

This week we are encouraged to explore the Ascension of Jesus, and what that means for the Disciples and for us.

But this week is a double celebration for Methodists as we also celebrate that time when John Wesley came to a full realisation of God's love for him and all people.

And so we will start with a grand Wesley Hymn, then we move into the Ascension of Jesus and the time between then and Pentecost which we celebrate next week. Then I want to move on to look at lovely Psalm, known as the Psalm of Ascents, I think it has a lot to tell us for these times. Finally, I want to leave you with a prayer and some space to pray and reflect on what this time means for you.

But let's start with a celebration of John Wesley's evening in Aldersgate with a Hymn than expresses how he felt after waiting for God to be real for him.

**HYMN 364 (StF)**

**OH FOR A THOUSAND TONGUES TO SING**

<https://youtu.be/i289qFwVGKo>

*Oh for a thousand tongues to sing  
My great Redeemer's praise  
The glories of my God and King  
The triumphs of His grace*

*Jesus! the name that charms our fears  
That bids our sorrows cease  
'Tis music in the sinner's ears  
'Tis life and health and peace*

*He breaks the power of cancelled sin  
He sets the prisoner free  
His blood can make the foulest clean  
His blood availed for me*

*He speaks, and listening to His voice  
New life the dead receive  
The mournful, broken hearts rejoice  
The humble poor believe*

*Hear Him, ye deaf; His praise, ye dumb  
Your loosened tongues employ  
Ye blind, behold your Saviour come  
And leap, ye lame, for joy*

*My gracious Master and my God  
Assist me to proclaim*

*To spread through all the earth abroad  
The honours of your name*

**PRAYER**

Let's open ourselves up to God in prayer for a while **(taken from the Service for today on the Methodist Church Website)**

Everyday God, We praise you that you are with us in every part of our lives and you never stop loving us. We praise you for the world you created and the beautiful things we see around us.

We praise you that you came to earth in Jesus to show us in person how much you care about us and the world we live in. As we remember your Ascension we thank you that you did not leave us alone but sent your Spirit so that we can always know you are with us.

You invite us to join in your work of loving people and the planet and we pray that you show us how we can share in your mission of love. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

God of overwhelming grace,  
you ignited the spark of your grace in John and Charles Wesley and a passion for holiness, justice and sharing your great love with others.

Warm our hearts that we may trust in you. Renew our conviction and inspire us to embrace new opportunities even in difficulty. Pour out your spirit on your people that we may be united in your love and ready to share hope with the world through Jesus who is one with you.

Amen

Let's read the reading for today from Luke's Second book, the book of Acts

**Acts chapter 14 - 11**

*As they met and ate meals together, he told them that they were on no account to leave Jerusalem but "must wait for what the Father promised: the promise you heard from me. John baptized in water; you will be baptized in the Holy Spirit. And soon." When they were together for the last time they asked, "Master, are you going to restore the kingdom to Israel now? Is this the time?" He told them, "You don't get to know the time. Timing is the Father's business. What you'll get is the Holy Spirit. And when the Holy Spirit comes on you, you will be able to be my witnesses in Jerusalem, all over Judea and Samaria, even to the ends of the world."*

Take a moment to let that sink in, maybe read it again.

### SHORT REFLECTION

The Disciples were told by Jesus to WAIT for what the Father had promised, but even so they were impatient for the future - "Master, are you going to restore the kingdom to Israel now? Is this the time?". Jesus' answer probably didn't help very much. "You don't get to know the time. Timing is the Father's business". But Jesus also points to a time of hope, the Disciples didn't know when or how, but they were told that there was a future for them and that they would be prepared for that in the coming of the Holy Spirit. And so it is for us too. We may not know when but we are told to wait for God's blessing.

### HYMN StF 315

#### WE SING THE PRAISE OF JESUS

<https://youtu.be/7OsUkb0W2Sq>

*We sing the praise of Jesus  
Of our ascended Lord  
The triumph of our saviour  
Of Christ the Son of God  
The forty days are over  
Earth sees his face no more  
But Christ the King of Glory  
We worship and adore.*

*Rejoicing in Christ promise  
We wait in prayer and praise  
The Spirit sent from haven  
to set the earth ablaze  
We pray with expectation  
We praise with one accord  
We wait for living fire  
The power of the Lord*

*Therefore with saints and angels  
And all the hosts above  
We lift our hearts and voices  
To bless the God of love  
To sing of our redeemer  
Who intercedes and prays  
That God the Holy Spirit  
May guide us all our days*

*With Sings of alleluia  
Let earth and heaven ring  
And praises to the Father  
Let all creation sing*

*All honour be to Jesus  
God's own eternal son  
And to the Holy Spirit  
Let endless praise be done*

### SOME THOUGHTS ON WAITING

Right now, we have all been waiting; Waiting for news that we can go outside, Waiting in queues to get into Supermarkets, Waiting for shopping to be delivered, Waiting to hear from those we love by Letter, by phone and by computer screen. Life seems to be full of Waiting.

Waiting has become so much part of what we do now that it is becoming normal, but I wonder of something has also changed about our waiting.

There was a time when waiting was a chore; we rushed about here and there, rushing to get to a meeting, rushing to catch a train, rushing to get the washing dry before the rain comes, and certainly rushing to get home after supermarket shopping to get on with something more interesting or more important. If the queue at one till was a person too long, we swapped and hoped that the next queue was quicker. If someone took a little longer than we thought was appropriate or (heaven forbid) entered into a discussion with the person on the till then we might begin to feel the pressure of those extra seconds ticking away.

But now, waiting seems to be OK, perhaps because we have learned that we cannot just rush into the shops, or race around anymore. Instead we have learned Waiting. For some this has been a simple lesson, maybe you were already quite good at waiting patiently. For others, and I count myself as one, this has been an interesting lesson in patience and waiting.

