**Cranmer Group Sermon, Worship & Prayers**

**May 24th - The Sunday after Ascension Day**

**‘Waiting and Praying’ (Acts 1:6-14)**

*Dear Friends,*

*Welcome to the first of our Cranmer Group Virtual Services during the eleven days of the ‘Thy Kingdom Come’ global prayer initiative.*

*It’s great to welcome another member of our congregations, Alison Stewart, as our preacher this week. Tying in with the prayer theme of this period between Ascension Day and Pentecost, Alison speaks to us from Acts chapter 1 on ‘Waiting & Praying’, as Jesus commissions his disciples, focusing on prayer and the Holy Spirit.*

*Again this week, we’re following our virtual service on Sunday mornings with an opportunity to get together for a chat. The service will be available online on Sunday from 9.30AM. It’ll last about 30 minutes, and then, at 10.15AM, we’re able to join together in a video conference, using a service called Zoom. However, for those of you without internet access, you can still join our chat on Zoom, by phone. You’ll need to call 0131 460 1196. Then key into your phone the meeting ID (864 0083 1074, followed by #) and then the password (549794, followed by #). I hope do you can join us!*

*With love and prayers, and God bless.*



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Alleluia! Christ Is Risen! **He Is Risen indeed!
Alleluia!**

**The Collect for the Sunday after Ascension Day
(Common Worship)**

Risen, ascended Lord,
as we rejoice at your triumph,
fill your Church on earth with power and compassion,
that all who are estranged by sin
may find forgiveness and know your peace,
to the glory of God the Father.
**Amen.**

**If You Are Encouraged**

**Played by Deb Hubbard**

If you are encouraged in your union with Christ,
finding consolation in his love,
Compassion, warmth and friendship in the Spirit's flow of life;
This is how you make my joy complete;

*By being of the same mind and loving with the same love,
united in the Spirit, with the same goal in sight,
by being of the same mind and loving with the same love,
united in the spirit, to the glory of Christ*

Be sure you do nothing out of selfishness or pride,
never seeing past your own concerns;
But humbly keep the interests of each other in your hearts,
seeing them as better than yourselves

*By being of the same mind and loving with the same love,
united in the Spirit, with the same goal in sight,
By being of the same mind and loving with the same love,
united in the Spirit, to the glory of Christ*

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**Bible Reading: Acts 1:6-14 (New International Version)**

**Read by Mike Senior**

*6 Then they gathered round him and asked him, ‘Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?’*

*7 He said to them: ‘It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.’*

*9 After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.*

*10 They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. 11 ‘Men of Galilee,’ they said, ‘why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.’*

*12 Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day’s walk from the city. 13 When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. 14 They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.*

**Sermon: ‘Waiting and Praying’ – Alison Stewart**
This passage begins by saying how they gathered round Jesus, in the King James versions it uses the phrase 'When they were together in one place'. Almost sounds like the good old days, doesn't it at the moment! How I am sure we long to be together with each other for fellowship and with families and friends. Together in one place. Yet due to technology, we are able to still share together in worship, coming before the Lord together in the special time and place within our own homes.

This is the start of the story of Christ's ascension, the last action, the last conversation with his disciples before he ascends to heaven.

So let's take a few minutes to look at that conversation this morning and the responses of the disciples. There are two conversations in this passage, one with the disciples and Jesus and then another with the disciples and two men dressed in white, which we shall also look at briefly.

After all the miracles and times with Jesus that the disciples have had after the resurrection - the walking together on the Emmaus road, the eating of fish together on the seaside, the walking on water - they begin in this passage by almost an expression of, “Well, all the heavenly, God-focused stuff is fine but what about us what about the times and place we are in right now.” They were living in an occupied land, they were subjected, part of the Roman Empire, ruled by outsiders, non-believers and their lives and finances were monitored and controlled. They wanted freedom.

They question: 'When will you restore?'

For them, it was about politics; it was earth bound in time and place. It was a real issue for them, and I don't want us to think it wasn't right to ask Jesus. Good teachers will always say there is no such thing as a stupid question, and that is certainly true when it comes to sharing our thoughts and prayers with Jesus. But Jesus brings them back to what counts. God knows. Jesus says its not for them to know, and then brings them to their role and what it is important for them to be doing. To focus on what actually matters, what actually really counts.

“BUT I have something greater for you,” he says. Compared to your thinking, your focus, your geographical centre, you are about to have your horizons widened more than you can imagine. The issue they thought was paramount pales into insignificance in what He is trying to tell them. They may not have the physical power to remove the Roman Empire, but they will be given the spiritual power to play a part in bringing in the Kingdom of Heaven - the life and reign of Jesus in people's hearts and lives, in Jerusalem, in Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Jerusalem – the equivalent of witnessing right where we are now, in the place that we find yourselves in.

Judea – our wider communities and society.

Samaria – to the other ones; those that are sometimes the hardest to deal with, so similar, yet irritatingly different. They Jews and Samaritans shared a history, yet differences had brought division between their communities.

And then, when they have overcome their fears and barriers, doubts and misapprehensions, then to the world.

This commissioning wasn't bound by time and place; it was for all believers, for all time, and everywhere.

How could they do this? How can we do this? Jesus begins by saying 'you will receive power when the Holy Spirit come upon you.'

