

Lord, please open our eyes, our ears and hearts to receive your word, Amen.

I wonder how you are feeling tonight. Are you like the disciples a bit concerned about what is happening in the future? Do you feel like Peter that you have let the Lord down in some way and need reinstating? Then our readings provide a real tonic so let's open our minds to the reality of the ascension. The end of Luke and the beginning of Acts both cover our Lord's Ascension. The good news that Jesus was God incarnate and had come to earth to fulfil all the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah was beginning to make sense to the Apostles. But Jesus had to open their minds, just as he had opened the eyes and hearts of the disciples on the Emmaus Road. It's interesting that Luke chose to begin and end his Gospel with temple worship as the temple was traditionally seen as the place where God dwelt and where heaven and earth meet. God was changing these old traditions and that through his sacrificial death and resurrection Jesus had brought life changing salvation to the world.

The journey that the disciples had been on with Jesus was drawing to a close. They had their last meal together at BBQ on the beach, but now Jesus takes them back to Bethany on the Mount of Olives for the climax to his earthly mission. He had done what he had come to do and the next part was going to be up to them and us until he returns. Of course Jesus knows that we can't really fulfil the commission without having the help of the Holy Spirit. So he tells his disciples to wait in Jerusalem for Pentecost just 10 days away. Only when the the gift of the Holy Spirit is received can they fulfil the mission Jesus gave them at his Ascension which was to be his witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth, and that still applies to us today.

Although Jesus' earthly mission was finished, he was now ascending to take his rightful place and continue his work at the right hand of the Father. As Paul in his mind blowing prayer puts it in his letter to the Ephesians: “God put his great power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him in the heavenly places far above all rule and authority, and power and dominion and above every name that is named not only in this age but in the age to come.

And he 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”

This is why his Ascension is so important to us as a church. But there is more: this power is at work in us, when we allow the Holy Spirit into our lives. We need especially at this time of the Covid Pandemic to do this through prayer.

Praying for others is one of the most practical and acceptable actions that we as Christians can do. It was typical for Paul to mention in his letter his Prayers for the Ephesians, their new found relationship through faith in the Lord Jesus and their love for all the saints. But this prayer surpasses any of his other letters, for as rich as the blessing is, he stretches the expectation of hope and the imagination of faith still further.

Paul prays for a deeper knowledge of God which is fundamental for our well being. The diversity of words like: wisdom, revelation, knowledge and illumination reminds us that there are many different kinds of knowledge. Paul wants us all to open our eyes and our hearts to the experience of God’s love allowing him to inspire us through prayer and reading the scriptures.

We have around us many great prayer resources and this is the perfect time between Ascension and Pentecost to use them. Visit our Church or the Diocesan Web sites; Search on line for Christian Aid or Thy Kingdom Come; Use our Parish Prayer diaries and Prayer leaflets. Prayer is our natural response to human need and we have to make it easier for people to pray in whatever form that may be. Why not join our new on line home group next Monday @4pm?

We can rejoice because the immeasurable greatness of God’s power is at work in our community, our church family and each one of us. Despite still being restricted in gathering together in our church building, we can thank God for the technology that allows us to come into each other’s homes just as he has always done and let’s praise God that we can always draw heaven and earth together on the altars of our hearts when we come to him in prayer. Amen. [834]