

A Service for Ascension Day 21st May 2020

Officiant and Preacher: The Revd Stephen Griffith

Organ music before the service – played by Keith Wright

Prière du Christ montant vers son Père *Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992)*
(movement IV from *L'ascension*)

Greeting and introduction

God has gone up with a shout,
the Lord with the sound of a trumpet.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ
be with you
and also with you.

Introduction to the Service

The Ascension Reading: Acts 1.4-11 – read by Paul Towers, Churchwarden

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

While staying with them, Jesus ordered his disciples not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. "This", he said, "is what you have heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." 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."

Alleluia. Christ is risen.

He is risen indeed. Alleluia.

Seeing we have a great high priest who has passed through the heaven,
Jesus the Son of God, let us offer him the praise worthy of his name.

Gloria in Excelsis

Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth. Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father, we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.

Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us; you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer.

For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Collect

Let us pray that our risen and ascended Lord will lead us to eternal life.

Grant, we pray, almighty God, that as we believe your only-begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ to have ascended into the heavens, so we in heart and mind may also ascend and with him continually dwell; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

New Testament reading: Ephesians 1.15-23 – read by Carole Pugh

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Ephesians.

¹⁵ I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love 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 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.

For the gift of his holy word.

Thanks be to God.

Hymn: Rejoice! The Lord is King (*Common Praise* 563)

**Rejoice! The Lord is King,
your Lord and King adore;
mortals, give thanks and sing,
and triumph evermore:
*Lift up your heart, lift up your voice;
Rejoice, again I say, rejoice.***

Jesus the Saviour reigns,
the God of truth and love;
when he had purged our stains,
he took his seat above.
*Lift up your heart, lift up your voice;
Rejoice, again I say, rejoice.*

His kingdom cannot fail;
he rules o'er earth and heaven;
the keys of death and hell
are to our Jesus given:
*Lift up your heart, lift up your voice;
Rejoice, again I say, rejoice.*

He sits at God's right hand
till all his foes submit,
and bow to his command,
and fall beneath his feet:
*Lift up your heart, lift up your voice;
Rejoice, again I say, rejoice.*

Rejoice in glorious hope;
Jesus the judge shall come,
and take his servants up
to their eternal home:
*We soon shall hear the archangel's voice;
the trump of God shall sound: rejoice!*

Words Charles Wesley (1707-1788)
Tune GOPSAL, G F Handel (1685-1759)

Gospel: Luke 24.44-53 – read by the Revd Kingsley Boulton, Deacon
Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Luke.
Glory to you, O Lord.

⁴⁴ Jesus said to the disciples, “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 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 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.” 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 worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; ⁵³ and they were continually in the temple blessing God.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon

Organ music during the lighting of candles and time of personal reflection – played by Keith Wright

Prière *Jean Langlais (1907-1991)*

Intercessions – led by Janet Fox, Reader

To the bidding Lord, hear us, *please respond* **Lord, graciously hear us.**

Let us join our prayers with those of our Saviour Christ, seeking the Father's blessing and the gifts of the Spirit.

Jesus Christ, great high priest, living for ever to intercede for us, pray for the Church, your broken body in the world ...

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Jesus Christ, king of righteousness, enthroned at the right hand of the majesty on high, pray for the world, and make it subject to your gentle rule ...

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Jesus Christ, Son of Man, drawing humanity into the life of God, pray for your brothers and sisters in need, distress or sorrow ...

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Jesus Christ, pioneer of our salvation, bringing us to glory through your death and resurrection, surround with your saints and angels those who have died trusting your promises ...

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Jesus Christ, Lord over all things, ascended far above the heavens and filling the universe, pray for us who receive the gifts you give us for work in your service ...

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

Jesus Christ, keep the Church in the unity of the Spirit
and in the bond of peace,
and bring the whole created order to worship at your feet;
for you are alive and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

Looking for the coming of his kingdom,
let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us.

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

Reading: St Mathew 28. 16-end

A reading from the Gospel according to Matthew.

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'

Responsory

Remember the words of the Lord Jesus

You are the Light of the world

Remember the words of the Lord Jesus

You are the Salt of the Earth

Remember the words of the Lord Jesus

Strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness

May the Spirit, who set the Church on fire upon the day of Pentecost,
bring the world alive with the love of the risen Christ.

And the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

Dismissal

Waiting expectantly for the promised Holy Spirit,
go in the peace of Christ. Alleluia, alleluia.

Thanks be to God. Alleluia, alleluia.

Organ Voluntary – played by Max Elliott

Heut' triumphieret Gottes Sohn *Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)*

Note on the music:

Olivier Messiaen and Jean Langlais were the two towering figures of French twentieth-century music. Each with his own individual musical language, exploring worlds of chromaticism and mysticism, they expressed their deep faith through their music.

The Messiaen piece is the final movement of four depicting aspects of the Ascension - in this case the *Prayer of Christ ascending towards his Father* - in which the rich harmony rises, underpinning a serene melody.

Langlais' short *Prière* also prioritises melody, with a mysterious tune weaving its way over a pair of alternating chords before giving way to a brief chordal phrase.

Bach's journey through the Easter season in the *Orgelbüchlein* collection of hymn-tune preludes concludes here with the exuberant *Heut' triumphieret Gottes Sohn*, in which the melody in the treble is given a rushing, dynamic accompaniment contrasting with a bold pedal figure.

Our thanks to Churchwarden Ben Pugh for making this broadcast possible.