

# Sunday Thought

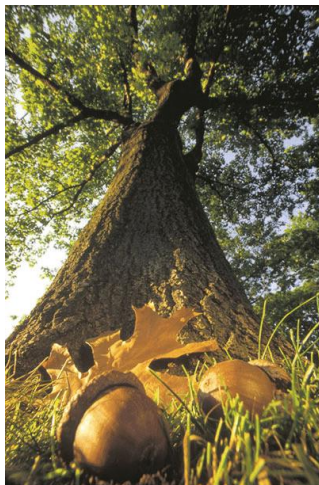
15th May 2022 Fifth Sunday of Easter

## Readings

Acts 11: 1 - 18  
Psalm 148  
Revelation 21: 1 - 6  
John 11: 31 - 35

## Dimensions of Glory

Some days I prefer to worship in God's bigger church – outside in the natural world. That's because there I can experience so many of the varying dimensions of his glory. Like the high splendour of the skies where there is beauty whatever the weather, or the depths of sparse green rugged valleys where rivers sing as they run home to the deepest seas. Looking out to a variety of different advancing horizons I discover a fullness of glorious worship among nature's well-rehearsed choirs, often greater than found within a church building, though, of course, that is vital to maintaining the Christian family fellowship where learning and personal spiritual growth take place.



Today's readings embrace all dimensions of God's glory. The psalm (148) is reminiscent of the glorious hymn of Francis which echoed around Assisi – '*All creatures of our God and King*'. It sings of God's cosmic radiance reflected from armies of bright angels just as it is from the sun, moon and stars, and even from clouds bursting with rain, hail and snow. Mountains, forests, crops, all creatures, and all people together join in one universal song of praise to their wise and loving creator

Even more than that, the excerpt from the revelation given to John tells of the fulfilment of the life and work of Jesus - the glory of God in a new heaven and a new earth where eternal life is a gift – as free as a drink of unbottled spring water! It's a life of glory – for everyone – defying death, pain, and grief. It is a whole new expression of life – life in and with Jesus. To drink the water means accepting his invitation to become a 'believer'.

Following the turmoil of the past two years, many Christian communities are longing to discover new ways of sharing faith and fulfilling our purpose by discovering the glory of God in new ways. Our scripture readings today help to show how that may come about for every church. It's all to do with different dimensions of glory! Learning that the whole glory of a sunset may be captured in a brand-new tender acer leaf.



Many a year I cannot resist picking up a couple of acorns, popping them in pots and seeing the glorious birth of a new tree. In time they will be planted somewhere on a country walk, with a prayer that others may one day look up at the glory of a magnificent oak. Before I share the greater glory, I need to appreciate the small glory-promise. That was Peter's experience in our story from the Acts of the Apostles. It is one of the most important events in the life of the first Church, too long to repeat here in full. Peter was experiencing a sort of 'party-gate'! The Apostles and church leaders in Jerusalem had summoned him home to account for breaking rules about 'eating out'. Rumours had reached them of Peter sharing meals with unclean non-Jews, or Gentiles. Peter gave an honest and accurate account of how God had taken over his life-timetable and used him for the conversion of a semi-retired captain of Rome's Italian regiment, who was living in Caesarea. *'The amazing thing God showed me in a vision',* he said, *'is that the good news isn't just for the Jews. It's for the whole world – everybody – as Jesus said it would be!'* It is still true that we need to see the gospel in its two glorious dimensions – of the acorn and the oak tree. We shall see the glory of God in the church – and in the world when the 'potted acorn' of gospel-glory in us reflects the splendour of the universal Kingdom – when a new me becomes God's dream of a new earth and a new heaven.

The gospel reading indicates two key factors in that happening – faith and love. Jesus' parting words to his friends is a new commandment. *'The whole world will see the Father's glory when you obey me and prove your love for me by loving one another in just the way I have loved you.'* Prove your faith by your life of love and everyone will see my glory. Live the acorn glory-life and the splendour of God will be known and seen in the church in a whole new dimension – like a glorious oak at the heart of the forest. Perhaps from acorns of faith we planted!

A Prayer of Creation Praise (with Psalm 148 in mind)

Lord! What a gloriously beautiful world you have made.  
We are so grateful to be part of it as your prime creation;  
for the privilege of sharing in its care, for you and with you.  
We want to praise you;  
for all the messages of your love in the sights and sound of nature,  
in the joy of our human experience and loving relationships.  
May these limited dimensions of your grace  
open our minds to greater dimensions of heaven on earth and of eternal life.



[www.friendshipfiles.com/sunday-thought](http://www.friendshipfiles.com/sunday-thought)