



## **The Benefice of Silsoe, Pulloxhill and Flitton**

*Growing as beacons of Christ's Light in our communities*

**Eucharist for Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> May 2020**

**ASCENSION DAY**

**Our service today is led by Rev Anne Barker**

*Where Jesus stood on the site of the Ascension, inside the Crusader Dome at Bethany - Image from Gillian Kern*

### **Introduction**

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, for forty days we have been celebrating with joyful hearts the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, his bursting from the tomb and his defeat of the power of sin and death. He appeared to his disciples many times and told them about the kingdom of God. Today we recall how he 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, let us hear the story of his parting.

### **Call to Worship** *(based on Psalm 46 and Psalm 93)*

Come all God's people! Let us gather to praise our Mighty God!

**With joy we celebrate and give thanks for God's faithfulness.**

Come all God's people! Let us gather to sing to our Glorious God!

**With joy, and with all creation, we celebrate the powers of our King.**

Come all God's people! Let us gather to worship and honour God!

**With joy we celebrate the wonderful deeds of our God and King,  
and in reverent awe, we bow in worship and praise of our God. Amen**

Our God reigns!

Robed with majesty and armed with strength,

God holds our world and our lives securely.

This is the God to whom we have given our lives —  
the God who deserves our worship and our praise!

Alleluia. Christ is risen.

**He is risen indeed. Alleluia.**

### Prayer of preparation

Ever-living God, your eternal Christ once dwelt on earth,  
confined by time and space.  
Give us faith to discern in every time and place  
the presence among us of him who is head over all things and fills all,  
even Jesus Christ our ascended Lord. **Amen.**

### Invitation to Confession

While we claim to celebrate the ascension of our Lord,  
the way we live proclaims our lack of faith in his power to deal with the world.  
Let us confess the incongruity between our faith and practice.

**We come, O Lord, on this day of glory to confess our lack of trust.  
While we proclaim your lordship over all creation,  
we have too often acted as though you are powerless  
in the face of today's events.  
Help us to live with confidence in your presence today  
and in hope for life with you forever. Amen.**

May God our Father forgive you your sins and bring you the fellowship of his table  
with his saints for ever. **Amen.**

### Collect

Let us pray that our risen and ascended Lord will lead us to eternal life:  
Grant, we pray, almighty God,  
that as we believe your only-begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ  
to have ascended into the heavens,  
so we in heart and mind may also ascend  
and with him continually dwell;  
who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

### Gloria

**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.**

**Ascension Day Dramatic Reading** *Based on Acts 1 with permission from Sam Hargreaves.*

Read by Bob Barker

Whoosh! Just like that! Like a rocket, Zooooom, that's how he went! Better than any fireworks I've ever seen! And we were watching to see where he was going when a cloud came across, and, well, that was it. Gone. Ascended.

I didn't want him to go. He'd already left us once, and that was awful. We just didn't know what to do with ourselves, we moped around, fearful for our lives, fearful for our sanity. I mean, he was our hope, we'd left everything for him. And he had promised that he would never leave us or forsake us. So when he died, what did that mean? Wasn't he who we thought he was? Was he a fake or a fool, or even a fiend? So many questions and doubts. We needed him, he was showing us the way, the way to be human, to live without the legalism of the Pharisees or the rule or the Romans. But it was just those things, which caused his death. I just didn't understand.

Then he came back. He came back! Who has ever come back from the dead! (Well, except Lazarus, and that little girl, and... er, well, perhaps I should have trusted him a bit more.) Anyway he rose again just like he said he would. And he gave us convincing proofs he was alive, showing us his wounds and eating fish and everything! I mean, ghosts don't eat fish, do they? And he spoke to us about the Kingdom of God, and it all started to make sense, all that stuff we'd heard before but hadn't really grasped until, well, until he'd died I guess.

One time when we were eating he said "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptised with water, but in a few days you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit." I got all excited and said "Lord, Lord are you are this time going to restore the Kingdom of Israel?" He looked at me in his way which means "you haven't quite got it yet, have you?" I'm getting used to that look.

He said "It's not for you to know the times and dates the Father has set for his own authority. 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."

Whoosh! Zooooom! Gone! Ascended. Before I'd even had chance to ask him what he was going on about. And we are all standing there looking up into the sky like a load of ninnies, when we hear a voice:

"Men of Galilee, why do you stand here looking into the sky?" Fair question I guess. They mustn't have seen the Whoosh! But now I think about it they did look pretty amazing themselves, all white and shiny, like people from heaven.

They said "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."

I looked at my watch and was about to ask if they could give an estimated time of return, but they'd already gone.

So here we are back in Jerusalem. We're praying and waiting, waiting and praying, and I can't say I'm not excited about the coming of the Holy Spirit, whatever that might be. But to be honest I'd rather Jesus came back himself. I need him. No one knows me like he does. No one shows me God like he does. But I guess even more than that the world needs him. Israel needs to be restored, God's Kingdom needs to come to this world, and Jesus is the only one to do it, I really believe that. But I'm worried that not one Jesus would be enough, it's like we need God to send maybe 100 or 1000 little Jesus', going around and spreading his Kingdom. Little Christs, empowered to do his work. We can't do it, we are useless. Come on God, we need your help!

