

*Ascension Day*

**CHRIST TRIUMPHANT!**

INVOCATION

+ In the name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen

Christ is risen! Alleluia!

He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

PRAISE

Thanks and praise to you,  
Jesus Christ, Lord of all,  
given the name above every other name:

Jesus, Lord of all,  
we worship and adore you.

King of righteousness, King of peace,  
enthroned at the right hand of Majesty on high:

Jesus, Lord of all,  
we worship and adore you.

Great high priest,  
living for ever to intercede for us:

Jesus, Lord of all,  
we worship and adore you.

Source of our salvation, you bring us to glory  
through your death and resurrection:

Jesus, Lord of all,  
we worship and adore you.

Every knee bows to you;  
every tongue confesses, you are Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father.

Alleluia! Amen!

PERSONAL REFLECTION

*In your own words ask God to be with you in this time of prayer...*

*Then take a few moments to reflect on your life in the last few days, and in your own words speak to God about it, asking him to amend what is wrong, and to affirm what is good.*

*Then say:*

Holy God,  
holy and strong,  
holy and immortal,  
have mercy on me.

PRAYER FOR THE DAY

Risen Christ,  
you have raised our human nature to the throne of heaven:  
help us to seek and serve you,  
that we join you at the Father's side,  
where you reign with the Spirit in glory,  
now and for ever.  
Amen.

READINGS

*Read DANIEL 7.9 – 14*

*In one his disturbing visions (similar to those of John of Patmos in Revelation) Daniel witnesses the Judgement. The theme is authority: the beasts – the rulers of this world – are deprived of their authority and it is given to another, 'one like a human being' who came 'on the clouds of heaven'. To him was given everlasting sovereignty, glory and kingly power, 'so that all peoples and nations of every language should serve him.' The Church has seen in this a prophecy of the authority given to Jesus, who, at Ascension-tide, is celebrated as Lord of all the world.*

*Say: PSALM 47*

*This psalm of rejoicing in the goodness of God may well have been sung in procession to the Temple. It uses the image of 'going up', or ascending, as a way of speaking about the power and authority of God.*

*Read: ACTS 1.1 – 11*

*Throughout the Bible the cloud symbolises the presence of God, and, just as Daniel saw 'one coming with the clouds of heaven', so at the end of his earthly ministry, the disciples see Jesus taken back into the cloud from which he came.*

Alleluia! Sing to Jesus!  
His the sceptre, his the throne;  
Alleluia! His the triumph,  
His the victory alone.  
Hark! The songs of peaceful Zion  
Thunder like a mighty flood.  
Jesus, out of every nation,  
Has 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 promise,  
"I am with you evermore"?

*Read: LUKE 24.44 – end.*

REFLECTION

The late Spring is one of the best times of year, and Ascension Day is one of the best festivals. It is a true festival of faith – in the sense that what it celebrates can only be known by faith. As Geoffrey Preston said, ‘When we celebrate the Ascension we are not so much remembering the last time Jesus took leave of his disciples, perhaps in some rather spectacular way. Rather we are trying to realise and to celebrate the way Jesus now is.’ (*Hallowing the Time*, p. 142) There is no evidence for the way Jesus now is apart from the faith of the Church.

And what is our faith? Writing to the Ephesians Paul said Jesus is ‘enthroned at God’s right hand, far above all government and authority, all power and dominion, and any title of sovereignty that can be named, not only in this age but in the age to come!’ (*Ephesians* 2.20,21) Or, as Michael Saward put it in his hymn:

Christ triumphant ever reigning,  
Saviour, Master, King,  
Lord of heav’n, our lives sustaining,  
Hear us as we sing:

On this day our song of praise proclaims that God has raised Jesus to the heights and given him the name above all names, the name at which every knee shall bow.

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

Our faith in Jesus begins with the conviction that he makes known to us the true nature of God:

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

Jesus is the human face of God. If the infinite God is to be expressed in human form Jesus is what he looks like. Jesus is the almighty, ineffable God expressed in a way suitable for human understanding, and the surprise is that his nature is love not wrath; he comes in forgiveness not in condemnation. Nor does he force himself on us; as his birth was humble, so his glory is veiled. Jesus doesn't come with a sign: 'Made in Heaven'; he leaves us free to draw our own conclusions. Jesus reveals the humility of God, inviting faith rather than demanding obedience.

