

Reflection



- Showing love
- Giving hope
- Bringing peace

The Church of St John & St Leonard

Luke 24:50-53

Ascension Day, 21st May 2020

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 heaven. 52 And they worshiped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; 53 and they were continually in the temple blessing God

I wonder what comes to mind when you think about the village of Bethany? Perhaps you recall that it was in Bethany that Jesus was anointed with the finest perfume while eating at the house of Simon. Or perhaps it is a reminder of where the triumphal journey began. For me, Bethany always makes me think about Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. I think of the tears of his sisters Mary and Martha and recall those words Jesus speaks to them in John 11:25 "I am the resurrection and the life" before he demonstrates his amazing power over death calling Lazarus out of the tomb and back to life. Bethany, in my mind is therefore a wonderful, fitting place for the ascension to take place.

Our passage opens with Jesus leading them to Bethany. He then lifts up his hands and he blesses them before being carried up into heaven. What an incredible but bittersweet moment that must have been. Receiving a final blessing from the risen Lord but then knowing that he was going to depart.

The disciples' response when they see Jesus ascending is worship. Finally, these faithful friends of Jesus who have travelled with him for so long begin to see who Jesus really is. They have always known his humanity, now they begin to understand his divinity – his power over death, his resurrection and now his ascension. In the presence of such majesty all they can do is fall on their knees and worship. I wonder what it is that leads you to that place of worship? For me, I find that music can be a great help – as I sing out words declaring who God is, committing myself to him once more there are times I am completely caught up in worshipping him. But it can also happen as I look at a magnificent sunrise or the crashing waves of the ocean, realising that the same God who created the earth and all of its beauty created me too. I wonder what it is that will lead you to worship today?

The disciples' worship is followed by joyful obedience as they return to Jerusalem where Jesus had instructed them to wait until they had been "clothed with power

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from on high" (Luke 24:49). What did they do as they waited? They blessed God – giving thanks for his faithfulness and his saving grace.

In many ways this time of lockdown may feel like a time of waiting – waiting to meet together again, waiting to see friends and family, waiting for life to feel 'normal' again. The challenge for each of us is how we will use this time of waiting. As we wait to meet together as Church again how are we feeding our spiritual lives and staying connected to God? Is there a book you have read that has inspired you that you could share with a friend? Or perhaps a programme you have watched that has helped you connect with God that you could recommend? Let's encourage each other at this time to keep going and keep growing in Christ.

Rector: The Revd Vicki Bryson



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