

Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> May 2024; Ascension Day. Benefice Holy  
Comunion Gilling

Today we celebrate again Ascension Day, a day of great significance for the world, the church and you and I, but a day which to be honest comes and goes without the attention it demands. It marks the end of the forty-day period following the Resurrection and marks the promise of Pentecost.

The ascension bridges the gap between the earthly work of Jesus Christ on the cross and his heavenly ministry as high priest, offering his sacrifice of intercession on the altar before the throne of God seated "at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven"

Some words from our Epistle, *"God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion."*

What does this mean? It means power; that Christ is in control of our world, not any other rule or authority or power or dominion. Christ is more powerful than all of these because he has ascended and sits at the right hand of the very throne of God. This should bring us hope. Albert Einstein, a man who taught us as much about our universe as anyone, once suggested that the most important question in life, one that everyone should ask, is this: *"Is the universe friendly?"* One of the gifts of the Ascension is that our Lord has ascended and is sitting at God's right hand - is that we can answer that question with a definite 'yes': the universe is friendly. Regardless of what is happening in our lives or in our world we know that our ascended Lord is in control and has not abandoned us. He is seated at God's right hand - far above all rule and authority - and intercedes for us. And He promises to

come again soon to take full control of our world. There may be times now when we wish he would do a little more now, but that is not ultimately up to us. Instead, we are invited to trust Him, even when we don't understand His ways, even when we find it difficult to comprehend but at the end of the day, we are invited to believe that God is in control.

Secondly, it means promise. Jesus promises that we will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon us, so that we can be his witnesses to the ends of the earth.

The power that Jesus is given in the Ascension is shared with us through the promised Holy Spirit. And that helps us to do what Jesus did while he was on earth. It helps us to continue his mission to do what he did: to heal the sick and feed the hungry and fight oppression and evil, and to work for justice and peace, to seek reconciliation, and teach others to do these things.

Thirdly, it means presence. Through the Ascension, Jesus actually becomes more *present* to us than he ever could before. Before Jesus ascended into heaven, and because he was fully human, Jesus was confined to the rules of this world - he could only be in one place at one time. He was the Son of God, but he was fully human. And so, he couldn't be everywhere at all times. The ascension, in other words, takes Jesus away from us, but only so that he can be present with us in a new way - filling all things and being everywhere present, in a way that he could not do had he remained on earth. The miracle of the Ascension brings joy to our hearts. Because it reminds us of Jesus' power, His promise, and His presence among us. May our belief in these things bring joy to our hearts, purpose to our lives, and praise to our lips. To the glory of God.

Finally, the Ascension means love. Jesus' ascending *for his people*. This love manifests itself in the sending of his

Spirit, an act dependent upon Jesus' ascension. "Unless I go away, the Counsellor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you", he says in John's Gospel. This is being given the power and authority to offer our human lives into God's divine work of spreading his word and life here on Earth.

The Ascension declares that all authority in Heaven and Earth belongs to Jesus, and he has sent out his followers to announce that his indestructible, good life is available now to all and today we too are invited to ascend into this way of living. Thanks be to God. Amen.