

Thursday 18th May; Ascension Day Benefice Eucharist,
Oswaldkirk

We are fast approaching the end of the Easter period and it only seems like yesterday we were entering Lent, yet here we are on Ascension Day and next week is Pentecost.

We commemorate the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ in grand style but when it comes to Ascension and Pentecost, we seem to be slow on it although these events are at the heart of our Christian faith. The Ascension is clearly expressed in the Apostles' Creed as part of the foundations of our faith which says, "He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty".

As we heard in our Epistle Paul explains the significance of the Ascension. Paul prays that the Ephesians' *hearts would be enlightened* so that *they would know what is the hope of God's calling*. The message then of Ascension Day is that God is calling us too to a future *hope*, something which we cannot yet fully see or understand, but if we are to pursue that *hope*, to some extent we have to set our *heart* on God's *riches*, even if we don't yet experience them and what we can experience is God's *surpassing power* in leading us to pursue this *hope*.

Ascension Day then is about peceiving the blessings of God. Jesus lifted His hands and blessed His followers as He was being taken to heaven. Today we are reminded that blessing is for us to if we open our hearts, minds, and your lives to receive the blessings of God.

Secondly, Ascension Day we are reminded of the Great Commission Jesus leaves, to go out and preach the gospel to all the peoples of the earth, the message of God's love and His desire to be one with His creation. Ascension Day

reminds us that we need to plan to go out and love people into the reality of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Thirdly, we are told that immediately after the ascension, the disciples returned to Jerusalem and were in constant prayer. Ascension Day reminds us too of the need to pray, to begin a period of waiting on God to receive the Holy Spirit powerfully at Pentecost. The Ascension reminds us of the importance of unity and to be in constant prayer. The disciples were together and united when God responded to that unity in the Upper Room. He kept them together and they remained together, serving Him and each other in love and humility. Ascension Day reminds us to keep together in the faith.

Paul's admonition and prayer in this first chapter of his letter to the Ephesians is for them to comprehend the incredible position they hold in the spiritual realm. Ascension Day reminds us too that by understanding our hope, our faith, and our church we can glimpse the opportunity we have to grasp the amazing inheritance available to us if we have eyes to see, and faith to walk.

Thanks be to God Amen.