And with that waiting comes some real benefits. I have discovered that people are talking more together – initially it is about the situation and when will it come to an end, but after a time, when we run out of things to say about that we start to discover stuff, initially we chat about the weather, then likes and dislikes and then perhaps we discover something that we have in common and that leads to a whole new discussion. And before you know it, they are next into the shop and maybe we never see them again, but because we have waited, we have

found out so much more than we might have done if we were just rushing around.

This was the case for the Psalmist in Psalm 130, he was waiting too.

## PSALM

*Let's read this slowly; Psalms are written to be read, each line in a breath, with a pause as we breath in between each of the lines. Don't be too eager for the next line to rush towards you, wait for it to come and then welcome it as you breath out the words that were breathed out by God to the Psalmist*

### **Psalm 130**

*A song of ascents.*

**1***Out of the depths I cry to you, Lord;*

**2***Lord, hear my voice.*

*Let your ears be attentive  
to my cry for mercy.*

**3***If you, Lord, kept a record of sins,  
Lord, who could stand?*

**4***But with you there is forgiveness,  
so that we can, with reverence, serve you.*

**5***I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits,  
and in his word I put my hope.*

**6***I wait for the Lord  
more than watchmen wait for the morning,*

**7***Israel, put your hope in the Lord,  
for with the Lord is unfailing love  
and with him is full redemption.*

**8***He himself will redeem Israel  
from all their sins.*

I love the way the Psalmist, it could have been David - others suggest Ezra who was in exile, expresses the idea of Waiting here;

**5***I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits,  
and*

**6***I wait for the Lord  
more than watchmen wait for the morning,*

My whole being waits! It is as if the psalmist is trying to express the deepness of the waiting, not just a fleeting waiting, not just an impatient 'mind-racing-to-the-next-thing' waiting, but a 'whole being' of waiting, fully occupied and focussed on waiting. Even so that waiting has a desire behind it, as the watchmen desire the morning so they can be relieved of their watch, so the Psalmist desire the Lords arrival again.

But that waiting is being put to use too;

**....and in his word I put my hope.**

Here is a lovely thing, no matter what the waiting or how long it may be, Psalmist knew to hope in the promises of Lord God that all will come to the best outcome. And then he tells the readers;

**7***Israel, put your hope in the Lord,  
for with the Lord is unfailing love  
and with him is full redemption.*

**8***He himself will redeem Israel  
from all their sins.*

This Psalmist knows that God is in control, we may need to wait for Him to bring about His promises, but it will end if full redemption and freedom for those that wait.

And so it is for us too. The Disciples were told to Wait for God's promise, the Psalmist waited with all he was knowing the promise of God. That same promise is for you and me too. This waiting time will pass, we may not yet know when or maybe even how, but we can hold onto Gods promise, "**for with the Lord is unfailing love and with him is full redemption.**"

**Amen**

## PRAYER

*A prayer about waiting by Christina Fox*

Father in Heaven,

I come before you with my heart filled with so many different thoughts and feelings. I am tense and uncertain about what I should be doing and where I should go.

I feel weak and helpless. Powerless. I am worried about what happens next and whether I have the strength to handle it.

Deep down I wonder, how long will I be here? Will I be stuck in this place of waiting forever? And why am I here to begin with? What's happening, Lord? But most of all, I wonder, where are you? Why haven't you responded to my cries for help?

But even as I pray that, **I know you are right where you've always said you would be.** You've never left me and you will never forsake me. You are not deaf to my cries. In fact, you know the thoughts in my heart before I even think them. You know exactly what is happening, why I am here, and what is going to happen next.

All things are in your sovereign care and control. Nothing happens outside your knowledge and will. Not even a hair falls from my head without your willing it to happen. Nothing surprises you or takes you off guard. Including this issue right here, right now.

You know why I am here waiting and you have promised to use it for your glory and my good. Forgive me for all my doubts, worries, and fears. Forgive me for my impatience as I wait in this place. Forgive me for questioning the story you've written for me. Forgive me for not seeking your face and allowing the struggles before me to seem greater and stronger than your grace and mercy for me. Cleanse my heart of all that keeps me from you.

I believe, help me in my unbelief! Help me to remember that it is good to wait for you. "It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord" (Lam 3:26).

As I wait, help me to remember and dwell on the salvation you've provided for me through Christ. Help me to remember that the same grace that saved me at the cross is the same grace that sustains me today. And that same grace is at work in me even now, shaping me into the image of your Son. And no matter what happens, no matter my current circumstances, I am safe in the shelter of your wings. There is nothing that can separate me from your love. Nothing and no one can snatch me from your hands.

Grant me the joy that comes from knowing you and being known by you. Fill my heart with gospel joy. Strengthen me by your word. May the words of the Psalmist be true of me, "I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I hope" (Psalm 130:5). Help me to remain faithful in this place of waiting. Help me to serve you and live for you even in this crossroad of my life. Help me to wait as long as it takes.

I pray all these things because of Jesus and in his name,

Amen.

#### **The Lord's prayer**

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.  
Amen

#### **HYMN**

##### **To be in your presence StF 530**

<https://youtu.be/typ7cueKdT4>

To be in your presence  
To sit at your feet,  
Where Your love surrounds me,  
And makes me complete;  
*This is my desire, O Lord*  
*This is my desire.*  
*This is my desire, O Lord*  
*This is my desire.*

To rest in your presence,  
Not rushing away,  
To cherish each moment –  
Here I will stay.  
*This is my desire, O Lord.....*

Don't rush away from this moment, instead take a moment to wait a while. Perhaps some music to help, but wait a while and know that God is with you – He always is.

Amen