

**COLLECT, READINGS AND REFLECTION**  
**SUNDAY 21 MAY 2023- 7<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY OF EASTER**

**COLLECT**

O God the King of glory,  
you have exalted your only Son Jesus Christ with great triumph to your kingdom in heaven:  
we beseech you, leave us not comfortless, but send your Holy Spirit to strengthen us  
and exalt us to the place where our Saviour Christ is gone before,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

**Psalm 68. 1-10, 32-35**

- 1 Let God arise and let his enemies be scattered; ♦  
let those that hate him flee before him.
- 2 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.
- 3 But let the righteous be glad and rejoice before God; ♦  
let them make merry with gladness.
- 4 Sing to God, sing praises to his name; ♦  
exalt him who rides on the clouds. ♦  
The Lord is his name; rejoice before him.
- 5 Father of the fatherless, defender of widows, ♦  
God in his holy habitation!
- 6 God gives the solitary a home ♦  
and brings forth prisoners to songs of welcome, ♦  
but the rebellious inhabit a burning desert.
- 7 O God, when you went forth before your people, ♦  
when you marched through the wilderness,
- 8 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.
- 9 You sent down a gracious rain, O God; ♦  
you refreshed your inheritance when it was weary.
- 10 Your people came to dwell there; ♦  
in your goodness, O God, you provide for the poor.
- 32 Sing to God, you kingdoms of the earth; ♦  
make music in praise of the Lord;
- 33 He rides on the ancient heaven of heavens ♦  
and sends forth his voice, a mighty voice.
- 34 Ascribe power to God, whose splendour is over Israel, ♦  
whose power is above the clouds.
- 35 How terrible is God in his holy sanctuary, ♦  
the God of Israel, who gives power and strength to his people! Blessed be God.

## Acts 1.6-14

### The Ascension of Jesus

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.' 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 towards heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. 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.'

### Matthias Chosen to Replace Judas

Then they 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, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.

## **Gospel Acclamation**

Alleluia! **Alleluia!**

This is the day that the Lord has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it.

**Alleluia!**

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to John, chapter 17, verses 1 to 11

**Glory to you, O Lord**

**John 17.1-11**

**Jesus Prays for His Disciples**

After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, 'Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed.

'I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.

This is the Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

## ***A Reflection from Hannah...***

For our reflection this week, I offer you an excerpt from this year's *Thy Kingdom Come Novena*- [TKC Novena 2023 DIGITAL.pdf \(thykingdomcome.global\)](#). As I'm sure you know, the period between Ascension Day and Pentecost has become established as a season of prayer and waiting upon the Holy Spirit's wisdom. This reflection, written by The Very Reverend Bob Key, helps us to do that:

### **A S C E N S I O N D A Y**

#### ***The God who reigns***

They were looking intently up into the sky as He was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. '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.' (Acts 1.10-11)

Angels get some crazy lines in the Bible. Gabriel appears to the teenager Mary in her simple house in Palestine and says, 'Fear not!' The shepherds outside Bethlehem, a group not known for their religious devotion, are told there is good news of great joy for them. The Ascension story is the same. The angels (young men in white) ask the disciples: 'Why are you standing here looking into the sky?' Surely one of the Apostles must have thought: 'Why do you think we are? Jesus has just gone there and in the last six weeks our world has been turned upsidedown. We have watched Him die, met Him alive again, had a wonderful time with Him of forgiveness, renewal, and teaching. Now He isn't here anymore.'

My sympathy is entirely with Peter, James, John, and the others.

The angels are quite clear. Jesus has gone and He has told the disciples what to do. They are to wait for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Then, in His power, go into the whole world, even those parts they didn't know existed. They are to proclaim the good news of God's saving love in Jesus Christ. They are to call people to repent and believe in the Saviour.

That was, is, and always will be the task the church has been given to do. That's it, in all its biblical clarity and simplicity. The Lord who ascended to heaven and reigns in glory has given us one great commission. We are to show and tell the good news of Jesus. In the book of Acts, St Luke shows us that this wonderful good news is demonstrated in every healing, every sermon, every breaking down of cultural barriers, in the provision of food for the poor in Jerusalem, in Paul taking on the philosophers in Athens, and so much more.

As we journey from Ascension to Pentecost, we follow the example of the first disciples. They prayed as they had never prayed before (Acts 1:14) and they planned for mission. Praying for our five folk who are not yet following Jesus is one way of getting involved in what God, the God who reigns, is doing. Just as those first disciples in Acts, we are to be living out the Kingdom. Everything we say and do becomes part of the proclamation. We are to be God's adverts, living icons of His love in the world.