

**Thursday 26 May 2022**

# Ascension Day



The observance of Ascension Day is of great antiquity. Ascension Day is also called the Feast of the Ascension. The *Book of Common Prayer* calls it 'Holy Thursday' but that usage today is very rare. The feast commemorates the bodily ascension of Jesus into heaven, forty days after the resurrection.

The account in Acts 1:3 says that Jesus appeared to his disciples during the forty days after his resurrection. For that reason, Ascension Day is always celebrated on a Thursday, the fortieth day of Easter. The Church calendar used in Britain means the earliest possible date for Ascension Day is April 30 (as in 1818 and 2285) and the latest possible date is June 3 (as in 1943 and 2038).

**Sermon** © Revd Dr Paul Monk.

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- The hymns are YouTube links. To hear the hymns please hover the mouse over each link, press Ctrl and then return.
- To see service transcripts from previous weeks, please visit the page, <http://www.medlockhead.co.uk/resources/index.htm>

## Introduction and welcome

**HYMN 1 Crown him with many crowns**  
**Crown him with many crowns**

(rock version)  
(traditional version)

God has gone up with a shout,

**All the Lord with the sound of a trumpet.**

In the name of the Father,

and of the Son,

and of the Holy Spirit.

**All Amen**

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.

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

While staying with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. 'This', he said, 'is what you have heard from me; for John baptised with water, but you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.' 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.' *Acts 1:4-11*

## The Gloria

Seeing we have a great high priest who has passed through the heaven,  
Jesus the Son of God, let us offer him the praise that is worthy of his name.

**All**    **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.**

## The Collect for Ascension Day

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.

**All**    **Amen.**

## First reading

A reading from the prophecy of Daniel

As I watched, thrones were set in place,  
and an Ancient One took his throne,  
his clothing was white as snow,  
and the hair of his head like pure wool;  
his throne was fiery flames,  
and its wheels were burning fire.

A stream of fire issued  
and flowed out from his presence.

A thousand thousands served him,  
and ten thousand times ten thousand stood attending him.

The court sat in judgment,  
and the books were opened.

I watched then because of the noise of the arrogant words that the horn was speaking. And as I watched, the beast was put to death, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire. As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time. As I watched in the night visions, I saw one like a human being coming with the clouds of heaven. And he came to the Ancient One and was presented before him. To him was given dominion and glory and kingship, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, and his kingship is one that shall never be destroyed. *Daniel 7:9-14*

This is the Word of the Lord

**All Thanks be to God.**

## Second reading

A reading from St Paul's Letter to the Ephesians

I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers.

I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints and what is the

immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand 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 also in the age to come. 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. *Ephesians 1:15-23*

This is the Word of the Lord

**All Thanks be to God.**

**HYMN 2 Hail the day that sees him rise** (please click on this link to hear the hymn)  
**Hail the day that sees him rise** (folk-song style)

## **Gospel reading**

Alleluia, alleluia.

Go and make disciples of all nations, says the Lord.

Remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke

**All Glory to you O Lord.**

Jesus said to them, 'These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.'

Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.'

Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and they were continually in the temple blessing God. *Luke 24:44-end*

This is the Gospel of the Lord

**All Praise to you O Christ.**

## Sermon

Ascension Day occurs exactly forty days after Easter. Why forty?

In the Hebrew-speaking world and the Middle East, 'forty' was a common, colloquial way of round up a number to mean 'many' in much the same way that we might exaggerate and say, 'lots' or 'squillions'. Think of 'Ali Baba and the *forty* thieves.' That same usage could explain the apparent repetition in Scripture: in the story of Noah, it rained for forty days; Moses was forty years of age when he fled into the wilderness; he led the chosen people for forty years and fasted before forty days before receiving the Law. Similarly, Jesus fasted in the wilderness for forty days; and his Glorious Ascension to Heaven occurred forty days after his Resurrection.

What is the meaning of the forty-day period between the Resurrection and the Ascension? We do not know for certain, but many medieval writers said it was symbolic: just as Moses was on top of a mountain for forty days before receiving the Law and Ten Commandments, so Jesus was communing with God before giving one more, final commandment:

Jesus said [commanded], 'Go out into all the world and make disciples of all nations. Baptise them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; teach them to obey everything I have taught you. And remember, I with you always, to the very end of the age'. *Matthew 28:18-20*

God gave Moses the Ten Commandments when he had been acting as a judge and his father-in-law wisely told him to seek help. Their story appears in Exodus 18:

Moses sat as judge for the people, while the people stood around him from morning until evening. When Moses' father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he said, 'What is this that you are doing for the people? Why do you sit alone, while all the people stand around you from morning until evening?'

