

Sermon Notes: The Ascension of Our Lord.

To-day we celebrate the end of Christ's mission on Earth, symbolised by the story of the Ascension. Yet we know that through the Holy Spirit, Christ is with us always. The stories of people ascending, such as that of Elijah, and of Mary, reflect the concept of Heaven being 'up there' somewhere, and yet we know that God is within us, around us, above and below us. God, and hence the Blessed Trinity is everywhere, and nowhere is there where God is not. The term Heaven does not represent a place but a state of existence in Union with God. The story of Christ's Ascension therefore is one of Christ being re-united with His Father, and it is illustrated in language that people of that time would understand.

The Ascension was certainly celebrated in the Fifth century and was one of the four greatest feasts of the Church from that time. Some writers claim it is a feast from apostolic times, and symbolises Christ entering into His glory by uniting with the Father. Remember **Christ came to show us how to live our lives and properly prepare to serve the Father.** The Ascension marks the completion of this task, and its handing over to His disciples, and thus to us. We know that when we have reached the stage of perfection that God intends us to reach, we will be one with Him in the Spirit, sharing in His consciousness, and no longer bound by physical forms, but ascend freely to be with Him forever. **This is our destiny.** One who was despised and rejected is now lifted up, and no matter what burdens we may bear, or difficulties we have to overcome, ultimately we too will be lifted up. But this does not mean being beamed into Space or some specific physical location. Rather it implies entering into God's glory.

The word 'glory' appears a lot in our bibles and Liturgies. It is the English equivalent of a lot of different words, sometimes meaning light as when **'the Glory of the Lord shone around them'**, and sometimes meaning praise as in **'Glory be to God in the Highest'**. But the principal meaning for us is the state of union with God. Entering into Glory is more likely to mean for us entering a higher state of consciousness or existence.

At this time of year there are also several commemorations that remind us of our Christian duty to others, and the need for us to be completely unselfish in our efforts to co-operate with all in doing God's work in the world. There will be a week of Prayer for Christian Unity, prayers for reconciliation with our indigenous peoples and doubtless we will note other worthy calls in the media in the coming weeks.

Autumn is upon us with its promise of Winter, but for us we know that through the ascended Christ, a new life of hope and love awaits us. It is for us to retain that knowledge and spread God's love throughout our community as now **we are His representatives** and he will be known and remembered through our actions and attitudes.

Christ has risen up and ascended, but He is with us still in our hearts and in the spirit of all creation, so let us live as if we believed it and celebrate and praise our God in the Highest.

