

Easter 7 Year A

Acts 1.12-14, 1 Peter 4.13-16, John 17.1-11

“Making Known” – prayer and action.

Welcome back, I hope you were able to join us for the wonderful feast of the ascension on Thursday – the cloud has lifted a little and we find ourselves in a place of in-between-ness. It is the last Sunday of Easter. Next Sunday is Pentecost – the third most important festival in our faith, when we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit and that is followed the Sunday after by Trinity Sunday when we rejoice at knowing God as Father Son and Holy Spirit. However there is always a danger in life of getting ahead of ourselves – and at the heart of Our Lords guidance for us in our spiritual life was to attend to the day and the now; whether that be “do not worry about tomorrow for today has enough troubles of its own” or indeed his instructions to the disciples before he finally left them physically to be with the father in heaven. Those instructions you will remember were to **stop, wait and then go**. Stop in Jerusalem, wait for the spirit and then go into the world.

Hence we have our very short little passage from Acts. Acts is as I have said previously, an extraordinary account of the vitality and mission of the early church against all the odds doing wonderful things but before all that activity in the face of adversity stop and wait. They did not spend the time learning to play the guitar, doing jigsaw puzzles or any other number of time fillers that are doing the rounds of lockdown for some. But they were together in the upper room. No doubt talking, reflecting, but certainly praying. It’s the upper room with Mary our Lords mother and other women and relatives – a place redolent with meaning.

They are already in a new relationship with God and each other through Jesus. That new relationship though behind closed doors just now will become one that literally and metaphorically bursts doors open for people all over the world but not yet. Classically, we pray to the Father through the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit. Power requires an energy source and that energy is God himself in the Holy Spirit. That little group in the upper room will become a power station for the whole world but by stopping and waiting they will receive a source of power that is eternal.

There are many examples of Jesus Praying. We will use his prayer as we come to communion, the one he used to teach the disciples - the Lord’s Prayer. In the Gospel reading – we along with the disciples are taken into the personal space of Jesus’s prayer life. Coming to the end of the farewell discourses, it is a moving prayer. First for his own commission not in a self-centred way but for others, secondly directly showing concern for the disciples and thirdly praying for those who will come to new life and faith through them.

It begins by Jesus “raising (lifted up) his eyes.” It is the same phrase as used a few weeks before, when by the grave of Lazarus he seemed so very down by the sight of such physical and spiritual infirmity. Now another phrase is added “into heaven”. It is as if he is looking into the eyes of the Father. The eyes reveal so much – we say they are “the window to the soul.” A person may not be able to speak or communicate but their eyes can still convey so much and prayer is not all about words - it is about being in relationship with God. Stopping, waiting and raising the eyes is enough. Words of thanksgiving of penitence or of asking may come but for now enough.

Jesus does not use the God he uses the word father – repeatedly. To say God evokes dignity and lord of the universe but to say father evokes a distinct person who has a son, it evokes personal knowledge and note too that Jesus uses that word several times – Known – three times in this short extract. He has made the father known. He does not say “I and God are one” he says I am one with the father” to have known me is to know the father”.

When the stopping and waiting, the gazing into heaven, the meeting of eyes is over it is time to go and be and do. For Jesus - to fulfil his mission in his passion death and resurrection. For the disciples and you and I, an instruction to go - to open the doors, to lift hearts and raise eyes.

If we have any faith, if there is any good or love of God and his world in our life, it is likely because someone stopped and waited a while and like Christ raised their eyes to heaven for our sake.

He who has brought those disciples into a new relationship with each other and with God, commands “go out and baptise”, not in the name of God but in the name Father Son and Holy Spirit, to the ends of the earth. Thanks be to God that they did and please God that we will. Amen.