

## In-between

20 5 12

O God the king of glory,  
you have exalted your only Son Jesus Christ  
with great triumph to your kingdom in heaven;  
we beseech you, leave us not comfortless,  
but send your Holy Spirit to strengthen us  
and exalt us to the place  
where our Saviour Christ is gone before

This morning, our text is taken from the opening chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, verses 9 – 11, part of the set readings for last Thursday, Ascension Day: 'When Jesus had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. While he was going and they were gazing up towards heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. They said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up towards heaven? This Jesus who has been taken from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven'.

One question I sometimes ask myself is as people, what makes us human? What are the distinguishing characteristics of a human being? What is it about us that makes us who we are and what we are and that distinguishes us from the rest of the animal kingdom? (*pause for congregation to make suggestions*)

You are, of course, absolutely right: the sophistication of language which allows us to think and to communicate. Our opposable thumb and fingers and hands which allows us to grip and manipulate objects, to create tools and to manufacture objects. Our artistic abilities which allow us to paint and to sculpture, to compose and to perform music. Our sense of awe and wonder, of otherness, of deity, that leads us to seek God in his creation. Our memory and sense of time which allow us to have a sense of the past and an anticipation of the future. And it is this last fact: our sense of time and the passage of time, that I'd like briefly to consider this morning.

Any parent taking their children on a long car journey will recognise the cry, 'Are we nearly there yet?' Patience is not necessarily found in the young and for a child each day can seem endless. As adults, time seems to speed up with not enough time to fit in all the demands of work and leisure. Perhaps one of the joys of retirement is that time seems to slow down again with time to do and to be.

As Christians, like everyone else, we live in time and have a real sense of the passage of time. We know that here in France in May the sun should in be shining and the temperature rising. We know that François Hollande has been elected and sworn in as President. And we may well be looking forward to June when the Queen will celebrate her Diamond Jubilee and to the London Olympics in July.

But as Christians, we have a sense not only of this regular flow of time in our everyday lives but we are also connected to sacred time through the daily and weekly readings from the Bible embodied in our Common Lectionary. A typical

Christian year moves seamlessly from Christmas to Easter with other significant moments punctuating the months in-between. Our Christian story is on-going, a cycle connecting us to God through remembering what has/is happening. It is our sense and awareness of our past which makes us the people we are at present and helps us to anticipate who we will become. While we consciously remember, our Christian history is also our Christian present.

And so we come today's text, when the disciples, now apostles, are in a moment in time in between two great and significant events separated by just ten days: the Ascension which we celebrated last Thursday and Pentecost which we will mark next Sunday. Ascension Day marks the completion of Jesus' earthly ministry embodied in the flesh. Born in a stable; crucified on a cross; risen from the tomb; his work now done, Jesus ascends into heaven. The Day of Pentecost marks the coming of the Holy Spirit when the apostles will be energised in a new and exciting way with the presence of God in the person of the Holy Spirit informing and inspiring them to do what they are being called to do. And Bartholomew in whose memory our church is dedicated will ultimately go to Armenia where he will be martyred at Albanopolis on the shores of the Caspian Sea on the orders of king Astyages.

So what did the apostles do in between Ascension and Pentecost? They spent a lot of time in worship: the phrase we find at the end of Luke's gospel sounds a little over-the-top, exaggeration, hyperbole – **'they were continually in the temple blessing God'**. At Archdeaconry Synod at St Jacut this month, the Revd Anders Berquist told us that the worship of God is ultimately the purpose for which God

has created us. If he's right, then the apostles were doing just what they were meant to do: worshipping God. For me, the word worship contains the notion of being God-aware. In worship more than anything, we should be aware of the presence of God alongside us, with us and within us. And certainly those disciples, those apostles were 100% God-aware in what they had seen and witnessed and in what was going to happen to them.

So let me leave you with this thought. As people in time, we are very much aware of the passage of time. And as we connect through sacred time with God who loves us more than we can ever know, let us respond to his love by really, truly worshipping him.

I have spoken in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,  
Amen.

*Preached at the Eucharist*

*St Bartholomew's, Dinard*

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H: Sermon 25: In-between

