

A sermon for Sunday the 24th of May.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit Amen.

And so we find ourselves in this time between: this strange few days between the Feast of Ascension on Thursday and the Feast of Pentecost, so soon to come. That moment when the Disciples, leaving the city with Jesus, found themselves gazing into the blue sky astonished at his departure, at the time when returning to the city they found that the comforter had come among them in the power of the Holy Spirit.

For the disciples this is a time between and for us too. Like them these are days of waiting. They return to the city to wait but for what? And why? And when will it come, this thing whatever it is. And now we too are waiting in this time between. We find ourselves caught in days between the old normal and everything that was perfectly taken for granted as being just how things were, and a new normal a future which we know will be different but we cannot yet discern exactly how.

Perhaps like the disciples we also find ourselves gazing a bit mystified into the blue sky. Let's stand with them for a moment on the grass outside Jerusalem. Jesus is gone. He is risen. He has been among them and appeared to them in strange and powerful ways. And now his physical reality with them is no longer tangible. He is not there anymore.

And somehow they know that he's gone; taken from them; gone from their sight. And they're left feeling full of awe and wonder and amazement and perhaps just a little bit of embarrassment as they find themselves left there standing up gazing into the blue sky.

So they go back into the city to wait for the coming of the spirit. And we too in this time of waiting find ourselves in these days in between. Some of us in these days are very busy: busy keeping businesses going; running schools or other educational institutions, colleges and places of learning; busy planning for emergence; busy sustaining the life of the church; busy caring for those who are sick. Some of us are very busy indeed. Others perhaps, more still, maybe isolated in many senses but all of us, whether busy, or still, are waiting.

And we in these days between Ascension and Pentecost, like the disciples, are waiting for God. And we are also finding God at work among us. All around us, showing us his kingdom in this time in between. Showing us his kingdom in those who are putting themselves in danger so that we can be cared for and safe. Showing us his kingdom in those who are feeding hungry families at food banks; showing us his kingdom in those who are caring for refugees and asylum seekers; caring for those who without proper homes; or left on the very edge of society.

Showing us in King to his kingdom in those who are catching up on the phone with a friend who is lonely; showing us his kingdom in those who are organising networks of outreach and care in their communities; showing us his kingdom too - in those who are just waiting with their hearts open to God and His purposes.

All of us, in this time in between, are attending to God. Standing there with the disciples, gazing up into the blue sky, and then turning to look around us to see the signs of God's kingdom: at God at work among us in this time in-between. And to hear already the rushing wind of the Spirit, the comforter, who is coming to us now, and soon, in this time, in between. Many of us in these days, this time in-between, are missing saying our prayers in church, finding ourselves saying them everywhere: at our desks; at the kitchen table; in the garden; on our daily walk: finding that prayer insinuates itself into every part of life, but missing saying our prayers in church, and especially in the

cathedral, on a beautiful day like this, when outside it's so bright and sunny and inside wonderfully cool and dim, and full of the Spirit.

So I thought I'd end this morning with a beautiful poem by R.S. Thomas called 'Kneeling', which conjures perfectly that sense of waiting for God and the discovery that the meaning is in the waiting.

Kneeling

Moments of great calm,
Kneeling before an altar
Of wood in a stone church
In summer, waiting for the God
To speak; the air a staircase
For silence; the sun's light
Ringing me, as though I acted
A great rôle. And the audiences
Still; all that close throng
Of spirits waiting, as I,
For the message.
Prompt me, God;
But not yet. When I speak,
Though it be you who speak
Through me, something is lost.
The meaning is in the waiting.

Amen.