



Sunday 24th May 2020

Seventh Sunday of Easter

Sunday after Ascension Day

**The Beacon Parishes Mission Community of Ipplepen with Torbryan,
Denbury, Broadhempston and Woodland**

FIRST READING

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.

PSALM

Psalms 68.1-10

Praise and Thanksgiving

To the leader. Of David. A Psalm. A Song.
Let God rise up, let his enemies be scattered;
let those who hate him flee before him.
As smoke is driven away, so drive them away;
as wax melts before the fire,
let the wicked perish before God.
But let the righteous be joyful;
let them exult before God;
let them be jubilant with joy.

Sing to God, sing praises to his name;
lift up a song to him who rides upon the clouds—
his name is the LORD—
be exultant before him.

Father of orphans and protector of widows
is God in his holy habitation.
God gives the desolate a home to live in;
he leads out the prisoners to prosperity,
but the rebellious live in a parched land.

O God, when you went out before your people,
when you marched through the wilderness,
Selah
the earth quaked, the heavens poured down rain
at the presence of God, the God of Sinai,
at the presence of God, the God of Israel.
Rain in abundance, O God, you showered abroad;
you restored your heritage when it languished;
your flock found a dwelling in it;
in your goodness, O God, you provided for the needy.

SECOND READING

I Peter 4.12-14; 5.6-11

Suffering as a Christian

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that is taking place among you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice in so far as you are sharing Christ's sufferings, so that you may also be glad and shout for joy when his glory is revealed. If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory, which is the Spirit of God, is resting on you.

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you. Discipline yourselves; keep alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour. Resist him, steadfast in your faith, for you know that your brothers and sisters throughout the world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering. And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.

GOSPEL

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.

A REFLECTION ON THE GOSPEL BY HILLARIE GRIGGS

On Thursday the church celebrated Ascension Day, but in today's gospel we return to the Last Supper. During this their last meal together, Jesus has been preparing the disciples for his crucifixion and the promise of the Holy Spirit. He ends this time of teaching with a prayer. At the end of the prayer they cross the Kidron Valley to the Garden of Gethsemane, the place of Jesus' arrest. This prayer serves as a transition from the events in the Upper Room to Jesus' Passion.

The prayer is long and lasts the whole of chapter seventeen. We have been given the first eleven verses to reflect on this week. What struck me first when reading this was Jesus' depth of feeling, he really was praying from the bottom of his heart. You can detect an urgency about it, Jesus knows he is about to depart, leaving his disciples in a difficult world with a critical mission. He was pouring out his love both for God and for his disciples. It shows us something of the interrelationship between Jesus and God but also between God, Jesus and the disciples.

Here was Jesus, at the moment when he was facing the greatest crisis in his life, and he still found time to pray for others. He was about to be betrayed and abandoned by his close friends. He was at the beginning of a pathway which would ultimately lead to his painful death. And at that moment he chose to stop and pray for this group that had been with him in his earthly ministry. If we read on to verse 20 he also prays not only for them but for all those who will come to believe in him. That means he was praying for me and for you. Jesus is not praying exclusively, as in a "you're out and I'm in" kind of way but intentionally so each one of us can know the love and protection of God. I find that incredibly powerful.

We are in the middle of our own time of crisis not only concerning our health but for many our financial livelihoods. Many are scared and anxious for the future especially as we come out of lockdown and have to leave the safety of our homes. I think something we can all do is to follow Jesus' example and intentionally pray for others at this time.

I know that when I hear the words "I'm praying for you" they bring me comfort and are quite often followed later by a sense of peace. I know that the person who says those words cares for me. One of the "Thy Kingdom Come" initiatives is to pray for five other people. Maybe over the next week we can all chose five people and pray for them that they may know the love and protection of God.