hated me. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. (John 15:18-19)

A: These things I have said to you while I am still with you. The Advocate, the Helper, the Holy Spirit, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I have said to you. (John 14:25-26)

D: Father in heaven, I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world. While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. (John 17:11-12, 15, 17)

C: After his suffering he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. (Acts 1:1-3)

D: The kingdom of God is like a grain of mustard seed, which is the smallest of all the seeds. But when it has grown, it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches. (Mark 4:30-32)

B: The kingdom of God is like leaven, which a person took and hid in three measures of flour. And as this person waited, it grew and it grew till all the flour was leavened. (Luke 13:21)

A: The kingdom of God is like a merchant that finds the great pearl and goes and exchanges all that he has for it. (Matt. 13:45-46)

C: On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. "This is what you have heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." (Acts 1:4-5)

B: I will pour out my spirit on all flesh;
your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
your old men shall dream dreams
and your young men shall see visions.

I, the Lord your God, dwell in Zion, my holy mountain.

And Jerusalem shall be holy. (Joel 2:28-32)

C: So 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." (Acts 1:6-8)

D: All this I have told you so that you will not go astray. They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God. I did not tell you this at first because I was with you. I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. (John 16:1-2, 4, 12-13)

C: Then he led them out as far as Bethany and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. 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." And they worshiped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and they were continually in the temple blessing God. (Luke 24:50-51; Acts 1:9-11; Luke 24:52-53)

[*pause*]

B: Several years later, the apostle Peter wrote to God's people scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. (1 Pet. 1:1)

D: Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that is taking place among you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you are sharing Christ's sufferings, so that you may also be glad and shout for joy when his glory is revealed. If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory, which is the Spirit of God, is resting on you. (1 Pet. 4:12-14)

C: Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you. Discipline yourselves, keep alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour. (1 Pet. 5:6-9)

A: Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. (John 16:20-22; 14:27)

D: And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the power forever and ever. Amen. (1 Pet. 5:10-11).

Talk: Ascension - why is it important?

Prayer

May your Spirit make us wise;
may your Spirit guide us;
may your Spirit renew us;
may your Spirit strengthen us
so that we will be strong in faith;
discerning in proclamation;
courageous in witness;
persistent in good deeds.

Reading: Acts 1: 12,13,14

¹²Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day's walk from the city. ¹³When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. ¹⁴They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

We pause for a moment of quiet.

God the Father,
who has given to his Son the name above every name,
strengthen you to proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord,
Amen

God the Son,
Who is our great high priest passed into the heavens,
plead for you at the right hand of the Father,
Amen

God the Holy Spirit,
who pours out his abundant gifts upon the church
make you faithful servants of Christ our King
Amen

And the blessing of God almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit
be among you and remain with you always.

Waiting expectantly for the promised Holy Spirit,
go in the peace of Christ, Alleluia, Alleluia

Thanks be to God, Alleluia, Alleluia.

Hymn

"Crown Him with Many Crowns"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YuMh_ept-Js

CROWN HIM WITH MANY CROWNS,
the Lamb upon His throne;
Hark, how the Heavenly anthem drowns
all music but its own;
Awake, my soul, and sing
of Him Who died for thee,
and hail Him as thy matchless King
through all eternity.

Crown Him the Lord of life;
Who triumphed o'er the grave
And rose victorious in the strife
For those He came to save.
His glories now we sing
Who died, and rose on high;
Who died, eternal life to bring,
and lives that death may die.

Crown Him the Lord of love;
behold His hands and side,
those wounds, yet visible above,
in beauty glorified:
No angel in the sky
can fully bear that sight,
but downward bends His burning eye
at mysteries so bright.

Crown Him the Lord of years,
the Potentate of time,
Creator of the rolling spheres,
ineffably sublime.
All hail, Redeemer, hail!
For Thou hast died for me;
Thy praise shall never, never fail
throughout eternity.

Matthew Bridges (1800-1894)

Chorale

As we close the service, you may like to hear this rendition of Psalm 47, "God is gone up" by Gerald Finzi, sung by Wells Cathedral Choir.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yrs5XR9Pd7k>

