

## Closing Prayer

God of majesty,  
you led the Messiah  
through suffering into risen life  
and took him up to the glory of heaven.

Clothe us with the power promised from on high,  
and send us forth to the ends of the earth  
as heralds of repentance  
and witnesses of Jesus Christ, the first-born from the dead,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
God for ever and ever.

*Opening prayers · Ascension, Year C<sup>3</sup>*

CPL • LBC Year C Ascension.odt • 2022-05-25

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<sup>3</sup> *Opening prayers : scripture-related collects for the years A, B and C from the sacramentary / International Commission on English in the Liturgy. – Norwich : Canterbury Press, 1999.*

## Ascension Day

*Thursday after the Fifth Sunday of Easter*

### Principal Service readings

*The reading from Acts must be used as either the first or second reading*

Acts 1.1-11 or Daniel 7.9-14 The Ascension of Jesus / A vision of the heavenly court

Psalm 47 or Psalm 93 Praise God who reigns / God's throne is everlasting

Ephesians 1.15-23 or Acts 1.1-11 God raised Christ from the dead / Ascension of Jesus

Luke 24.44-53 The Ascension of Jesus

### Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,  
speak to our hearts in the stillness,  
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,  
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;  
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

### Gospel Reading

#### *The Ascension of Jesus*

<sup>44</sup>Jesus said to the disciples, 'These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you – that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.' <sup>45</sup>Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, <sup>46</sup>and he said to them, '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.'

<sup>50</sup>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 worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; <sup>53</sup>and they were continually in the temple blessing God.

Luke 24.44-53 NRSV<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *New Revised Standard Version Bible* is copyright © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

## Comments and Questions

Luke concludes his gospel with a final appearance of the risen Jesus (24.36-49) and a brief account of the ascension (24.50-53). In this, he provides a satisfying conclusion to 'all that Jesus said and did' (Acts 1.1) and provides a link to the story of Jesus' prophetic successors.

Acts tells us more about this concluding part of Jesus' story, relating that Jesus appeared over a forty day period to his followers, eating with them and speaking to them of the kingdom of God (Acts 1.3; 10.41). There is a further account of the ascension in Acts 1.4-8. The final scene of the gospel is more than a historical account – it has literary and religious purposes.

In this final scene Luke conveys sensitively both the reality of Jesus' presence (he eats fish, 24.42-43, and allows his disciples to touch his body, 24.39-40), and the difference from his former presence (his insubstantiality, which strikes fear in them, 24.36-37). Jesus himself says: 'It is truly myself!' (24.39), to emphasise the reality of his appearance. The appearance on the road to Emmaus has some similarities (24.13-35). In the Emmaus story Jesus explains about himself from Moses and the prophets (24.27). Here, he explains from 'the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms' (24.44), the three categories of scripture (the law, the prophets, the writings).<sup>2</sup>

Why does Luke include two accounts of the ascension? Luke pulls together strands from the first part of the story (Luke), and gives the reader the framework to understand the second part (Acts). Jesus' suffering, death and resurrection are shown to be the interpretive key to understand the scriptures (24.45).

Luke has Jesus now issue a 'programmatic prophecy' (24.47-48), of events that not only fulfil what the prophet says but also fulfil the scriptures. The first of the 'fulfilment' events will be the coming of the Holy Spirit (24.49), when they will be 'clothed with power from on high' (24.49). This is the final statement in the gospel. After this, there is a brief narrative account of the ascension. For Luke, the withdrawal of

<sup>2</sup> *Torah* (Law) – five books. Jews regard this as the holiest part of the *Tenakh* (the Jewish Bible). *Nevi'im* (Prophets) – eight books. These books describe the history of Judaism after the death of Moses. *Ketuvim* (Writings) – 11 books, Job, the Psalms ...

Jesus is not so much an absence as it is a presence in a new and more powerful mode: he becomes accessible to everyone through the life-giving Holy Spirit. Elisha asked for a double portion of God's Spirit of | Elijah, as he was taken up, leaving his prophetic 'mantle' behind and his Spirit was more actively present in Elisha. Similarly, the disciples of Jesus are to be 'clothed with power from on high' (24.49).

## Quotations

### 1

In his life Christ is an example showing us how to live in his death he is a sacrifice satisfying our sins in his resurrection a conqueror in his ascension a king in his intercession a high priest.

Martin Luther, 1483–1546

### 2

<text> Christ is already in that place of peace, which is all in all. He is on the right hand of God. He is hidden in the brightness of the radiance which issues from the everlasting throne. He is in the very abyss of peace, where there is no voice of tumult or distress, but a deep stillness--stillness, that greatest and most awful of all goods which we can fancy; that most perfect of joys, the utter profound, ineffable tranquillity of the Divine Essence. He has entered into His rest. That is our home; here we are on a pilgrimage, and Christ calls us to His many mansions which He has prepared.

John Henry Newman, 1801–1890

### 3

At His Ascension our Lord entered Heaven, and He keeps the door open for humanity to enter.

Oswald Chambers, 1874–1917

## Related topics

*For further study:*

Ascension; paschal mystery; christology; Trinity; Holy Spirit; Christian witness; sacraments; symbols: light, water, cross, oil, bread, wine, laying on of hands, white garment; assembly