

Thy Kingdom Come but are we ready?

A sermon preached by Emma Hodge on Thursday 10th May 2018 (Ascension Day) at St. Michael and All Angels' Sandhurst

Introduction

What does the Ascension mean to you? Don't worry this isn't an interactive sermon and I am not expecting any response!!! But all of us have come here to night to commemorate Jesus' Ascension, 40 days after Easter. The Ascension is one of the fundamental aspects of our belief, in a few minutes we will all say the creed, the statements of our belief and one of the things that we believe is that Jesus Ascended into Heaven, but that is not the end of the sentence as we will go on to say that we believe that Jesus is with His Father in Heaven and that he will come again. All three points are included in our reading from the Acts of Apostles, which contain one of two accounts (both by Luke) of Jesus' Ascension.

1. Relationship with Father

When Jesus ascends to heaven, he is also returning to God the Father. Throughout Jesus' earthly ministry Jesus refers to his relationship with his Father, he often spent time going and praying, he refers to his Father throughout his life, from early on, he knows that God is his father, and he needs to spend time learning and understanding the scriptures so that he can develop his relationship with God the Father, but in addition to this, there are also numerous references that Jesus makes to heaven and the writers of the gospels make it clear that heaven is where God the Father resides.

Jesus makes it clear throughout his ministry and teaching on earth that as follows of Jesus, we need to live our lives in a manner that honours God the father. However we can't hope to do this if we don't have a good relationship with God the Father, and through him with Jesus.

Jesus also makes it clear that there we need to have a good relationship with God the Father. We are all aware that our relationships with other people need work, so that they are nurtured and grow, this also is the case with our relationship with God. We can only get to know God the Father by spending time with Him, how we spend time with Him is different depending on who we are and where we are but each one of us needs to nurture and develop our relationship with God just as we nurture and develop our human relationships.

2. Jesus will come again

An element of the Ascension is the words which the Angels spoke to the disciples (the people in bright robes are a biblical description of Angels). They told the disciples who were looking up into heaven where Jesus had just ascended to heaven and disappeared from their sight, the angels told the disciples that Jesus would return in the same manner that they had just witness him disappear from earth. One moment he was there and then the next he had left them. Jesus will return with no warning, he will just return.

A lot of the early church thought that Jesus' return would be in their lifetime. Jesus' return is not only an aspect of the Ascension, but it is also an aspect of the creed. We state that we believe that Jesus will return and that when he returns he will judge both the living and the dead. However Jesus will not just return as a judge, He will also return as king, and therefore there will also be a

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kingdom. Jesus as King is also an aspect of the Lord's prayer, every time we pray it we pray that we want God's kingdom, the kingdom where Jesus will reign to come. In the account of the Ascension that we have in Acts, the disciples were asking when that kingdom will come. Jesus' kingdom has been a recurring theme, and the disciples often misunderstood what sort of kingdom, and what sort of King Jesus will be. Jesus never denies that he will be king and that there will be a day when His Kingdom will come. Jesus gives the answer that God the Father will set the day and time in which the Kingdom will come.

Jesus' return as King is not always something which we think and talk about, it is something that we are happy to acknowledge in the creed and the Lord's prayer, and one or both of them are said at every service here at St. Michael's and many of us will use the Lord's prayer in our private prayers but it is still a fundamental aspect of our lives as Christians. That we believe that Jesus will come again.

3. What a difference...

The disciples and early church expected Jesus kingdom to come soon, however, over two thousand years later we are still waiting that day when Jesus' Kingdom will come. In this, lies a challenge, a challenge to both us as individuals and as a church. The challenge is this, what difference would it make if we knew that Jesus would return next month, next year, in five years time? Would we do anything differently in our lives so that we are ready to greet Jesus as judge and King? Would we do anything differently in our life as a church so that we are ready to greet Jesus when he returns?