

2026-05-17 ... 10am Service Sermon ... Revd Bev Jameson

John 17.1-11, Acts 1.6-14

PRAYER

Father may these spoken words be faithful to the written word and lead us into the living word, Jesus Christ our Lord - Amen

SERMON

Endings and beginnings, we have all had to face them at times during our lives. Sometimes it is a happy occasion like a marriage where single life comes to an end and the couple begin a new life in partnership. Or the birth of a child and I am sure those of you who have had children will understand life is never the same again. Sometimes, though it can be an ending of one way of life that leads to the beginning of an uncertain one – changing jobs, a new school, moving house to a new place as - I have. Both our readings this morning are about endings and beginnings.

The verses in our gospel reading are often interpreted as Jesus' prayer, a prayer for himself as he too is facing an ending and a beginning. Jesus is celebrating the fact that his work on earth is at last done. He has completed the deeds and words that his father has sent him to do. He has laid before his chosen disciples all that the father had given to him. Now he makes a request that he would be exalted and glorified, lifted up to that position alongside the father which in Jewish tradition belonged to the messiah.

He then turns to pray for the disciples. Through Jesus call and teaching they had faced endings of an old way of life and a beginning to become new people following Jesus, who kept them from the darkness of this world. When Jesus leaves the darkness threatens to overtake them once more. They too, like Jesus were facing an ending and beginning. Their life with Jesus was coming to an end and they must begin to face an uncertain and scary future without him. Jesus had protected them and kept them safe in the father's name. Jesus now entrusts them to the father for his protection and safe keeping when he leaves. This is a prayer which has been used by many over the centuries—protect us, keep us safe in your name so they may be one as Jesus and God were one.

Our reading from Acts describes the Ascension of Jesus which we celebrated here at a special service on Thursday. It is also another ending and beginning for both Jesus and the disciples.

Jesus was with the disciples in Jerusalem. The disciples expected Jesus to restore the kingdom of Israel, a new beginning but Jesus says it is not for them to know the time and date. But he promised they would be baptized in the Holy Spirit which would come on the day of Pentecost. The Spirit would prepare those insecure, anxious, illiterate men to establish Christ's church throughout the world and to face suffering and death.

Then Jesus ascended into heaven. This was also an ending of sorts in that Jesus is taken up into heaven, no longer physically present on earth but spiritually present, leaving the disciples in a sort of in between time - ending but not yet beginning. The Holy Spirit will come, but not

yet not until the day of Pentecost. Christ will come again (we say this in our creed) but not yet. In the meantime, the disciples are to witness about Jesus to tell Jerusalem, all Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth of the new way life Jesus taught - to love one another, to love your neighbour even if your neighbour does not love you. To stand up for those who have no voice and no the forgiveness and salvation which can be found through him. .

Endings and beginnings, we all face them BUT when we become a Christian our old way of life ends and we begin a new life in Jesus, following his teaching but also to spread the good news to the world. Two thousand years later, we are still in that in-between time, where Christ has yet to return, We are still waiting for God's kingdom to be restored. We live in a flawed broken, brutal, spite ridden world of war, inequality and violence. The commission Jesus gave to the disciples two thousand years ago is our commission today to tell the world of the new way life he taught and to try in our flawed, human way to bring Christ's values, his love, the forgiveness and salvation which can be found through him.

We too are his witnesses and that is not just telling people about Jesus, what he has done in our lives and what he can do in the lives of other, it is by the way we behave, how we treat one another, how we live our lives to Christ's values in a world which has so very different values. Actions speak louder than words and sometimes our Christian beliefs fly in the face of the world's values and attitudes.

I guess this can be a hard thing to do and we can be as anxious and nervous as those original disciples and followers. But the promise Jesus made to them, is our promise too. Next week is Pentecost where we celebrate the Holy Spirit coming to those insecure, anxious, illiterate men. Jesus said the Holy Spirit would prepare them for establishing Christ's church throughout the world, and that is a promise for us too. Whatever kind of work the Holy Spirit does, or whatever kind of guidance is given it is for Christ's glory The Holy Spirit today can transform ordinary, self-effacing, self-doubting people like me, perhaps like you, into powerful women and men. In his strength and in his power, we can speak of Jesus, his wonders, his miracles, his death and resurrection. That salvation that can be found through believing in him who died on the cross to take away our sins, to lead us into new life, to help us live our lives the way that Jesus taught

So in this week and we near Pentecost next Sunday please pray about how that story ends and begins with you. Will you bear witness and carry out Jesus great commission in Jerusalem, in all Judea, Samaria, Whitchurch, Shropshire England and to the ends of the earth?

AMEN