

EASTER 7 - SUNDAY AFTER ASCENSION DAY – 24th May 2020

ALDERSGATE SUNDAY

A short act of worship for use in people's homes while churches are closed

You can follow the service here [Join in here](#)

Opening affirmation

Jesus Christ, born among us; God with us: **you have lived a human life.**

Jesus Christ, teacher; healer; worker of miracles: **you have walked upon earth.**

Jesus Christ, broken, bruised and bloodied: **you have shared the world's suffering.**

Jesus Christ, risen from death and glorious in majesty: **you do not leave us comfortless.**

Hymn – Singing the Faith 315

1. We sing the praise of Jesus,
of our ascending 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.
2. Rejoicing in Christ's promise
we wait in prayer and praise,
the Spirit sent from heaven
to set the earth ablaze;
we pray with expectation,
we praise with one accord,
we wait for living fire,
the power of the Lord.
3. 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.
4. With songs 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!

Norman Wallwork (b 1946) ¹

Prayers of praise and confession

Jesus, we celebrate your life and work with thanks and praise,

your humility and care, your love for the truth,

your commitment to the plan up to and through and beyond your death and

your reconciliation of the world to yourself.

We celebrate your homecoming and join with the worship of all the angels of heaven.

We bend our knees in awe and lift up my heart and hands in worship.

Father of mercy, God of all compassion, forgive our lack of worship.

We admit we are grumpy and self-centred.

We refuse to lift up our eyes to see you

and to open our ears and hear your wonderful commission,

and so we fail to speak of you and to serve you.

Draw us to yourself.

Accept, heal and empower us.
Draw us into your life and your work
so that we may draw others too,
to love and praise and live for you. Amen.

Reading - Luke 24: 44-53

⁴⁴ He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."

⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ He told them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

⁵⁰ When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them.

⁵¹ While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. ⁵² Then they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. ⁵³ And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.

Reflection - Lifted up

On Ascension Day we remember Jesus' return to his 'home', his native realm, heaven, to take up again the glory that belongs to him, that he has with the Father from before the beginning, all that he gave up to be born as one of us. It is cause for the wildest of celebrations. Our worship today is a faint echo of the welcome Jesus receives in heaven on his victorious return. 'See the Man of Sorrows from the fight returned victorious' – 'see the conquering hero come'. It's his day of glorification!

Don't get stuck on worrying about 'what actually happened'. Lay aside those images of Jesus ascending like a rocket bound for space. It is about Jesus crossing the invisible boundary between the dwelling of God and the physical world we know. We don't have either the experience or the words to convey that. This is the pivotal moment for Luke – he uses it both to close his Gospel and to begin the story of Acts. He wants us to be clear that the work of redemption is complete. The bodily, tangible presence of Jesus is no longer to be seen but Jesus' work continues through his people, his Church, indeed it is just beginning as Acts 1 verse 1 makes clear. The ascension closes the resurrection appearances and sets the scene for the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost and the birth of the Church.

In both Luke and Acts, Jesus commissions the disciples to be his witnesses, beginning from where they are and moving out 'to the ends of the earth'. That commission is ours, too. Today, do not feel it as a burden but receive it as an incredible privilege. Let the focus on Jesus, the ever living King of Glory be the centre of your personal life and of our life in the church and as the Church.

Hymn Songs of Fellowship 412

1. O for a thousand tongues to sing
My great Redeemer's praise,
My great Redeemer's praise!
The glories of my God and King,
The triumphs of His grace!
2. Jesus! the name that charms our fears,
That bids our sorrows cease,
That bids our sorrows cease;
'Tis music in the sinner's ears,
'Tis life, and health, and peace.
3. See all your sins on Jesus laid;
The Lamb of God was slain,
The Lamb of God was slain;
His soul was once an offering made
For every soul of man.
4. He breaks the power of cancelled sin,
He sets the prisoner free,
He sets the prisoner free;
His blood can make the foulest clean,
His blood availed for me.
5. He speaks and, listening to His voice,
New life the dead receive,
New life the dead receive;
The mournful, broken hearts rejoice,
The humble poor believe.
6. Hear Him, ye deaf; His praise, ye dumb,
Your loosened tongues employ,
Your loosened tongues employ;
Ye blind, behold your Saviour come;
And leap, ye lame, for joy!
7. My gracious Master and my God,
Assist me to proclaim,
Assist me to proclaim,
To spread through all the earth abroad
The honours of Thy name.