Moses said to his father-in-law, 'Because the people come to me to inquire of God. When they have a dispute, they come to me and I decide between one person and another, and I make known to them the statutes and instructions of God.' Moses' father-in-law said to him, 'What you are doing is not good. You will surely wear yourself out, both you and these people with you. For the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone.

'Now listen to me. I will give you counsel, and God be with you! You should represent the people before God, and you should bring their

cases before God; teach them the statutes and instructions and make known to them the way they are to go and the things they are to do. You should also look for able men among all the people, men who fear God, are trustworthy, and hate dishonest gain; set such men over them as officers over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. Let them sit as judges for the people at all times; let them bring every important case to you but decide every minor case themselves. It will be easier for you and they will bear the burden with you. If you do this, and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all these people will go to their home in peace.'

Moses listened to his father-in-law and did all that he had said.

*Exodus 18:13-24*

The Ten Commandments were given to Moses in response to infantilism by the people who needed to grow, spiritually. Instead of Moses alone knowing the Law (he was uniquely close to God, remember) God gave the Law so that everyone could know God's intentions for righteous living. Similarly, the disciples alone enjoyed having Jesus with them, seeing his actions and hearing his teaching, and needed to grow spiritually. Jesus gave them a new law, with baptism and teaching as its outward signs, and with a living relationship with God its intended result. That 'living relationship' was/is achieved when the Holy Spirit dwells in a soul as a result of baptism.

We see the progression: Moses fasted forty days then received the Law which, when lived, leads to righteousness. Jesus fasted forty days and was baptised into his Messiahship, which gave him the power to teach, heal, and enforce that righteousness. At the end of a forty-day Lent, Jesus gave the New Commandment which passed on the New Law explaining how to live that righteousness, transmuting that righteousness into sanctification. And the risen Christ waited a further forty days then gave the 'final commandment' which teaches how to pass on that sanctification to all.

These four stages, then, describe a spiritual trajectory: we're taught righteousness then share it with others; we receive sanctification then pass it to others. Through this process of caught and then taught, the Christian ideal propagates and enlivens.

## Creed

Do you believe and trust in God the Father,  
the source of all being and life,  
the one for whom we exist?

**All We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Son,  
who took our human nature,  
died for us and rose again?

**All We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit,  
who gives life to the people of God  
and makes Christ known in the world?

**All We believe and trust in him.**

This is the faith of the Church.

**All This is our faith.**

**We believe and trust in one God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.  
Amen.**

## Prayers of intercession

Almighty God, our heavenly Father,  
you have exalted your Son Christ Jesus to your right hand,  
and made him the head over all things for his body the Church:  
hear us as we pray for the Church throughout the world ...

Make us and all your people receptive to the gifts he pours upon us,  
that we may use them to your glory,  
and the building up of the body of Christ.

Lord, in your mercy:

**All hear our prayer**

Lord God Almighty, the Ancient of Days,  
you have given your Son all authority in heaven and on earth:  
hear us as we pray for the world he came to redeem ...

Grant that we may know even in this time the things that make for peace,  
and may strive for the reconciliation of all people

in his kingdom of justice and love.

Lord, in your mercy:

**All**    **hear our prayer**

Father of all, whose Son has promised to be with us always,  
to the end of the age:

hear us as we pray for those among whom we live and work ...

Grant that we may be so aware of his presence with us,  
that people may take note of us, that we have been with Jesus.

Lord, in your mercy:

**All**    **hear our prayer**

O God our Redeemer, whose Son ever lives to make intercession for us:  
hear us as we pray for those in any kind of need ...

May he who has borne our infirmities strengthen and heal them,  
that they may find grace to help in time of need,  
and rejoice in his salvation.

Lord, in your mercy:

**All**    **hear our prayer**

Heavenly Father, whose Son has borne our humanity into the heavenly realms,  
and gone before us to prepare a place for us:

hear us as we remember before you those whose earthly sojourn is over,  
and whose life is now hidden in him with you ...

