

Worship at Home with Mary Winchcombe for Sunday 21st May 2023

A call to worship:

Loving God, we draw near to you, trusting not in any goodness of our own,
but in your grace and love, your unfailing, overflowing mercy.
Open our hearts to all you say, and our lives to all you would do,
by your grace and to your glory. **Amen**

STF 332 Lord I lift your name on high

Lord, I lift your name on high, Lord, I love to sing Your praises;
I'm so glad you're in my life I'm so glad you came to save us

You came from heaven to earth, to show the way,
From the earth to the cross, my debt to pay,
From the cross to the grave, From the grave to the sky:
Lord, I lift Your name on high.

Prayer

Glorious God, maker of heaven and earth, morning star at the beginning
of our days, guiding and leading us onwards, leaving darkness behind,
we adore you.

Jesus, light of the world, bright sun, chasing shadows, providing light and
energy, all we need to grow, to thrive, we praise you.

Flaming Spirit, warming and strengthening, fanning the embers of our
service,
bringing us peace as evening draws near, we thank you. **Amen**

Acts 1:6-14 New Living Translation

The Ascension of Jesus

⁶ So when the apostles were with Jesus, they kept asking him, “Lord, has the time come for you to free Israel and restore our kingdom?”

⁷ He replied, “The Father alone has the authority to set those dates and times, and they are not for you to know. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

⁹ After saying this, he was taken up into a cloud while they were watching, and they could no longer see him. ¹⁰ As they strained to see him rising into heaven, two white-robed men suddenly stood among them.

¹¹ “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why are you standing here staring into heaven? Jesus has been taken from you into heaven, but someday he will return from heaven in the same way you saw him go!”

¹² Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, a distance of half a mile.^[a] ¹³ When they arrived, they went to the upstairs room of the house where they were staying.

Here are the names of those who were present: Peter, John, James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James (son of Alphaeus), Simon (the zealot), and Judas (son of James). ¹⁴ They all met together and were constantly united in prayer, along with Mary the mother of Jesus, several other women, and the brothers of Jesus.

Reflection on Acts 1:6-14

Jesus chose a group of hard-working ordinary men as his disciples. They were Jews, uneducated commoners, simple men of faith who gave up everything to be followers of Christ; and life for them, with Jesus, could never be described as dull!

They have seen miracles, listened to his preaching, teaching and parables. witnessed his triumphant entrance into Jerusalem, his arrest and trial followed by his Crucifixion, his resurrection and they have spent 40 days hearing Jesus speak of the kingdom, preparing them for the time when he will not be with them. Quite a rollercoaster ride!

Anyone who has travelled with children will know very well, the words “Are we there yet?” sometimes uttered before you’ve hardly left the house!! And our Acts reading begins like that: the apostles kept asking Jesus, “Lord, has the time come for you to free Israel and restore our kingdom? Just as they have got used to having him around again, it is time for him to return to His Father. His work on earth is complete. The time has come for them to carry on the work that He had started. He assures them that they will not be alone, he will send the Holy Spirit to guide them; but they must wait – it will come soon.

Waiting is so often a difficult thing to do, especially when you don’t know how long that waiting will be.

They are to be his witnesses; witnesses to what?

They are still locked into the idea of God somehow re-establishing the glory days of King David and Jesus' reply doesn't give them the clarity they want. It's not for them to know God's timing, they have to wait. And the waiting is for baptism by the Holy Spirit – another thing they don't understand.

All in all, they are left with a lot of questions as Jesus is taken from their sight. Their puzzlement isn't helped by the encounter, moments later with two angels, who tell them to stop looking for their friend.

The disciples have one command: you will be my witnesses. What were they witnessing to if it wasn't the restoration of Israel? What were they going to say when asked where Jesus had disappeared to? Who would believe them anyway?

We have the benefit of hindsight, the overview, the experience of faith lived through many generations.

Ten days later the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost and the disciples were transformed.

Christ's ascension is a reminder of the Kingdom of God within our hearts, and of the ever-present Spirit of God, watching over and protecting us as we spread the light of Jesus' truth throughout the world. Jesus completed his earthly mission of bringing salvation to all people and was physically lifted up from this world into heaven. The meaning and the fullness of Christ's resurrection is given in the Ascension. Having completed his mission in this world as the saviour, he returned to the God in heaven and raised earth to heaven with him!

Prayers for others

Gracious God we bring to you our broken world, so full of injustice and exploitation, suffering and sorrow, hatred and division.

We pray for all who work for change; all who strive to bring help and healing, hope and wholeness.

Loving God bring healing and renewal, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

The Lord's Prayer

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.

Save us from the time of trial. And deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power. and the glory are yours
Now and for ever. **Amen**

STF 338 There is a Redeemer

There is a Redeemer
Jesus, God's own Son,
Precious Lamb of God, Messiah,
Holy One.

*Thank You, O my Father
For giving us Your Son
And leaving us Your Spirit
Till the work on earth is done*

Jesus, my Redeemer,
Name above all names,
Precious Lamb of God, Messiah,
O for sinners slain. *Refrain*

Thank You, O my Father
For giving us Your Son
And leaving us Your Spirit
Till the work on earth is done. *Refrain*

When I stand in glory
I will see his face,
and there I'll serve my King for ever
in that holy place. *Refrain*

Blessing:

Fill our hearts with your grace O Lord, our souls with your love and our
lives with your glory; through Christ our Lord.

(Dwight L Moody 1837-99)