

Ascension Day was on Thursday, and before I was allocated this day to preach on, I hadn't really stopped to think about its significance. Unlike Jesus' death and resurrection which we celebrate as probably the most important days in the Christian calendar His ascension, for most people including me, probably comes and goes with little more than a fleeting acknowledgement at best. But not this year, this year my ears and eyes were a tune like when you change your car, suddenly your car is the most popular on the road, you see them everywhere.

Anyway, back to Ascension day Whilst Jesus' resurrection should have immediately proved who He was, both fulfilling Scripture and defying the laws of nature, I suggest that it took a further forty days, and this very public ascension for His disciples to finally, and fully believe. In John 21, following Jesus' death, even after the first few initial sighting of the risen Lord, we are told that the disciples went fishing, they returned to what they did before their encounter with Jesus. When faced with uncertainty, we often return to what we know best, to what is familiar and to where we feel most comfortable, and so it is with the Disciples, but it is here, that Jesus meets them. Act 1:3 tells us that Jesus met with His Disciples many times after this, and spoke to them about the Kingdom of God.

After telling His disciples that they were soon to receive the Holy Spirit, which you will hear about next Sunday, Acts 1 says that Jesus was taken up before their very eyes.....

Following Jesus' ascension, in our Bible reading today, we are told that Peter acknowledges that the events that had transpired was scripture being fulfilled..... after all the doubt, and confusion about Jesus' mission, finally it appears, they understand. Not only this, but they seek to continue to become part of the fulfilment of Scripture in choosing another disciple to replace Judas so that they can carry out Jesus' Great Commission to spread the Good News

Through their encounter with the resurrected Christ, the disciples are transformed into the witnesses that Jesus had been preparing them to be. In our reading 1 John 5:9 we are told that the testimony of God is greater than that of man, it is in the resurrection, and the subsequent ascension that the disciples finally accept Jesus' divinity, as the Son of God and His encounter with the disciples is most effective during His post resurrection engagement with them.

Like with the Disciples, it is through our own personal encounter with the risen Lord, that we are able to bear witness to who God is, and what He has done for us. When we talk about God, if we are able to share our own personal stories about what He has done for us, how much more convincing is it, than just relaying a story about events that took place over two thousand years ago. If we only talk about the Bible stories with no personal testimony, how convincing do you think they would be? It is in our revelations of how our lives have been transformed by the risen Lord, in the sharing of our testimonies about what He had done for us, how He has saved us, provided for us that we can witness to others

Like the disciples, God has called us witness to others, to share our encounters with the risen Lord so that they also can believe.

So why is His ascension significant? His ascension is the final piece in the puzzle, proving His divinity, that He is truly the Son of God. His ascension signifies Jesus' job is done, His mission completed, and as it is said, He has been obedient TO THE VERY END..... now He can finally return to His Father, leaving His disciples to continue the work of spreading the Good News, following His example, And they, like us, are promised our own ascension to eternal life with the Father, if we follow Jesus' example, He came to show us the way, as He states in John 14:6, "**I am the way, and the truth, and the life.** No one comes to **the** Father except through me. So if we believe in Him, that He was sent by the Father, and we are obedient as he was, then we too will ascend up into heaven one day.

How are we to be obedient? Like Jesus, each of us has our own divine mission, I challenge you to find yours, and if you already have, I challenge you to think about how you can stretch yourself to achieve more, to do more, to give more or simply be more. Can we ever do too much for God? Jesus gave His life, what are you called to do?

I'll leave you with the story of my own challenge After being on the discernment process for some time, I was nearing the end, the Bishops Advisory Panel (the people who decide if you are suitable for ordained ministry) was in sight but then I got what I thought was my dream job, teaching Religious Education in an inner city school, perfect I thought, do I really need to do anything more? Do I really need to be ordained? As I pondered, I was faced with was a nagging thought 'is anything ever too much for God?' off course,

the answer had to be No, so I proceeded and the rest as they say is history. I would just like to add that, my so called dream job wasn't so dreamy after all.

In order to ascend we, like Jesus we might have to be challenged to breaking point, but few of us will have to give our lives as Jesus did ... but whatever challenge we face, rest assure that Jesus has already prayed for us, and He has sent the Holy Spirit to be with us, what better help could we ask for. In my experience, it is in those challenges, when we know that we are doing His will, that we experience the greatest peace, His peace.

Amen