Make us joyful and expectant, that at his coming with all his own  
we too may go forth to meet him and share in his eternal joy.

**All**    **hear our prayer**

Merciful Father,

**All**    **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.

The peace of the Lord be always with you,

**All And also with you. Alleluia!**

**HYMN 3 Of the Father's heart begotten**  
**Of the Father's heart begotten**  
**Of the Father's heart begotten**

[\(click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

[\(instrumental version\)](#)

[\(sung as plainchant\)](#)

## The Liturgy of the Sacrament

### Eucharistic Prayer (prayer E)

The Lord be with you

**All and also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**All We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**All It is right to give thanks and praise.**

It is indeed right and good,

our duty and our joy,

always and everywhere to give you thanks,

holy Father, almighty and eternal God,

through Jesus Christ the King of glory.

Born of a woman,

he came to the rescue of our human race.

Dying for us,

he trampled death and conquered sin.

By the glory of his resurrection

he opened the way to life eternal

and by his ascension, gave us the sure hope

that where he is we may also be.

Therefore the universe resounds with Easter joy

and with choirs of angels we sing for ever to your praise:

**All 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.**

We praise and bless you, loving Father,  
through Jesus Christ, our Lord;  
and as we obey his command,  
send your Holy Spirit,  
that broken bread and wine outpoured  
may be for us the body and blood of your dear Son.

On the night before he died he had supper with his friends  
and, taking bread, he praised you.  
He broke the bread, gave it to them and said:  
Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;  
do this in remembrance of me.

When supper was ended he took the cup of wine.  
Again he praised you, gave it to them and said:  
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.

So, Father, we remember all that Jesus did,  
in him we plead with confidence his sacrifice made once for all upon the cross.

Bringing before you the bread of life and cup of salvation,  
we proclaim his death and resurrection  
until he comes in glory.

Great is the mystery of faith:

**All Christ has died.  
Christ is risen.  
Christ will come again.**

Lord of all life,  
help us to work together for that day  
when your kingdom comes  
and justice and mercy will be seen in all the earth.

Look with favour on your people,  
gather us in your loving arms  
and bring us with and all the saints  
to feast at your table in heaven.

Through Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
all honour and glory are yours, O loving Father,  
for ever and ever.

**All 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.**

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

The Lord our God has entered into his kingdom.

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

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.

**All**     **Though we are many, we are one body,  
because we all share in one bread.**

**All**     **Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world,  
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world,  
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world,  
grant us peace.**

Draw near with faith.

Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ  
which he gave for you,  
and his blood which he shed for you.

Eat and drink in remembrance that he died for you,  
and feed on him in your hearts  
by faith with thanksgiving.

**All**     **We do not presume  
to come to this your table, merciful Lord,  
trusting in our own righteousness,  
but in your manifold and great mercies.  
We are not worthy  
so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table.  
But you are the same Lord  
whose nature is always to have mercy.  
Grant us therefore, gracious Lord,  
so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ  
and to drink his blood,  
that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body  
and our souls washed through his most precious blood,  
and that we may evermore dwell in him,  
and he in us.  
Amen.**

Jesus is the Lamb of God  
who takes away the sins of the world.  
Happy are those who are called to his supper.

**All Lord, I am not worthy to receive you,  
but only say the word and I shall be healed.**

Communion is distributed.

## **Prayer after Communion**

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.

**All Amen.**

**All Almighty God,  
we thank you for feeding us  
with the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ.  
Through him, we offer you our souls and bodies  
to be a living sacrifice.  
Send us out  
in the power of your Spirit  
to live and work  
to your praise and glory.  
Amen.**

**HYMN 5 Go make of all disciples**

(please click on this link to hear the hymn)

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

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. *(Acts 1:12,13a,14)*

## The Dismissal

God the Father,  
who has given to his Son the name above every name,  
strengthen you to proclaim Christ Jesus as Lord.

**All Amen**

God the Son,  
who is our great high priest passed into the heavens,  
plead for you at the right hand of the Father.

**All Amen**

God the Holy Spirit,  
who pours out his abundant gifts upon the Church,  
make you faithful servants of Christ our King.

**All Amen**

And the blessing of God the Almighty:  
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,  
be with you now and remain with you always.

**All Amen.**

**HYMN 5 Alleluia! Sing to Jesus!**

[\(please click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

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

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