

# Sunday Thought

29th May 2022 Seventh Sunday of Easter

## Readings

Acts 16: 16 - 34

Psalm 97

Revelation 22: 12 - 14, 16, 17, 20 - 21

John 17: 20 - 26

## When Christ is King



I often think that in the life of the church we must be seeing things while standing on our heads or looking from the wrong side of a magnifying glass! Not least when it comes to the Ascension of our Lord, Jesus Christ. His ascension is the finale to his human lifework which began thirty-three years earlier in Bethlehem. Caught up in a glorious cloud formation as King of all kings, he is going home, returning to the spiritual dimension – to God, his Father. His work here is complete. A whole new world is beginning. He has opened the way for us, with him, to life with the Father and to be ready for every new outpouring of his Spirit. Jesus, with the Father's love and the Holy Spirit's power will enable the Gospel to spread out into the whole world – the cosmos and beyond!

So, where are we on Ascension Day? Forty days after Easter Sunday makes it a Thursday celebration during a working week when often our clouds are too grey and heavy to suggest realms of heavenly glory. It is as though we have it all up-side-down and magnification in reverse. For me, this festival is the most important in our Christian calendar. It shouts to all the world; *Christ Jesus is Lord and King!* If we lose that affirmation, we may be in peril of missing the words of Jesus as he departed to the Father, promising to send the Holy Spirit in his place to make him real in every believer's life and experience. It is the moment when Jesus said to his followers, *'The mission my father gave me is accomplished. Now, you go and tell the world! I am with you. My Spirit will enable you.'* Bethany village must have been pulsating with the heart of heaven that morning. How can we give the day a passing nod and go with usual Thursday routines? It is not so in many parts of the Christian church.

Apologies for going on about it, but I share this long-time ache to get the power and glory back into our everyday Christian life and worship. My rekindled inspiration comes from the scripture readings for this Sunday after the Ascension. We have so much need to hear it! *'The earth will be glad, and the islands of the seas will rejoice – when the Lord is King'* says the psalmist. It will be a globe of peace and justice, full of good and faithful living, when the reign of God is acknowledged in every heart and home, in every nation and council chamber... The old favourite hymn *Hills of the North rejoice* carries well the theme of today's thought. The psalmist pictures God as King.

He is lighting all the dark, clouded earth. As it rolls and trembles around the sun, he is sparking splendid glory in every place. Jesus said, *'Go to all people everywhere. Make them my disciples... teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. I'm with you to the end.'* All the world will rejoice – when the Lord is King! Our task is still, like the first disciples, to tell the whole world! It becomes real when I and every other believer let Jesus reign as King of all we have, all we are and all we do, and take one more step towards a world of Joy and peace.

How will the church in this new 'time of God's Spirit' do that? Jesus said, *'Wait for the Spirit.'* We must keep asking, listening, and not be surprised by his varied and often personal answers. Keep thinking big about the Kingdom of God being here among us, and keep praying BIG! It really is a matter of standing on our feet for Jesus and getting the magnification the right way round. I know that is not easy. For Jesus the crown became one of thorns. Paul knew that when he was at Philippi. At Troas the Acts story begins to be told in the third person plural – 'we', indicating that Doctor Luke has joined the missionaries. Was that because Paul was unwell? It would account for his not being able to travel into Asia. That was not his only problem. In Philippi a slave-girl made preaching difficult by her nuisance until Paul heals her, then her owners, enraged by their loss of income from her fortune-telling, caused Paul and his companions to spend a night in prison. There followed a massive earthquake, an embarrassing court appearance and an appeal ... BUT Paul used every opportunity to tell the world the good news .. and that led to the church being planted in Europe – a church among whose members were a jailer and his family and a woman entrepreneur and her household!



Words from Revelation express the glory of Jesus, Son of God, first and last, from creation to final glory. We, with all heaven want to pray, *Come Lord Jesus! Come to me! Come to all the world!* We are the longing to see Jesus' last prayer with his disciples answered (John17) *'May all who believe, share my life as one – together – the life of God's Spirit – share my love – share my glory – live with me first and last in their lives THEN the world will know the Lord is King, and rejoice in peace!'* Impossible? Who would have thought a single virus could change the world?

A Prayer for the World Kingdom of God (with Psalm 97 in mind)

Lord! Let every dawn be a reminder that you are lighting up the world.  
You are Lord of all the earth,  
melting the brooding darkness with rays of your love;  
dispersing evil, division, hatred, and despair;  
giving us sure hope of peace, unity and reconciliation,  
the end of crime, discrimination, war and poverty, leading to the day  
when every nation will share their songs of joy and peace, because Jesus is King!



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