It is the Holy Spirit who enabled and emboldened the disciples to proclaim the good news of Jesus, and to bring in His Kingdom.

This time between Ascension and Pentecost reminds us of the time the disciples spent waiting for the Holy Spirit to come in this very special way. In a way we don't have to wait, the Holy Spirit is here for each one of us to strengthen and encourage us.

As we spend time in our lives at the moment 'waiting', we can know that the Holy Spirit is with us, our constant companion.

And Jesus ascends, He goes up to heaven as on a cloud.

The disciples and standing there looking up.

Still looking, not surprising really - I would have been stood there still looking!

But Jesus had said farewell and 'commissioned ' them. He had told them what to do next but they were still stood unmoving looking perhaps at what they had lost. They may have felt as if they were in that difficult stage we sometimes find ourselves at in life were one door closes, something doesn't go as we hoped or expected and we are waiting to see what will happen next. Perhaps harking back and holding on to the past, making moving forward so much harder?

The appearance of the two men dressed in white brings them to the present and ask them the question -

'Why do you stand her looking into the sky? '

A time for not focusing on what we have lost, but a time to get on with bringing in the Kingdom. Fulfilling our calling, moving onto another stage.

In the times we find ourselves in, we are unable to go to our equivalents of Jerusalem and Judea. Get we can still fulfil our calling to serve and bring in God's kingdom. During these days, the Churches across the country are united in Thy Kingdom Come, a special time for prayer to bring in God's Kingdom. Prayers are not in lock down! They are no barriers they cannot cross; no limitations on their effectiveness due to the virus. We may not be able to go out but we can write, we can phone, and we can pray.

Wherever we are, whatever situation we find ourselves in at the moment, the Holy Spirit is with us, to help and support us as we pray to bring in God's Kingdom.

**Intercessions**

**Led by Janet Greasley**

Let us pray. Lord, help us to remember and pray for all those in our communities in trouble; who are lonely, or who are ill or caring for loved ones; not enjoying good health, who are suffering from dementia or Alzheimer’s.

Lord, in your mercy,
**Hear our prayer.**

Lord, give us strength and courage to meet the challenges of each day. Help us remember our many blessings, the love of Christ, our family and our friends.

Lord, in your mercy,
**Hear our prayer.**

At this time, we remember the victims of Cyclone Amphan that has struck India and Bangladesh, with winds of up to 115mph.

Lord, in your mercy,
**Hear our prayer.**

Lord, we continue to pray for all the doctors, nurses, and carers in our hospitals and care homes, that they may stay free from the Coronavirus, and soon be able to resume a normal life with their families and friends. We thank them for their dedication and skills.

Lord, in your mercy,
**Hear our prayer.**

Finally, let us hope and pray that we may soon resume our work to help build the Cranmer Group of parishes, and minister to our congregations and communities.

Lord, in your mercy,
**Hear our prayer.**

Merciful Father,
**accept these prayers
for the sake of Your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ
Amen.**

 **The Lord’s Prayer**As our Saviour taught us, so we pray:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.**

**The Collect for the Sunday after Ascension Day
(Book of Common Prayer)**

O God, the King of glory, who hast exalted thine only Son Jesus Christ with great triumph unto thy kingdom in heaven: We beseech thee, leave us not comfortless; but send to us thine Holy Ghost to comfort us, and exalt us unto the same place whither our Saviour Christ is gone before, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. **Amen.**
**Alleluia, Sing to Jesus
Recorded by St. Paul's Cathedral Virtual Choir of the Nation, and edited together.**

Alleluia, sing to Jesus!
His the sceptre, his the throne;
Alleluia, his the triumph,
His the victory alone:
Hark, the songs of peaceful Sion
Thunder like a mighty flood;
Jesus out of every nation,
Hath redeemed us by his blood.

Alleluia, not as orphans
Are we left in sorrow now;
Alleluia, he is near us,
Faith believes, nor questions how:
Though the cloud from sight received him,
When the forty days were o’er,
Shall our hearts forget his promised,
‘I am with you evermore’?

Alleluia, Bread of Angels,
Thou on earth out food, our stay;
Alleluia, here the sinful
Flee to thee from day to day:
Intercessor, Friend of sinners,
Earth’s Redeemer, plead for me,
Where the songs of all the singles
Sweep across the crystal sea.

Alleluia, King eternal,
Thee the Lord of lords we own;
Alleluia, born of Mary,
Earth thy footstool, heaven thy throne,
Thou within the veil hast entered,
Robed in flesh, our great High Priest;
Thou on earth both Priest and Victim
In the Eucharistic Feast.
Do also listen to a particularly beautiful new worship song this week: ‘Thy Kingdom Come’, by Pete James. It’s been specially composed for this year’s Thy Kingdom Come global prayer initiative, and sets new and prayer-full lyrics to the tune of the glorious traditional hymn, ‘Tell out My Soul, The Greatness of the Lord!’

With the new lyrics in the film itself, it’s at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CWhL6v8oQZ0>

Do enjoy it!

**A Closing Blessing**

The Spirit of truth lead you into all truth,
give you grace to confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
and strengthen you to proclaim the word
and works of God;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be among you & remain with you always.
**Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
**In the name of Christ, Amen.**