



## THE ASCENSION SUNDAY, MAY 24<sup>TH</sup>, 2020



**The Ascension of Christ: Salvador Dalí, 1958**

During the period of Lent, customary emphasis falls upon the human-ness of Jesus and by extension, our own. Lent is a time when we focus upon the human condition: often its brokenness. In the Easter Season, emphasis falls upon the idea of resurrection: again, not just that of Jesus, but our own, understood, comprehended, not simply as hope for the after-life, after the grave, but meaningful life, life-giving life in the present, before the grave.

Ascension Day, falling on Thursday, May 21<sup>st</sup>, this year – last Thursday – is the high point of the final stages of the Easter Season, when we celebrate what the Eastern Church has long remembered: the call to becoming divine, to becoming gods: the theological word, “*theosis*”. This idea of our potential and actual divinity, as human beings, is something that cannot be understated. It provides the balance to the historical tendency in the Western church of being preoccupied with our sinfulness.

Soon, we will be celebrating National Reconciliation Week – falling between Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> May and Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> June. I would like to allude to this event, this Sunday, May 24<sup>th</sup>, and then again in a different way, the following Sunday, May, 31<sup>st</sup>.

The very idea of “The Ascension” referring to an ascended humanity and planet, includes the ‘ascended’ dignity of indigenous peoples, who still labour under the burden of the ‘dark side’ of European colonization, whether they live in Australia, Canada, the U.S., the south and central American continent, or indeed Asia and Africa.

## GATHERING

### Announcements

#### Greeting

In the name of the Father, of the Son and the Holy Spirit

The Lord be with you

***And also with you***

#### We light the Paschal Candle

We light the candle celebrating the Ascension of Jesus who left us a mandate to make the world more divine,

***to make the world an altogether more human place.***

We acknowledge and pay our respects to the traditional owners of the land on which we meet – the Darramarugal people. It is upon their ancestral lands that our worship centre stands. As we worship together this morning, let us be mindful of the deep spiritual connection to this land of the Darramarugal elders, past and present, over many thousands of years.

**Hymn: Sing a new song** (TIS 166, Cosmic Praise, James Philip McAuley)

#### An Indigenous Prayer

Let's hear a prayer of Prayer of Thanksgiving through the eyes of Indigenous Australia.

God of holy dreaming,

Great Creator Spirit,

***from the dawn of creation you have given your children the good things of Mother Earth.***

You spoke and gum tree grew.

In vast deserts, dense forest,

***and in cities at the water's edge,  
creation sings your praise.***

In Jesus' life, death and resurrection  
 you heard the cries of your people  
***and became one with your wounded ones:  
 the convicts, the hunted, and the dispossessed.***

The sunrise of your Son  
 coloured the earth anew.  
***In Jesus we have been reconciled to you,  
 to each other and to your whole creation.***

Lead us on, Great Spirit,  
 as we gather from the four corners of the earth;  
***enable us to walk together in trust from the hurt and pain of the  
 past into the full day which has dawned in Jesus Christ. Amen.***

*From the Rev'd Lenore Parker, an Indigenous Anglican Priest, from "A Prayer Book for  
 Australia".*

**The Peace**  
 Christ is risen!  
***He is risen indeed!***

## LET'S HEAR THE WORD

### Some Insights about The Call to become Gods

We all suffer. It's part of life. The blessing is - while evil exists, Divinity  
 does, too, and it is stronger. **Taya Kyle**

Someday, after mastering the winds, the waves, the tides and gravity,  
 we shall harness for God the energies of love, and then, for a second  
 time in the history of the world, man will have discovered fire.

