



SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Seventh Sunday of Easter

May 24, 2020

Anglican Parish of Raymond Terrace
www.stjohnsraymondterrace.org

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Pray

May I speak to you in the name of GOD – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen



On Thursday we celebrated the Feast of the Ascension of JESUS into heaven – the day when JESUS began working from home! During the years of His ministry on earth, his disciples often wondered about His kingdom. When would it come? What would be their role in it? In the traditional view, the Messiah would be an earthly conqueror who would free Israel from Rome. But the kingdom about which JESUS spoke was, first of all, a SPIRITUAL kingdom – established in the hearts and lives of all believers¹. As we will talk more about next week, GOD’s presence and power dwell in believers in the person of the Holy Spirit. JESUS assured his disciples and the people of that time and this, that GOD the Father sets the timetable for all events and that they,

¹ Luke 17:21

and we, need to trust His timetable. JESUS instructed His disciples in the Great Commission to witness to people of all nations – but to wait first for the Holy Spirit. GOD has important work for us to do as well – and we too must wait for the power of the Holy Spirit. But like all human beings we tend to want to run ahead of GOD. But waiting is sometimes a part of GOD’s plan – as to be truly effective, we need GOD’s timing AND power.

The Gospel was spread over a vast area. It would begin with the devout Jews in Jerusalem and Samaria, spread to the mixed race in Samaria and, finally, to Gentiles all over the world. However, the gospel has not reached its final destination if there is someone we know who hasn’t heard the Good News about JESUS. We need to make sure that we are contributing to the ever-widening circle of GOD’s loving message. There was a priest in this Diocese many years ago – Father Rod Turner – who was Rector of St Peter’s East Maitland and then of Singleton – who used to describe situations like this as like dropping a pebble into a still pond and watching the

ripples make ever-growing circles out to the water's edge.

After 40 days with His disciples, JESUS returned to heaven. It was important for the disciples to see JESUS taken up into heaven – they knew without a doubt that He was GOD and that His home is in heaven. The 2 men dressed in white were angels who proclaimed to the disciples that one day JESUS would return in the same way He had gone – boldly and visibly. History is not haphazard or cyclical; it is moving towards a specific point – the return of JESUS to judge and rule over the earth. ^St Paul in his 1st letter to the Thessalonians tells us that **For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.** So, we should not be standing around “looking into the sky,” but be working hard to share the gospel so that others will be able to share in GOD’s great blessings.

After JESUS was taken up into heaven, the disciples immediately returned to Jerusalem and had a prayer meeting. JESUS had told them that they would be

baptised with the Holy Spirit in a few days – so they waited and prayed. I ask you to continue to pray your Parish Council and me and for our parish as we move forward from the season we are in now into a post-pandemic church – what shape that will take and what processes will need to be in place to comply with government health regulations. Prayer should always be the first step for everyone when discerning the Holy Spirit's power and guidance.

The theme of Psalm 68 is one of remembering GOD's glory and power. Times and cultures may change; but GOD is always majestically present as our defender and provider.

Chapter 5 of the first letter of Peter is headed: THE SHEPHERDING OF GOD's PEOPLE IN THE MIDST OF SUFFERING.

Peter was 1 of JESUS' 12 disciples and was 1 of 3 who experienced the transfiguration of JESUS. He was often the spokesman for the apostles, he witnessed JESUS' death and resurrection, preached at Pentecost, and

became a pillar of the Jerusalem Church. But in writing to the elders, he identified himself as a fellow elder, not a superior. He asked them to be shepherds of GOD's flock – exactly what JESUS told him to do. Peter was taking his own advice as he worked along with the other elders in caring for GOD's faithful people. His identification WITH the elders is a powerful example of Christian leadership – where authority is based on service, not power.

^Peter describes several characteristics of good leaders in the Church:

1. They realise they are caring for GOD's flock, not their own
2. They lead out of eagerness to serve, not out of obligation
3. They are concerned for what they can give, not for what they can get
4. They lead by example, not by force.

The Chief Shepherd is JESUS CHRIST. This refers to His 2nd coming, when He will judge all people and give

rewards to His faithful followers. The CROWN of glory, while metaphorical or figurative, pictures the glory believers will receive that is eternal and unchanging. What better motivation for selfless service! What better motivation for keeping the faith in the face of suffering and temptation.

It doesn't matter how old we are, we can always learn from each other. We mustn't let pride get in the way of our relationships with each other. Trust in GOD will always help us to keep our lives focussed on Him.

Our Gospel passage is only the first 11 verses of chapter 17 – but the whole chapter is a prayer of JESUS. From it we learn that the world is a tremendous battle-ground where the forces under Satan's power and those under GOD's authority are at war. Satan and his forces are motivated by their bitter hatred for JESUS and His forces. JESUS prayed for His disciples, including those of us who follow Him today. JESUS prayed that GOD would keep His chosen believers safe from satan's power –

setting them apart and making them pure and holy, uniting them through His truth.

How do we get eternal life? JESUS tells us clearly here – by knowing GOD the Father Himself through His Son, JESUS CHRIST. Eternal life requires entering into a personal relationship with GOD in CHRIST JESUS. When we admit our sin and turn away from it, CHRIST’s love lives in us by the Holy Spirit.

Before JESUS came to earth, He was One with GOD. At this point, when His mission on earth was almost finished, JESUS was asking His Father to restore Him to His original place of honour and authority. JESUS’ resurrection and ascension – and Stephen’s dying exclamation in Acts 7:56 – attest that JESUS did return to His exalted position at the right hand of GOD.



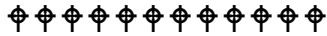
So, as I have said, Peter, in writing to the elders, identified himself as a fellow elder, not a superior. He asked them to be shepherds of GOD’s flock – exactly what JESUS told HIM to do. Peter was taking his own advice as he worked along with the other elders in caring

for GOD's faithful people. His identification WITH the elders is a powerful example of Christian leadership – where authority is based on service, not power.

And in our Gospel passage, JESUS is praying for His disciples – including us in 2020 – as we live through a war between the powers of satan and GOD. JESUS is the Chief Shepherd and knows that the hour of His glorification has come. He has completed the work the Father gave Him to do – so in prayer, He entrusts those He will leave behind to the Father's care. It will be wonderful if each of us can say at the end of our lives that we have completed the tasks GOD has given us here on earth. Certainly, we aren't perfect, and we make mistakes; but we did the best we could in most situations. May we also have the confidence of JESUS and St Paul to entrust the ones we leave behind to the loving care of our heavenly Father.

As we continue to journey through this pandemic, may we increasingly trust in GOD, our shepherd who will

guide us through the darkness when we hold onto His hand and bring us into His marvellous light



May we pray:

We place our trust in You, O GOD, and seek your eternal mercy in the purposes of our life. Grant also to us courage to care for all your people whom you have sent into our lives, that we might be a sign to them of the divine friendship you have given to us. Through JESUS CHRIST, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen

Life Application Study Bible

Daily Prayer 2020

GOD's WORD Daily Reflections 2020