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

The eternal name of God is Love – a love which bears all things, hopes all things and endures all things:

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

The love of God seen in Jesus is self-giving, self-sacrifice, even to the point of laying down his life – the victim crucified. It is this kind of love that makes new relationships possible because it brings forgiveness, and it reaches even beyond death. We see in Jesus that God is not remote from us but near to us; not beyond us, but beside us. In his love our acts of self-sacrifice and all unmerited suffering have meaning. Caring for the sick and infirm, going without, turning the other cheek; the suffering of the hungry, the thirsty, the falsely imprisoned, victims and refugees – all this is gathered up in Christ and given an eternal value. The cast-down are exalted, and the mighty are brought low, as Mary said in the *Magnificat*. The love of God confounds a world built on power and prestige.

Selfless love alone gives the right to reign, and it is Jesus above all who has won that right.

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

Jesus is the priestly king. A priest is one who stands before God on behalf of others; a king is one who rules over others; in Jesus, true kingship is shown to be of a priestly nature, self-giving in service rather than self-indulgence in privilege. As Daniel foresaw, it is to Jesus that all authority in heaven and earth has been given:

To him was given dominion and glory and kingship,  
that all peoples, nations and languages should serve  
him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that  
shall not pass away, and his kingship is one that  
shall never be destroyed.

*(Daniel 7.14)*

It is above all this aspect of the way Jesus now is that we celebrate today. When Luke describes Jesus as being lifted up into the cloud, the symbol of God's glory, he is saying that Jesus becomes one with God and shares God's authority. By giving him authority God makes Jesus' life the standard by which we all shall be judged. He is the Lord before whom the indifferent and those who reject him will have to appear, just like those who believe. His justice is the standard by which all human institutions and policies will be judged.

Christians often miss this and shy away from the public dimension of our faith. We are not sure about those who campaign for the remission of the unpayable debts of the poorest nations; or those who campaign for justice in world trade; or those who campaign for stronger protection of the environment. I see these campaigners as our brothers and sisters, uniting in a common cause of reconnecting our lives with the common good. Love and self-giving are not

virtues just for our private lives. If Christ is the King he is the king of the whole of our lives, public and private, and our plans and our policies, even our economics, must be brought into line with the values of his kingdom.

The way Jesus now is gives us confidence that our faith is not in vain. In him we see the true, forgiving face of God; through him our pain and the pain of the world is given meaning; by him our lives and our politics are judged that all may live in justice and peace; therefore to him we offer our joyful song of praise:

So, our hearts and voices raising  
Through the ages long,  
Ceaselessly upon you gazing,  
This shall be our song:

Our song is one of joy and praise that God has exalted Jesus to his right hand and given him all authority. But this is clear only to those who believe. Or rather, believing in Jesus enables us to see things as they eternally are. The world proceeds as though the final standard is human judgment, but we know differently. Faith enables us to know now what, in the end, will be apparent to all: that Jesus is the One upon whom the Father's favour eternally rests; his is the only Name by which we shall be saved.

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

*Pause and reflect.*

## PRAISE

Christ triumphant ever reigning,  
Saviour, Master, King,  
Lord of heav'n, 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:  
*Yours the glory ...*

Suffering Servant, scorned, ill-treated,  
Victim crucified!  
Death is through the cross defeated,  
Sinners justified:  
*Yours the glory ...*

Priestly king, enthroned for ever  
High in heaven above!  
Sin and death and hell shall never  
Stifle hymns of love:  
*Yours the glory ...*  
So, our hearts and voices raising  
Through the ages long,  
Ceaselessly upon you gazing,  
This shall be our song:  
*Yours the glory and the crown,  
The high renown,  
The eternal name.*

## PRAYERS

Jesus, our exalted Lord,  
all authority has been given to you;  
Lord, let my prayer be joined with yours.  
*Lord, hear my prayer.*



Jesus Christ, great high priest,  
living for ever to intercede for us:  
pray for the Church, your broken body in the world ...  
*Lord, hear my prayer.*

Jesus Christ, king of righteousness,  
enthroned at the right hand of the majesty on high:  
pray for the world, that it may be subject to your just and  
gentle rule ...  
*Lord, hear my prayer.*

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 my prayer.*

Jesus Christ, source 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 my prayer.*

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 my prayer.*

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 our God, for ever and ever.  
Amen.

CONCLUSION

Our Father...

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
The love of God,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,  
be with us all, now and for ever.  
Amen.