



ST. PETER'S PARISH CHURCH, RUSHDEN

The ROCK

ASCENSION DAY - ISSUE #8 - 21/05/20

Reflection for Ascension Day

Six years ago on Ascension Day, Agnes and I and our daughter Katy were staying in Lichtenstein, and at 6a.m., 7 a.m, 8 a.m., 9 a.m., and throughout the day, Church bells were ringing out, beckoning people to worship. After three years, spent in the daily presence of our Lord Jesus, his disciples were still somewhat confused, so why were they found in the Temple, praising God, when the One they had come to love and worship was taken from them? There are, I believe, a number of reasons why the Ascension of our Lord was the cause of great rejoicing. First of all, our Lord had completed the task that He was called to do, so that God's plan of salvation was accomplished for all time. We are told that when God created the world, he RESTED on the seventh day, not because He needed a break, because 'the Creator of the world does not faint or grow weary' but as a signal of a completed work. When our Lord returned to heaven, there to sit at the right hand of the Father, it was as reigning King.

In the BIRTH of Jesus, heaven and earth met. This would have been very shocking to Greeks, because it went quite against their ideas that the gods kept themselves at a very respectable distance from any kind of sordid human encounter. It was equally abhorrent to the Jews that God, who created human beings from the dust of the ground, would actually become a human being, and share our human nature. If this was very shocking, it was even more shocking to conceive that having visited, this planet, sharing our common humanity, that God would actually, then INVADE heaven as a human being!

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Yet, that is, I believe WHY the disciples were daily in the Temple, praising God, following the Ascension of our Lord. For God to be fully God, there cannot be a square inch of earth or heaven from which He is excluded. **The wonderful thing for us is that God has a representative who shares our humanity permanently on duty in heaven.** While Jesus was here on earth, up to his post resurrection appearances, He shared our human limitations, but now heaven is never unmanned.

Luke begins with heaven invading earth, and it ends with earth invading heaven. The Immortal, who tented among us in Palestine, is permanently present as our Divine-Human High Priest in heaven. Luke begins and ends in the Temple, the place where heaven and earth meet. This is why the ascension is such good news. This is one reason why we would not want Jesus to leave heaven and appear on the earth, however convenient that might be for world evangelisation. If our Lord Jesus were to leave heaven then the pledge of our salvation would be removed. Jesus is humanity in the presence of God. He can sympathise with our weaknesses because he is human. His presence there gives us the confidence to press on without giving up.

Secondly, Jesus is the ASCENDED KING. When the Apostolic Church proclaimed that Jesus is the true King of the universe, it did so in the face of a society in which morality and Christian ethics were poles apart from the world and its practices. And today, there is a vast chasm between the teaching of our Lord, and the increasingly secular and Biblically Illiterate society in which we now live.

But as Christians we believe that one day Christ will return, and once again earth will be invaded by heaven. Every eye shall behold Christ, and every tongue confess that He is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. When Christ is truly, in practice, Lord of His Church, and Sovereign King, then God's reign in His Church constantly challenges the prevailing attitudes of the world at large. The Spirit is given through the ascension so that the glorified Christ is present with His people to revive and refresh them.

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It is the Spirit who enables us to talk about the presence and absence of Jesus without contradiction. The ascended Lord is not everywhere, but he is everywhere accessible.

On Ascension Day, the One who invaded EARTH with HEAVEN, and then as both God and MAN, as God intended humanity to be, returned to heaven to be our Reigning King and Lord of the Church, our permanent and effective High Priest, and thus the pattern is complete. Heaven invades earth, and earth in Christ invades heaven. **And one day Christ will return and once again INVADE EARTH with HEAVEN, and the people of God will be caught up in the rapture at His return.**

- Rev. John Seaman

Staying Connected

Some steps to help us stay connected as a church family:
If you need to speak to someone should you feel anxious or in need, please contact Lay Pastoral Minister Jean Bowerman in the first instance.

We ALL have a duty of care towards one another within the household of faith; and sometimes we need to take the initiative if we are struggling and ASK for help.

Should we become aware of a church family member who is struggling, please encourage them to ask for help or ask if you may share their need with Jean Bowerman. The pastoral care team are still operating!

Despite social distancing measures, we DO have a variety of ways that we can still meet to pray, worship and socialise as a church family:

- Online 'Zoom' Coffee & Chat
- Monday evening Night Prayer (Service available on the website)
- Wednesday Morning Prayer 9am service via Zoom (30 mins)
- Saturday 2pm live meditation on Facebook (20-30mins)
- Sunday worship available via the website and Facebook page.
- The Rock weekly Newsletter
- Daily Hope free phonenumber 0800 8048044.
- Plus a range of other resources available on our Facebook page and Website.

We are also exploring the possibility of Zoom Home groups. If you wish to receive information to access any of these services, please contact Jordan or Rachel.

God's Word urges us not to neglect meeting together (Heb. 10.25), and right now these are some ways we can do that at present. In due course, we shall be able to do these things in person!

Future Planning

We are planning for what may be possible after lock down, so that groups can begin to meet in person once again and we shall let you know details as soon as we are permitted to get these underway!

Online Ascension Day Service

Join us in worship at 7:30pm on Thursday for our joint Ascension Day service. This video can now be found on our Facebook page, the church website and our YouTube channel.



Food Bank

Please continue to bring donations to the rectory and place in the blue box. This week a good number of items were sent from our parish!

Prayer for the Week

Risen Christ, by the lakeside you renewed your call to your disciples: help your Church to obey your command and draw the nations to the fire of your love, to the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

Memory Verse - 1 Timothy 3:16

*Without any doubt, the mystery of our religion is great:
He was revealed in flesh,
vindicated in spirit,
seen by angels,
proclaimed among Gentiles,
believed in throughout the world,
taken up in glory.*

Joan's Joke!



What did the buffalo say when he
dropped off his son for his first day
at school?

...bi-son!

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