**Reflection for Ascension Day**

**Call to worship**

Jesus, Son of God, who was lifted into heaven, **we worship you with great joy.**
Jesus, Son of God, raised far above all rule 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, **we worship you with great joy.**
Jesus, Son of God, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, and whose kingship is one that shall never be destroyed, **we worship you with great joy.**

**Hymn StF 315 We sing the praise of Jesus *Norman Wallwork***

[*https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pPol2RwXneg*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pPol2RwXneg)

**1 We sing the praise of Jesus 2. Rejoicing in Christ’s promise**

 **of our ascending Lord; we wait in prayer and praise,**

 **the triumph of our Saviour, the Spirit sent from heaven**

 **of Christ the Son of God. To set the earth ablaze;**

 **The forty days are over, we pray with expectation,**

 **earth sees his face no more; we praise with one accord,**

 **but Christ the King of glory we wait for living fire**

 **we worship and adore. the power of the Lord.**

**3. Therefore with saints and angels 4. With songs of alleluia**

 **and all the hosts above let earth and heaven ring;**

 **we lift our hearts and voices and praises to the Father**

 **to bless the God of love; let all creation sing.**

 **to sing of our Redeemer All honour be to Jesus,**

 **who intercedes and prays, God’s own eternal Son;**

 **that God the Holy Spirit and to the Holy Sprit**

 **may guide us all our days. Let endless praise be done!**

**A prayer of praise and confession**

God of glory and love and power and possibility,
we celebrate with you the work of Jesus,
his humility and care, his love for the truth,
his commitment to your plan up to and through and beyond his death,
his achievement of reconciling the world to you.
We celebrate his homecoming with you and with all the angels of heaven.
We bend our knees in awe and we lift up our hearts and our hands in worship.

Forgive the lack of worship in our lives.
We are grumpy and self-centred.
We refuse to lift up our eyes to see you
and to open our ears and hear your wonderful commission,
and so our lives fail to speak of you and to serve you.
Today, your day of glory, draw us to yourself.
Accept and heal and empower us.
Draw us into your life and your work
so that we may draw others, too,
to love and praise and live for you. **Amen.**

**Bible reading: Mark 16: 19 – 20**

**19**After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God. **20**Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it.

**Some thoughts on the Ascension of Jesus**

In between all the drama and action of the Easter story and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost we have the unspectacular account of Jesus’s ascension…….*”he was taken up to heaven”* is the six letter phrase used by both Mark and Luke to record the event, and Matthew doesn’t even give it mention. Compared with the send-off Elijah received with a fiery chariot *(2 Kings 2:11)*, Jesus’s departure could even be considered a non-event, but of course to do so would miss the point of this occasion. The significance is not in the nature of the ascension, but in what came before and after, neatly summarised in these two verses from Mark’s Gospel. First, the event occurred *“after the Lord Jesus had spoken to them.”*  The disciples had been with Jesus the best part of three years when he had spoken with them a great deal, but this was a different kind of encounter. I recall when I retired some 14 years ago there were numerous “hand-over” meetings preparing my successor as best I could for what might await him. We sometimes use the expression *“handing over the mantle”* which comes from the Elijah story mentioned already – Elijah literally passed on his mantle, his cloak, to Elisha his successor. This was the handover meeting that Matthew expresses as the Great Commission *(Matthew 27: 18 -20)* Mark uses similar words when he says *“go throughout the whole world and preach the gospel to the whole human race” (Mark 16: 15)* I recall my successor looking somewhat apprehensive as I went through the tasks I had undertaken as part of my role. Goodness knows what those first disciples must have felt! But you know what? They did just that for the second thing we note from the Mark passage is that they *“went out and preached everywhere.”* Mission accomplished! Well not quite. Jesus knew that what he was asking his disciples was the start of an ongoing task, and in that respect he wasn’t just addressing them but the millions of disciples who were to follow down the ages, and he’s addressing those of us today who seek to carry out his work of letting everyone know of God’s wonderful love. Writing this during lockdown has made me even more conscious of how we can keep the message going and as a person of limited technology skills I admire those who are using the whole of social media to ensure the message goes on. Jesus clearly knew that the task he was asking wasn’t a short term contract, but a job for life. As we give thanks on Ascension Day for those who have gone before us keeping the message going, some well-known names, some known just to us, but many more unknown names who have faithfully taken up the challenge, we might ask ourselves how we can play our part in continuing that message in a world in need of good news. If you think that’s a big challenge, remember Jesus’s words, *“I am with you always.”* You’re never alone, even in isolation.Amen

**A prayer for others**

As you leave the world, Lord Jesus, you continue to care for it.
You have made us your witnesses, so bless your Church throughout the world
that your disciples everywhere may be continually telling the Good News, by word and action.
We pray especially for our churches in the Ripon and Lower Dales circuit during this time of closure. May our congregations find ways to continue in your praise and service.

Bless this neighbourhood and let your kingdom come. We pray especially for those who are finding the current situation of lockdown difficult to endure, especially those concerned for their livelihood and employment; for young people worried about what is the next stage for them as their choices are diminished; for those worried about the health and welfare of their families; for those who work in the hospitals, surgeries, care homes currently confronting the corona virus; for those who are working under difficulties to ensure that we have food to eat and our essential services are working. We pray for those who are ill and for those who are bereaved, naming in our minds those who’s pain and sadness we are close to.

Lord, you promised that you would be with us always as we work to establish your kingdom on earth.
We thank you for those who are working for justice and peace and ask that we, your commissioned witnesses, may work both with them and with you for the good of all.
You send us to proclaim the Good News to the ends of the earth, so activate us to be involved and let what we do and say be a blessing for your creation.
**Amen.**

**Hymn StF 410 Lord, your Church on earth is seeking** *Hugh Sherlock*

[*https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=grlfOrHpNtc*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=grlfOrHpNtc)

1. Lord, your Church on Earth is seeking
Your renewal from above;
Teach us all the art of speaking
With the accent of your love.
We would heed your great commission;
“Go ye into every place;
Preach, baptise, fulfil my mission,
Serve with love and share my grace.”

2. Freedom give to those in bondage,
Lift the burdens caused by sin;
Give new hope, new strength and courage,
Grant release from fears within.
Light for darkness, joy for sorrow;
Love for hatred, peace for strife.
These and countless blessings follow
As the Spirit gives new life.

3. In the streets of every city
Where the bruised and lonely dwell,
We shall show the Saviour’s pity,
We shall of His mercy tell.
In all lands and with all races
We shall serve and seek to bring
All the world to render praises,
Christ, to you, Redeemer, King.

**Closing responses**

Holy Jesus, we have seen you and known you.
We know your glory and your love.
**We lift up our hearts to bless you.**
As you lifted up your hands to bless your disciples
you lift them today to bless us, and in response,
**we lift up our hands to bless you.**
You have promised us the power of your Spirit
to guide and empower us in the work you call us to.
**We lift up our lives to bless you. Amen**