**Pierre Teilhard de Chardin SJ**

God will not look you over for medals degrees or diplomas, but for  
 scars. **Elbert Hubbard**

Western Christians have imagined that, at the end of the day, God is  
 going to throw the present space-time universe into a trash-can and

we'll be sitting on clouds playing harps above the skies. The ultimate future that we're promised is much more interesting than that. It is new heavens and a new Earth with new bodies to live in and a new politics that serves all. **N. T. Wright**

### **Acts 1:1-11 (Good News Translation)**

This is a story about the Ascension of Jesus: his apparent escalation, to the heavens, to God; a pictorial way of confirming the idea that God 'signs off' on the legitimacy of Jesus' life and actions. For the early Christians it was a case of Elijah revisited: remember Elijah's departure into heaven in a chariot? But the emphasis of this reading is not on escaping to heaven. Quite the contrary! The idea is this: that Jesus' escalation serves to confirm the truth of his life...and so we are invited to live like him...truthfully, and in like form, to be as gods. To become genuinely god-like then is to take responsibility for the human reality in which we are immersed. Accordingly, in our reading, the disciples are directed back to reality, discouraged from staring into the heavens. The angels are smilingly saying "get on with the job with living, take responsibility for your community, your society, for the world"!

1 Dear Theophilus:

In my first book I wrote about all the things that Jesus did and taught from the time he began his work <sup>2</sup> until the day he was taken up to heaven. Before he was taken up, he gave instructions by the power of the Holy Spirit to the men he had chosen as his apostles. <sup>3</sup> For forty days after his death he appeared to them many times in ways that proved beyond doubt that he was alive. They saw him, and he talked with them about the Kingdom of God. <sup>4</sup> And when they came together,<sup>[a]</sup> he gave them this order: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift I told you about, the gift my Father promised. <sup>5</sup> John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

<sup>6</sup> When the apostles met together with Jesus, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time give the Kingdom back to Israel?"

<sup>7</sup> Jesus said to them, "The times and occasions are set by my Father's own authority, and it is not for you to know when they will be. <sup>8</sup> But when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you will be filled with power, and you will be witnesses for me in Jerusalem, in all of Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." <sup>9</sup> After saying this, he was taken up to heaven as they watched him, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

<sup>10</sup> They still had their eyes fixed on the sky as he went away, when two men dressed in white suddenly stood beside them <sup>11</sup> and said,

“Galileans, why are you standing there looking up at the sky? This Jesus, who was taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way that you saw him go to heaven.”

## Psalm 47

This psalm is a hymn celebrating God’s enthronement as king of all nations. It probably dates from the days of David or of Solomon. Vv. 1-4 summon all people everywhere to praise the God of Israel as king.. The Hebrew in v. 5 suggests that this psalm was written to accompany a religious ceremony connected with the Ark of the covenant; it dramatized God’s kingship. “His holy throne. V. 9a tells of all rulers gathering as the people of Israel’s God (our God). It may tell of vassal rulers coming to Jerusalem to pay tribute.

<sup>1</sup>Clap your hands, all you peoples; ***shout to God with loud songs of joy.***

<sup>2</sup>For the LORD, the Most High, is awesome, ***a great king over all the earth.***

<sup>3</sup>He subdued peoples under us, ***and nations under our feet.***

<sup>4</sup>He chose our heritage for us, ***the pride of Jacob whom he loves forever.***

<sup>5</sup>God has gone up with a shout, ***the LORD with the sound of a trumpet.***

<sup>6</sup>Sing praises to God, sing praises; ***sing praises to our King, sing praises.***

<sup>7</sup>For God is the king of all the earth; ***sing praises with a psalm.***

<sup>8</sup>God is king over the nations; ***God sits on his holy throne.***

<sup>9</sup>The princes of the peoples gather as the people of the God of Abraham. ***For the shields of the earth belong to God; he is highly exalted.***

## Ephesians 1:15-23 (J.B. Phillips New Testament Translation)

Ephesians is all about the way in which the crucified Christ becomes the ruler of the universe. It provides what we call a Christian cosmology. As such, it also speaks about the authority of Jesus and by extension the authority of the Church. Certainly, there is in Ephesians then, what we call a *public theology*, a theology that is not just limited to private belief. That said theology and faith that are public in nature, have to be interpreted carefully, especially in the light of

serious church excesses, such as the dark history of the Inquisition (12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries), where that authority was abused, and most recently, the horror of paedophilia, which the Church has not managed well. In essence, *any authority that the church claims* must reflect the serving generosity of the man Jesus.