Reading - Ephesians 1: 15-23

¹⁵ For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, ¹⁶ I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. ¹⁷ I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. ¹⁸ I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, ¹⁹ and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength ²⁰ he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹ far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. ²² And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

Reflection – Aldersgate Sunday

282 years ago on this day John Wesley, a Church of England minister, attended a meeting in Aldersgate Street in London. There he heard someone reading from Martin Luther's commentary on the Book of Romans. It was on that night, the culmination of a long spiritual journey, a soul-searching quest for true faith, that John Wesley had his well-known 'heart strangely warmed' moment. We may call it his conversion. It is notable that one who had sought to serve God faithfully all his life, had committed to holy orders, had spent time as a missionary in America, had ministered to the needs of prisoners and visited the sick was all too aware that he lacked that experience of inner assurance of forgiveness of his sins that he found that night.

On that occasion he knew deep within in that inner place of absolute certainty that it was 'for me, for me my Saviour died' – that 'he could trust in Him and Him alone for full salvation'. So began a movement which affected the spiritual life of the whole country. Some say it saved us from revolution. As the people called Methodist we stand in that tradition today. It is evangelical, experiential and activist to its core.

This reading from Ephesians contains one of the great prayers of the New Testament. It is an earnest plea to know God more, in a fuller richer way. It is a prayer for enlightenment, for spiritual sight, inner heart-warming awareness of 'the hope to which the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father has called us, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe'. Let's continue to make that prayer our own and one we pray for one another. If we are to see a spiritual awakening again in our land anywhere near the one Wesley saw it will begin with us and it will begin with us on our knees in prayer. Let John Wesley have the last word today.

'A Methodist is one who has the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost given unto him; one who loves the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his mind, and with all his strength. God is the joy of his heart, and the desire of his soul; which is constantly crying out. "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee! My God and my all! Thou art the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever".' (From 'The Character of a Methodist' by John Wesley.)

Does that sound like me or you? What have I, have we, lost and what must we do?

Prayers for others

Ascended Lord Jesus, you continue to care for the world you died and rose again to save. You have made us your witnesses, so now I ask you to bless your Church throughout the world that your disciples everywhere may be continually telling the Good News, in word and action.

I give thanks today for the evangelical witness of John and Charles Wesley, for the Methodist Church, its organisations, leaders, ministers and people. Revive us again O Lord.

I pray especially for the witness of the church to which I belong in these difficult times, for pastoral carers, preachers, leaders and ministers, that together we may be faithful to Jesus, the heritage in which we stand and our calling to serve the present age.

Bless the neighbourhood where I live, my street, my community and let your kingdom come.

I bring to you its need for healing (...)

and reconciliation (...).

I bring to you those who are working for justice and for the wellbeing of the weak and vulnerable in our area (...)

Bless the whole world and reign in it.

I pray for the world's troubled and broken places (...)

and for places where people don't have the basic necessities of life (...).

I cry out to you against all that threatens life on this planet (...).

In this season of prayer I pray again for the 5 people you have called me to pray for, crying out to you for their salvation, that your Kingdom may come in their lives. You send us to proclaim the Good News beginning at home and then to the ends of the earth, so energise and inspire me to be involved and let what I do and say be to your praise. Amen.

A personal prayer

God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
I ask for the Holy Spirit's help that I may know you more;
open my eyes to the hope you have called us to,
and the greatness of your power for all who believe,
so that with you at the centre of my life, I may live and die for you
and bring others to a saving knowledge of your love. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn – Songs of Fellowship 627

You are the King of Glory,
You are the Prince of Peace;
You are the Lord of heaven and earth,
You're the Sun of righteousness.
Angels bow down before You,
Worship and adore, for
You have the words of eternal life,
You are Jesus Christ the Lord.

Hosanna to the Son of David!
Hosanna to the King of kings!
Glory in the highest heaven,
For Jesus the Messiah reigns. Mavis Ford ²

Dismissal

After the Lord Jesus had spoken to the disciples, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God. Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it. Mark 16: 19-20

Blessing

Now may the blessing, peace and comfort of the ascended Lord Jesus be mine and be with all those I love, now and always. Amen.

Acknowledgements

¹ Copyright Norman Wallwork

² Copyright © 1978 Authentic Publishing (Admin. by Integrity Music) CCLI Licence number 54165