

WEEKLY SERMON

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The Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ

Bible readings: Acts 1:6-14, 1 Peter 4:12-14; 5:6-11 and John 17:1-11



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Every year we celebrate with joyful hearts the Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus Christ who defeated the power of sin and death for ever. But our joy will only be complete if we are spiritually tuned with the Mind and Heart of Jesus.

In Acts 1:6², the disciples, even after being with resurrected Jesus for 40 days, could not grasp that Jesus had come to redeem the whole world and not only a particular group of people called Israel. Jesus wanted his disciples to be witnesses in Jerusalem and throughout Judea, in Samaria and to the ends of the earth.

In the gospel reading from John³, the disciples failed to grasp in Jesus' prayer about the ongoing battle between Satan (Evil) and God (good). Jesus wanted the disciples to be empowered by the gift of the Holy Spirit, to be pure and holy, to reveal God's true character by overcoming Satan and glorifying Jesus' name on this earth.

It was not an easy learning for the disciples. But once filled with the Holy Spirit, they realised their partnership with Ascended Christ. Reading from Peter⁴ encourages that the Cross of Christ becomes the strength enabling disciples to face trials and tribulations joyfully for propagation of the gospel.

They were to stay alert! To watch out for the great enemy who prowls around God's people like a roaring lion to devour them. They had to stand firm and hold their faith strongly in the face of persecution and torture for following Jesus Christ.

HEALTHY CHURCHES TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES

My own upbringing as Christian in Pakistan was not easy. We had to humble ourselves with the mighty power of God and hold complete trust in the Resurrected and Ascended Jesus.

Today, in our country, although we don't face physical persecution Satan is devouring people. In order to draw people back to the Church, the Ascended Christ calls us to be His living witnesses in our neighbourhood and in the world.

Charles Spurgeon, a Baptist preacher was apt in saying, "Immanuel, God with us is in our nature, in our sorrow, in our lifework, in our punishment, in our grave, and now with us, or rather we with Him, in resurrection, ascension, triumph, and Second Advent splendour".⁵ Amen

Rev Dr Sarah Gill, Vicar of St Stephen's with St James' in Blackburn, and Bishop's Advisor on UKME issues

¹ Master of the altar of Hohenfurth / Vyšší Brod monastery, Ascension, ca 1350, Convent of Saint Agnes of Bohemia, Prague

² Acts chapter 1 verse 6

³ John chapter 17 verses 1-11

⁴ First Letter of Peter chapter 4 verses 12-14 and chapter 5, verses 6-11

⁵ Charles Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, Hendrickson Publishers, (2006, p 360).