### **The Gospel** – read by Bob Barker

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke 24:44-53

#### ***Glory to you O Lord***

<sup>44</sup> Jesus said to them, 'This is what I told you while I was still with you: everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.'

<sup>45</sup> Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. <sup>46</sup> He told them, 'This is what is written: the Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, <sup>47</sup> and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup> You are witnesses of these things. <sup>49</sup> I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.'

<sup>50</sup> When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. <sup>51</sup> While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. <sup>52</sup> Then they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. <sup>53</sup> And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.

This is the Gospel of the Lord

**Praise to you O Christ**

### **Sermon**

#### **Music composed and played by Bob Barker**

#### **Affirmation of Faith** (*from 1 Timothy 3:16, 6:15-16*)

Without question, this is the great mystery of our faith:

**Christ appeared in the flesh and was shown to be righteous by the Spirit.**

**He was seen by angels and was announced to the nations.**

**He was believed on in the world and was taken up in to heaven.**

**At the right time Christ will be revealed from heaven**

**by the blessed and only almighty God,**

**the King of kings and Lord of lords.**

**He alone can never die, and he lives in light so brilliant**

**that no human can approach him, nor ever will. Amen.**

## Intercessions – by Reader Roy Pinnock

*Please kneel or sit for Intercessions. During the prayers the Intercessor may say*  
Lord in your mercy  
**Hear our prayer**

*At the end :*

Merciful Father  
**Accept these prayers for the sake of your Son**  
**Our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.**

## The Peace

Jesus says: 'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.  
If you love me, rejoice because I am going to the Father'. Alleluia. (*John 14.27,28*)

The peace of the Lord be always with you  
**and also with you.**

## Prayer at the preparation of the Altar

Blessed be God, by whose grace creation is renewed,  
by whose love heaven is opened, by whose mercy we offer our sacrifice of praise.  
**Blessed be God for ever.**

## Eucharistic Prayer A

The Lord is here. **His Spirit is with us.**  
Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**  
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.  
**It is right to give thanks and praise.**

It is indeed right, it is our duty and our joy,  
at all times and in all places to give you thanks and praise,  
holy Father, heavenly King, almighty and eternal God,  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord.

And now we give you thanks because, after his most glorious resurrection,  
he appeared to his disciples, and in their sight ascended into heaven to prepare a place for us;  
that where he is, thither we might also ascend, and reign with him in glory.  
Therefore with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven,  
we proclaim your great and glorious name,  
for ever praising you and *saying:*

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,**  
**heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.**  
**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.**  
**Hosanna in the highest.**

Accept our praises, heavenly Father,  
through your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ,  
and as we follow his example and obey his command,  
grant that by the power of your Holy Spirit  
these gifts of bread and wine may be to us his body and his blood; +  
who, in the same night that he was betrayed,  
took bread and gave you thanks;  
he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying:  
Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;  
do this in remembrance of me.  
**To you be glory and praise for ever.**

In the same way, after supper he took the cup and gave you thanks;  
he gave it to them, saying:  
Drink this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant,  
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.  
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.  
**To you be glory and praise for ever.**

Therefore, heavenly Father, we remember his offering of himself  
made once for all upon the cross;  
we proclaim his mighty resurrection and glorious ascension;  
we look for the coming of your kingdom,  
and with this bread and this cup we make the memorial of Christ your Son our Lord.

Great is the mystery of faith  
**Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again**

Accept through him, our great high priest,  
this our sacrifice of thanks and praise,  
and as we eat and drink these holy gifts  
in the presence of your divine majesty,  
renew us by your Spirit, inspire us with your love  
and unite us in the body of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.  
**To you be glory and praise for ever.**

Through him, and with him, and in him,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
with all who stand before you in earth and heaven,  
we worship you, Father almighty,  
in songs of everlasting praise:  
**Blessing and honour and glory and power  
be yours for ever and ever. Amen.**

## The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray:

**All: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,  
your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom,  
the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.**

## Breaking of the bread

May we become as this blessed bread, a blessed people,  
blessed and broken in the love and care of one another.  
We who eat of the same bread, even though varied and different  
like its many grains of wheat, are one in the body of Christ.

**Jesus, Lamb of God, have mercy on us.**

**Jesus, bearer of our sins, have mercy on us.**

**Jesus, redeemer of the world, grant us peace.**

I heard the voice of a great multitude crying, Alleluia.

The Lord our God has entered into his kingdom.

**Blessed are those who are called to the supper of the Lamb. Alleluia.**

## Post communion Prayer

God our Father, you have raised our humanity in Christ  
and have fed us with the bread of heaven:  
mercifully grant that, nourished with such spiritual blessings,  
we may set our hearts in the heavenly places;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**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 for ever. Amen.**

## Commission and Blessing *(Acts 1:1-11, Ephesians 1:15-23)*

Go out into the world, and in your words and in your lives bear witness to the Christ  
who has ascended to be everywhere present.

And as you come to know him, may God give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation,  
may Christ Jesus lift up his hands and bless you,  
and may the Spirit open to you all the riches of Christ's inheritance.  
And the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
be with each one of you, and those on your heart, today and always. **Amen**

**A reading from the Acts of the Apostles** (*Acts 1:12,13a,14*)

Then the disciples returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey away. When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying.

They were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.

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

Alleluia, alleluia.

**Thanks be to God. Alleluia, alleluia.**