

# LOOKING AT LIFE THROUGH THE LENS OF THE GOSPEL

And ye are witnesses  
of these things.  
- Luke 24:48 (KJV) -

## THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD

29th May 2022

**Luke 24:46** Jesus said to the disciples, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, <sup>47</sup> and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup> You are witnesses of these things. <sup>49</sup> And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

**Luke 24:50** Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. <sup>51</sup> While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. <sup>52</sup> And they worshiped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; <sup>53</sup> and they were continually in the temple blessing God.

### THE ASCENSION

The Gospels give us several clues for understanding how the first Christian communities began their historic journeys without the presence of Jesus at the head of his followers. Perhaps it is not as simple as we are sometimes led to believe. How did they understand and live their relationship with him once he departed from the earth?

*Matthew* does not mention his ascension to heaven at all. He ends his Gospel with a farewell scene on a mountain in Galilee where Jesus makes his disciples this solemn promise “*Surely I am with you always to the very end of time.*” The disciples don’t have to feel his absence. Jesus will always be with them, but the question is how this would happen.

*Luke* has a different setting. In the final scene of his Gospel, “*while he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven.*” The disciples must accept the separation from him in all its reality. Jesus is already living in the mystery of God. But he ascends to the Father while **blessing** his own. His followers begin their historic journey protected by that blessing which Jesus had used to heal the sick, forgive sinners and caress the little ones.

*John* the evangelist puts some words in the mouth of Jesus that provide another clue. On bidding his disciples farewell Jesus says to them: “*I am going to the Father and you are sad ..It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counsellor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.*” The sadness of the disciples is understandable. They want to be assured that Jesus will always be with them, but that assurance alone would lead to the temptation of staying comfortably infantile under the protection of the Master.

The response of Jesus shows a wise method of teaching. His absence will help the growth of his followers. He leaves them the mark of his Spirit who, in Jesus’ absence, will promote the growth of his own into responsive adulthood. It is good to remember this, for in these times a fear of creativity, the temptation to remain stagnant, and a nostalgia for a Christianity that is relevant only to a bygone age and culture, seem to be growing among us.

Throughout history, Christians have fallen into the temptation of following Christ in a childish manner. The historic presence of Jesus has ended. The Feast of the Ascension reminds us that we are living in the age of the Spirit, the time of creativity and responsible growth. The Spirit does not provide the followers of Jesus with “eternal prescriptions”. He gives us light and strength to help us keep seeking ever new ways to reproduce the interventions of Jesus. in this way he leads us fo the fullness of the truth of Jesus.

JOSÉ A PAGOLA—Following in the Footsteps of Jesus, Year C

The scene invites comparison with the closing moments in Matthew and John.  
Continued presence and mission are the themes,  
Kieran O’Mahony—tarsus.ie

The Ascension of Jesus was an essential stage in his relationship with his followers. He had walked with them in their moments of strength and of weakness, and now he was leaving them.

It is, of course, significant that this moment occurred immediately after his apparent defeat and after they had betrayed him.

By meditating on the story, we discover similar moments in our own relationship with God, with a cause, or with people who have touched our lives.

### SCRIPTURE PRAYERS

Lord, we would always prefer to preach the name of Jesus from a position of strength

-we have turned away from sin;

-we have completed a course of study and now understand the message;

-many people admire us.

Send Jesus to remind us that if we want repentance for the forgiveness of sins

to be preached to all the nations,

we must begin from Jerusalem where we betrayed our cause and were welcomed back.

Then we will be witnesses to your forgiveness.

*"I continue to believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word in reality."*

*Martin Luther King, accepting the Nobel Peace prize*

Lord, we pray today for those who are tired of waiting for your grace

-parents with a child addicted to drugs,

-leaders working for Church renewal,

-radical politicians,

-third world people caught in the debt trap.

Though you are delaying, you are sending down what you promised,

so they must stay in the city until they are clothed with the power from on high.

**MICHEL DE VERTEUIL—*Lectio Divina on the Sunday Gospels. Year C***

The Easter story continues, because as Christians we live with an assurance that pain, grief and death will not have the last word. Christ has shown us that the story does not end here, and so we can dare to shine the light of hope and wholeness into the empty tomb, into the darkness of situations. Hope lives.

*Easter people are everywhere. They shine light into dark situations. Where have you encountered such people in your own life? When have you shown that light for others?*

*Where do you see the Risen Christ in the world today, in creation, in people, in community spirit?*

**TRÍONA DOHERTY & JANE MELLETT -Go Deeper**

### POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. The Ascension of Jesus was an important growth point for the disciples. Jesus would be with them in a different way from now on. Painful though it was, it was necessary for them to let go of his physical presence and adjust to the new reality. Perhaps you have known similar transition points in your own life.

2. Jesus invited the disciples to be witnesses to the good news they had learned. The way we live, speak and relate to others speaks of what we have learned about life. We all are witnesses. How have you been a witness to the goodness of life?

3. In particular Jesus invited them to be witnesses to the good news of forgiveness. Recall people who have been witnesses to you of forgiveness and reconciliation. What effect did they have on your life? Have you been able to be a witness to the good news of forgiveness in your life?

4. Stay in the city until... Jesus instructs the apostles to wait patiently for the moment of grace. What has been your experience of waiting for a moment of grace? What are the moments of grace that you particularly recall (a friendship, a new opportunity, birth of a baby, etc).

**JOHN BYRNE—*Intercom***

### Thought for the day

As the Easter season draws to a close, both the liturgy and the lectionary point us towards the clothing with power from on high. In these days, our prayer is "Come, Holy Spirit." Each year, this prayer is of greater urgency, as we all try to listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. Our future being as Christians, as community, as church, all depends on our own deep attitude of listening and of openness. The future church will be a church of the Spirit, energised and exuberant, faithful and on fire.

### Prayer

Breathe into me, Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be wholesome. Move in me, Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be wholesome. Attract my heart, Holy Spirit, that I may love only what is wholesome. Strengthen me, Holy Spirit, that I may defend all that is wholesome. Protect me, Holy Spirit, that I may always be wholesome.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. Amen

Pope Francis

**KIERAN—[tarsus.ie](http://tarsus.ie)**