

7th Sunday of Easter

Acts 1.6-14

The Ascension of Jesus

So when they had come together, they asked him, 'Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?' He replied, 'It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. 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.' When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. While he was going and they were gazing up towards heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. They said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up towards 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.'

Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey away. When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.

What's going on?

This reading begins with the Ascension of Jesus into heaven as it is the Sunday after Ascension Day (see the readings for Ascension Day). Jesus is taken into heaven and we learn what the disciples did next. They go back to Jerusalem and gather together with Jesus' mother Mary and his family. Here they spend time in prayer, thinking about what they have witnessed and how they are going to carry out the task of witnessing to others what Jesus did.

Psalm 68

Praise and Thanksgiving

To the leader. Of David. A Psalm. A Song.

Let God rise up, let his enemies be scattered;

let those who hate him flee before him.

As smoke is driven away, so drive them away;

as wax melts before the fire,

let the wicked perish before God.

But let the righteous be joyful;

let them exult before God;

let them be jubilant with joy.

Sing to God, sing praises to his name;

lift up a song to him who rides upon the clouds—

his name is the LORD—

be exultant before him.

Father of orphans and protector of widows

is God in his holy habitation.

God gives the desolate a home to live in;

he leads out the prisoners to prosperity,

but the rebellious live in a parched land.

O God, when you went out before your people,

when you marched through the wilderness,

Selah

the earth quaked, the heavens poured down rain

at the presence of God, the God of Sinai,

at the presence of God, the God of Israel.

Rain in abundance, O God, you showered abroad;

you restored your heritage when it languished;

your flock found a dwelling in it;

in your goodness, O God, you provided for the needy.

Sing to God, O kingdoms of the earth;

sing praises to the Lord,

Selah

**O rider in the heavens, the ancient heavens;
listen, he sends out his voice, his mighty voice.**

**Ascribe power to God,
whose majesty is over Israel;
and whose power is in the skies.**

**Awesome is God in his sanctuary,
the God of Israel;
he gives power and strength to his people.**

Blessed be God!

What's going on?

This is a song of praise and thanksgiving and is appropriate at this time as we remember how Jesus was taken to heaven and how his Church began to be established. We are reminded to reflect on what God does for human beings and of the heavenly vision of the power and might of God sustaining the universe through his power.

1 Peter 4.12-14; 5.6-11

Suffering as a Christian

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that is taking place among you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice in so far as you are sharing Christ's sufferings, so that you may also be glad and shout for joy when his glory is revealed. If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory, which is the Spirit of God, is resting on you.

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you. Discipline yourselves; keep alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour. Resist him, steadfast in your faith, for you know that your brothers and sisters throughout the world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering. And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in

Christ, will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.

What's going on?

This letter reminds us that the first Christians had a terrible time, suffering persecution and ridicule. The Christian community is told to stand firm and remember that Christ also suffered. We need to keep before us the vision of the homecoming God offers to those who believe in Jesus and which we have seen a vision of through the Ascension. If the world of human beings brings with it trouble and pain, there is yet blessing and strength offered to us by God beyond it all.

John 17.1-11

Jesus Prays for His Disciples

After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, 'Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed.

'I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.

What's going on?

In this passage from John, Jesus prays for his disciples who remain on earth to be witnesses and to spread the gospel. In his prayer he stands between the human life on earth and the heavenly life to which he will return. He reflects that he has fulfilled his mission given to him by God and that he will return to God to the glory of the divine life. He asks God to protect his followers who will carry on God's mission of love to the world and to offer them the same consolation of relationship with him that Jesus has known. Jesus therefore prepares to return to the Father and leaves his disciples with a loving concern for their lives to come.