**Home Service Sheet For 12th May 2024**

**Call to Worship:**                  **Psalm 93:1-5**

The Lord reigns; he is robed in majesty;
    the Lord is robed; he has put on strength as his belt.
Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved.
Your throne is established from of old;
    you are from everlasting.

The floods have lifted up, O Lord,
    the floods have lifted up their voice;
    the floods lift up their roaring.
Mightier than the thunders of many waters,
    mightier than the waves of the sea,
    the Lord on high is mighty!

Your decrees are very trustworthy;
    holiness befits your house,
    O Lord, forevermore.

**Opening Prayer**

Grant us, Almighty God, the faith to believe that Your only begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, ascended into the heavens and is now sat at Your right hand, ever interceding for us. Help us to celebrate and praise You for all that You have graciously done for us through the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Your Son. Keep us expectant, awaiting His return in glory at the end of the age, when You will gather us to Yourself for eternity. In Jesus’ Name we ask this, amen.

**Hymn**                                     **Christ Triumphant**by ***Michael Saward***

<https://youtu.be/BPVerh02eL4?si=71o9Gm-Ln5raK9HD>

Christ triumphant, ever reigning, Saviour, Master, King!
Lord of heaven, our lives sustaining, hear us as we sing:

***Yours the glory and the crown, the high renown, the eternal name.***

Word incarnate, truth revealing, Son of Man on earth!
Power and majesty concealing by Your humble birth:

Suffering Servant, scorned, ill-treated, victim crucified!
Death is through the cross defeated, sinners justified:

Priestly king, enthroned for ever, high in heaven above!
Sin and death and hell shall never stifle hymns of love:

So, our hearts and voices raising through the ages long,
Ceaselessly upon You gazing, this shall be our song:

**The Lord’s Prayer**

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 that 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.

**Bible Reading                     Acts 1:1-11**

In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen.He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, “you 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, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed 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 and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”

**Reflection**

Ascension Day is not something that we tend to mark or celebrate as non-conformist Christians. We know what to make of our Lord Jesus’ birth, baptism, death and resurrection, but His ascension doesn’t seem to be quite so straight forward. The previous events of Jesus’ life and death all happened here on the Earth, but through His ascension He left this planet and returned to His Father in heaven. I suspect that one of the issues is that we cannot point to a place on a map and say, ‘this is heaven’! At a fundamental level we don’t fully understand where it is.

Luke opens his second volume by recounting what Jesus said to His disciples just before He ascended to God the Father. This is, in effect, Luke’s equivalent to Matthew 28:16-20, in which Jesus gave His disciples the Great Commission to go throughout the world making disciples and baptising them. The key points of what Jesus says are to wait for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and then once they had received the Spirit to go everywhere proclaiming the Gospel message. The Holy Spirit was given to all believers at Pentecost, and from that moment onwards all who believe in Jesus also receive the same Holy Spirit at the very moment they place their faith in Christ.

Some people get rather confused by the language that Jesus used in verse 5, where He said, “John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit”. This leads some to think that this is a separate experience from salvation, and yet the Scriptures only give us one example where there is a separation of salvation and receiving the Spirit. There are good reasons to believe that this was an exception to the rule by which God demonstrated His acceptance of non-Jews into the Church through faith alone by grace alone (see Acts 8:5-17). From the day of Pentecost onwards, anyone who places their trust in Jesus for salvation also receives the Holy Spirit at the same time.

The gift of God’s Holy Spirit is not given simply so that the believer will simply have a good ‘experience’ of God, but rather so that the believer would be equipped for service in the Church, and in particular for sharing the Gospel. Jesus put it this way, “you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses… to the end of the earth.” (V.8) These two things, receiving the Spirit and witnessing are directly linked to one another. Christians are not expected to proclaim the Gospel without the power and help of the Holy Spirit. Rather, we are equipped by God and given boldness to proclaim our faith in Jesus to other people. Interestingly, the word translated as ‘witnesses’ is the Greek word from which we get the English word ‘martyr’. The significance of this is that our sharing of the Gospel, or bearing witness to Jesus, is done in the knowledge that there may be negative consequences for us from the world. We may be ridiculed or shunned, arrested or even put to death for our obedience to God.

The final three verses of our reading speak of the ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus had done everything that He needed to do and taught the disciples everything they needed to know and so the time was right for Him to return to the Father. Jesus had told the disciples of His departure on a number of occasions that are recorded for us in the Gospels, and yet they still seem surprised. You can imagine them watching Jesus lifted up from amongst them with their mouths wide open, can’t you? This was beyond their experience and understanding. Something perhaps similar had happened to Enoch and the prophet Elijah in the Old Testament, but that was hundreds of years ago.

Luke shows us that the disciples needed to be redirected, and this was done by two angels. They said to the disciples, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus… will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.” (V.11) In effect they are telling them to move on - there’s nothing more to see for now. Perhaps there’s a helpful principle found in these words, and that is for Christians to focus on the main things of our faith and not the obscure things around the edge of our faith. As Christians we should be focused on salvation, living out the Christian life and sharing the Gospel first and foremost. Jesus will return one day, but we don’t know exactly when, but we need to obey His commands in the meantime. Amen.

**Prayer**

Gracious God, we pray today for Your blessing to rest upon Your Church. We are grateful for its worship and fellowship; for the care and teaching of children, young people and adults; for its nurture and love. Help us to be the kind of church You call us to be. Help us to grasp the meaning of the Gospel which You have entrusted to us and give us grace to live by it and boldness to proclaim it faithfully. We pray for those who are less fortunate than ourselves; those who live in developing countries and countries where there is very little stability. Help us to live as Your disciples, focused on You and Your ways. These things we ask in Jesus’ Name, amen.

**Blessing**

Risen Lord Jesus, draw us to Yourself this day. May Your Kingdom be made known in and through us to the world as we live as Your witnesses until You come again. Everlasting God, to You belongs the praise, glory, honour, blessing and power, now and forever, amen.

Attachments area

[Preview YouTube video Christ triumphant ever reigning • Michael Saward](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BPVerh02eL4&authuser=0" \t "_blank)

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