

St Marc Grenoble  
Sunday 21st May 2023  
**Acts 1: 6 - 14**  
**John 17: 1 - 11**  
**'The Hour has Come'**

Good morning everyone. - Welcome to all - both here and those joining on Zoom  
Let's Pray

There was a National Holiday on Thursday - can anyone tell me what it was celebrating? What do we Christians celebrate on Ascension Day? ...

We celebrate Jesus, after His life and death on earth, and after His resurrection, which conquered the power of death, being taken up into heaven – if you like back to base – back where He belongs, and where He provides us with direct and unrestricted access to God.

Was there anything else that struck you about either of today's readings? ... Thanks

I'm going to begin by reading a 'meditation of James' (from Nick Fawcett), which shares some thoughts from Ascension Day - Please sit, be still and listen

**Read: Meditation of James CW Miscellany year A p. 400.**

That meditation gives a feeling, or taste, of the mixed emotions and confusion the disciples must have been experiencing! Jesus returned and then departed again; but, this time, with a much greater sense of triumph – power and glory; yet, there was a real sense of uncertainty and expectancy for what may happen next – and when??

This story of the Ascension is the bridge between Luke's Gospel – his story of Jesus' life on earth, and his second book The Acts of the Apostles, the story of the young church. If you like it's the end of the beginning, and the beginning of the next phase!

Luke says in the first verse of Acts "I told you all that Jesus **began** to do and to teach. The way it's written clearly indicates that we're expected to continue what Jesus began; Luke's record in Acts encourages us to continue in the same direction.

Most people simply couldn't or wouldn't believe Jesus had risen from the dead (still true today) But, we read the 'He showed Himself to them alive, after His suffering, by many proofs. He was seen by them for forty days, during which He spoke about God's Kingdom'. We're told: 'At the end of His time with them, after the resurrection, Jesus took the disciples to Bethany (Luke 24: 50), near Jerusalem (less than 2mls). Acts 1 says they were on the Mount of Olives. (I checked - Bethany is on the Eastern slopes of the Mount of Olives)

He told them not to leave Jerusalem but to wait for the 'Father's promise', assuring them they would soon be baptised with the Holy Spirit. He commissioned them to continue His ministry, saying they were to be His 'witnesses' telling the Good News about Him in Jerusalem, all over Judea & Samaria - even to the ends of the world.

Then a remarkable thing happened. As they watched, Jesus was taken up, before their very eyes and disappeared into a cloud! That doesn't happen very often, does it?! (Can anyone think of a similar event?- Elijah)

They stood there – gobsmacked! Wondering what on earth was happening and what may happen next. Of course, what goes up normally comes down! (c.f Elijah, 50 men searched for 3 days)

Then, two men in white appeared - presumably angels (Messengers?) Told them to stop gazing into heaven, and to get on with what they had been commissioned to do.

Jesus commissions us, in the same way, to continue His ministry. He tells us to GO into all the world and proclaim the Gospel. That's one of the things I love about Jesus! He does amazing things, and expects us to take it in our stride and get on with the job He has given us!!

How did the disciples handle all this? We're told, after Jesus ascended out of their sight, they returned to Jerusalem – to the Upper Room where they were staying, and devoted themselves single-heartedly to prayer, together with the women-folk.

If ever we are uncertain about our future, our role, our mission; that is a very good role model to follow. Pray it through, keep on praying, seek God's support, wait on Him and ask for His help and direction.

In my own experience, the work of the Holy Spirit certainly didn't finish there. Whenever I've been stuck, or struggling over anything in my ministry, I've sought the help of the Holy Spirit and, often to my amazement, He never fails.

Be sure, the God we worship and serve does not leave His children comfortless or directionless. We need to be open to seeking and receiving His help. Our God does not fail; despite the fact our faith often does!!

Now, as I close, I'd like to 'tie in' our view with Jesus' view. Today's Gospel reading gives us a really good picture of Jesus praying for His disciples shortly before His crucifixion. Go home & read John 17: 1 - 11 again.

It tells us what Jesus expects from us and how He will help us. It's a wonderful passage in which we see Jesus praying for us to experience His joy completed in us. He asks the Father to protect us from the evil one, to sanctify us, and consecrate us, as we set about the mission He's given us. He confirms He will be with us and in us. With assurances like that we have to be excited; we cannot possibly do anything other than to serve exactly as we're called

As we're planning the future ministry of this church, we must spend serious time in prayer together in the weeks and months ahead – NOW is the time to be sure you know your calling! Ask God, listen up and wait for His response

Let's Pray ...