

empower us and even less surprising that the Holy Spirit is the one gift that as Christians we tend to shy away from? After all the Holy Spirit can and will reveal to us those glimpses of what we are asking for! In those glimpses we are challenged to be honest about what we really want! Do we really want to experience God with us in a way that changes everything completely or are we just asking for an experience of our existence now but somehow more polished and peaceful? When Jesus returns we are told everything will be changed ~ all will be revealed, our lives transformed beyond anything that we understand. It is our human nature to be fearful of things we do not know ~ things beyond our experience. But think on ~ Those glimpses of heaven that you experience ~ they are not frightening ~ they reveal something precious, something peaceful, something beautiful ~ they often give you a fleeting power or an authority that humanly you do not possess ~ the ability to do something that reveals God's love to others ~ brings Him glory. That is the power that Jesus taught could move mountains ~ it is awesome but it is not frightening and it comes through the Holy Spirit. Yet you and I shy away from this most precious of gifts as if it is some sort of trickery ~ something dangerous something to be feared! When has God's love threatened to harm you in any way? God's promise is to be with you even when times are tough and traumatic ~ times when we are appalled and damaged ~ not by God but by the world, human nature, evil. We are told that the faithful will be insulted for their faith ~ You and I will experience ordeals ~ but we will be aware of Christ with us and through our lives Christ will be glorified. Call to mind the images of Manchester as see God present!

Next Sunday we celebrate Pentecost ~ each of us will be given the opportunity to receive the Holy Spirit to guide our discipleship. Pray to be ready to receive God's gift and allow it to be active in your life. Prepare to abandon fear and be ready to say "Yes" to God ~ and rejoice. Amen.

**Ministry Musings** (28<sup>th</sup> May 2017)

## **Alleluia He is Risen**

Did anyone ever tell you ~ were you warned? ~ Becoming a Christian does not guarantee a life free of difficulties ~ an 'easy ride' ~ you don't glide through life wearing rose-coloured glasses? Historically the church has swung from persuading people to believe or fear hellfire and brimstone through to it's a wonderful life with Christ ~ with the implication that it will be trouble free. There are truths at both ends of the pendulum but the reality lies somewhere in the middle! Peter tells his listeners (1 Peter 4: 12-14)~

*"Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you."*

Life without Christ is empty and desolate ~ life with Christ offers a peace and assurance ~ Hope ~ not an insurance against worldly trials but a means to journey through them with God's guidance and a knowledge that we will always be in His presence.

Next Sunday is the Day of Pentecost ~ a great day to consciously invite Christ in afresh ~ ask to receive the Holy Spirit in your life for the year ahead and the discipline to respond to her guiding through prayer and praise.

Consider this week your experiences in the past year ~ those where you have felt God close and those where He has felt distant. There is no guarantee the year ahead will be easier, possibly it won't, but if you are intent on recognising Christ walking with you then come next week prepared to recommit to your pilgrimage of faith.

**Knowing Jesus ~ making Him known**

## Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> May 2017 ~ 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter 10:00am

Readings : Acts 1: 6-14 NT page 114  
1 Peter 4: 12-14, 5: 6-11 NT page 232  
John 17: 1-11 NT page 108



His disciples gathered around Jesus. They wanted answers ~ they wanted to know what Jesus was going to do ~ whether He was going to restore the kingdom to Israel, but they are talking at cross-purposes.

Note in Luke's writing in the account in Acts the word kingdom has a lower case "k" ~ the kingdom that the disciples are asking about is the restoration of power and authority ~ the majesty that Israel had known prior to occupation ~ the days of old where they had mighty kings ruling over them in Jerusalem ~ kings like Uzziah or Solomon.

The Kingdom that Jesus speaks of has an upper case letter "K" and refers to God's Kingdom ~ the Kingdom that we can experience during our earthly lives and that we are assured a place in for eternity. It is this Kingdom that Jesus is talking about when He tells his disciples that it is not for them to know the times or dates the Father has set ~ that is in God's hands and under His control or authority. But Jesus also tells the disciples that they will not wait alone ~ they will receive the power to be His witnesses all round the world.

When did Jesus tell them this? It was the last thing that He

said to them for when he had finished speaking ~ before the disciples could question further ~ Jesus was taken up before their eyes and Luke describes a cloud hiding Jesus from their sight. This we call the Ascension, celebrated on Thursday and now we wait for Pentecost.

Luke goes on to say that the disciples were looking intently up into the sky as this happened ~ almost as if they were waiting for the event to be reversed. Jesus had told them that He would be going to the Father ~ he told Mary the same when she thought He was the gardener ~ but they could not comprehend what He was telling them! Yet again the disciples needed help ~ heavenly messengers ~ angels or evangelists ~ to explain to them that Jesus had returned to Heaven ~ the fullness of the Kingdom ~ the place where He would sit at the right hand of God the Father ~ the place where each of us will join Him for eternity, at our death, and from the 2nd coming. Note that the angels ~ appearing like men in white ~ tell them that Jesus who has been taken from them in this way will return in the same way ~ what they neglect to tell them of course is when that return will be! That is the return that you and I journey through our lives as Christians expecting to happen and indeed calling on Jesus to fulfill. In our liturgies we call on Jesus praying ~ "Come Lord Jesus" and we have been taught to pray "Thy Kingdom come" which, of course is the title of the global call to prayer that each of us is invited to share in this week as we await the Feast of Pentecost.

But what do we really mean, what do we expect to happen? You and I pray for God to be with us in all His glory when in earthly terms our actual experience is the trust in faith that only those who die are able to meet with God in all his glory in the place we call heaven ~ a place that we have not seen. We have to make do with glimpses of what that will be like ~ and if we are really honest those glimpses are not very frequent and tell us little more than such a place exists! Is it any wonder then that Jesus promises the Holy Spirit to