<sup>15-19</sup> Since, then, I heard of this faith of yours in the Lord Jesus and the practical way in which you are expressing it towards fellow-Christians, I thank God continually for you and I never give up praying for you; and this is my prayer. That God, the God of our Lord Jesus Christ and the all-glorious Father, will give you spiritual wisdom and the insight to know more of him: that you may receive that inner illumination of the spirit which will make you realise how great is the hope to which he is calling you—the magnificence and splendour of the inheritance promised to Christians—and how tremendous is the power available to us who believe in God.

<sup>20-21</sup> That power is the same divine power which was demonstrated in Christ when he raised him from the dead and gave him the place of supreme honour in Heaven—a place that is infinitely superior to any conceivable command, authority, power or control, and which carries with it a name far beyond any name that could ever be used in this world or the world to come.

<sup>22-23</sup> God has placed everything under the power of Christ and has set him up as head of everything for the Church. for the Church is his body, and in that body lives fully the one who fills the whole wide universe.

The word of the Lord

***Thanks be to God***

**Matthew 28:16-20 (Good News Translation) (alternate reading)**

Again, the question of authority pops up. For Matthew, the Christian church enjoys an authority, but it is not one that confidently claims universal knowledge about everything. The Church does not possess automatic, divine authority about things scientific, or things political, or indeed anything else. The Church *does* however possess the authority, the sole authority to teach what Jesus has taught about God's action in history through the Kingdom of God. The Church is the sole body, authorized to impart the values of the Gospel and what they suggest for the way people think about the world and how they ultimately live.

<sup>16</sup> The eleven disciples went to the hill in Galilee where Jesus had told them to go. <sup>17</sup> When they saw him, they worshiped him, even though some of them doubted. <sup>18</sup> Jesus drew near and said to them, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. <sup>19</sup> Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples: baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And I will be with you always, to the end of the age."

The Gospel of the Lord

***Praise to you Lord Christ***

**Hymn: Fairest Lord Jesus (TiS 203, Anon, St Elizabeth)**

**Some thoughts about "becoming as gods"**

**Let's Give: Our Offerings**

**Doxology**

***Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,  
praise him, all creatures here below,  
praise him above, ye heavenly host,  
praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.***

**Prayers of the People**

The one who prays offers the following words at the end of each series of petitions, "You call us to be gods". The people respond, "May we become what you have made us".

**Lord's Prayer**

Let us say the Lord's Prayer

***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.  
Save us from the time of trial***

***and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,  
now and forever. Amen.***

하늘에 계신 우리 아버지여  
이름이 거룩히 여김을 받으시오며  
나라이 임하옵시며  
뜻이 하늘에서 이룬 것 같이  
땅에서도 이루어지이다.  
오늘날 우리에게 일용할 양식을 주옵시고  
우리가 우리에게  
죄 지은 자를 사하여 준 것 같이  
우리 죄를 사하여 주옵시고  
우리를 시험에 들게 하지 마옵시고  
다만 악에서 구하옵소서  
대개 나라와 권세와 영광이  
아버지께 영원히 있사옵나이다. 아멘

**Closing Hymn: My heart and voice I raise** (TiS 225, Ascalon,  
Benjamin Rhodes)

### **Blessing and Sending Out**

Christ is risen!  
He is risen indeed!

We see reality through resurrection  
We look to the signs of a new world  
We live out the signs of this new world.

The service has ended  
Go in peace to love and serve the Lord  
***In the name of Christ***

**Blessing as we leave: May the feet of God** (TiS 779, Aubrey,  
Aubrey Podlich)



## Closing Postlude



**“Decolonizing the post-Colonial”:** Helen S. Tiernan: Imagining the great south continent uncolonized. There is a sense of the utopian in this, with the indigenous presence front and centre, and with land unspoilt. History always has its problems, but without European settlement, at the very least, they would be different.