

The Vine at Home
Ascension Sunday – Year B

Call to worship

Holy God,
We have come to worship you,
We have come just as we are,
With all our doubts and fears.

May we be inspired by a fresh encounter with you today.

Amen.¹

Hymn: STF 152 - This is the Day

Opening Prayers

A prayer of thanksgiving.

Lord, we thank you that you came to earth for us, sacrificed yourself for us, died and was buried for our sins.

On this ascension Sunday may we give thanks for the greatest gift of all, your son Jesus.

We give thanks that we know that one day Jesus will return, we thank you that when Jesus ascended into heaven we were not left alone, the Holy Spirit moves through us this day and always.

Amen.

A prayer of confession.

God of all that ever has been, ever is and ever will be.

We confess that there are times when we have turned away from you and taken the easy way out.

May we know that loving you means some time taking the harder option, but we are assured that you mean us no harm or ill will.

May we be given the strength to face our fears in your name.

Amen.²

Let us now say The Lord's Prayer

Readings: Acts 1:1-11 The Promise of the Holy Spirit

1 In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning **2** until the day when he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. **3** After his suffering he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them during forty days and

¹ Call to Worship written by Tim Baker

² Opening prayers written by Michael Pryke

speaking about the kingdom of God. **4** While staying^[a] with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. “This,” he said, “is what you have heard from me; **5** for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with^[b] the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

The Ascension of Jesus

6 So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?” **7** He replied, “It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. **8** But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” **9** When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. **10** While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. **11** They said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”³

Ephesians 1:15-23 Paul’s Prayer

15 I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love^[a] toward all the saints, and for this reason **16** I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. **17** I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, **18** so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, **19** and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. **20** God^[b] 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, **21** far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. **22** And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, **23** which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.⁴

Luke 24:44-53

44 Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.” **45** Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, **46** and he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah^[a] is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, **47** and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. **48** You are witnesses^[b] of these things. **49** And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

The Ascension of Jesus

50 Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. **51** While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into

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heaven.[^c] **52** And they worshiped him, and[^d] returned to Jerusalem with great joy; **53** and they were continually in the temple blessing God.⁵

Reflection and Response

[For a full version of this reflection, written by Rev Dr Christine Dutton, subscribe to The Vine resources by contacting the team on thevine@twelvebaskets.co.uk]

Are we nearly there yet?

Can you remember saying those words as a child or hearing them from children or grandchildren on road trip or a walk?

Are we nearly there yet?

Are we nearly at a date when we will be able to meet our friends? Stay with family? Travel abroad? Sing together in church? Put the kettle on and have a cup of tea together?

We hear the disciples ask the 'are we nearly there yet' question as they question Jesus in Acts 1: vs 6: 'Lord is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?'

What is next for you in your walk with God?

As we think about ascension, you might wish to watch this short clip from the Big Church Sing earlier in the year, featuring a re-telling of the ascension story.

<https://www.theworshipcloud.com/view/store/twelvebaskets-vine-video-ascension-sunday-16th-may-2021>

In the video, we are reminded that the ascension is an invitation to follow Jesus in our everyday lives. How can you be good news to others in your family, your community, your world?

[You might like to make space for people to discuss or reflect on this question.]

Prayers of intercession

Lord, as you raised Christ from the dead and seated him at your right hand may we know your presence this day.

In particular we pray for those in positions of leadership and power, may that act with mercy and humility and may your will be done through them.

We pray for your church across the world, in particular we pray for those communities who have been persecuted because they pray to you.

May they know your love and touch as they continue to struggle to praise you, Lord grant them strength and knowledge that one day we shall all live in a place of endless praise and worship.

[Pause]

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Lord, we come to you. Sometimes closed minded, sometimes doubting your promise. Today open our eyes to you, to your resurrecting love. You suffered for us and so we draw to mind those that we know are suffering today.

Lord, you know all of these people in our hearts and minds. May they know your love and your presence and healing hand with them this day.

God of rejoicing, as the disciples worshipped and returned to Jerusalem with joy in their hearts when you ascended into heaven, let us have joy in our hearts today. Let us go into the streets of our cities and town praising and rejoicing to you, may we always have your joy in our hearts.

Amen.⁶

Hymn: STF 239 - Sent by the Lord am I

Blessing

You are a person of God,
You are held in the loving arms of a divine Creator,
And you go from this space – from this moment – into a world crying out for love, for hope,
for justice.

Amen.⁷

⁶ Prayers of intercession written by Michael Pryke

⁷ Additional prayers by Tim Baker