

Poole Bay Methodist Circuit Worship
Sunday 17th May 2026
Ascension Sunday: Why does it matter?
with Reverend Gill Le Boutillier-Scott

Welcome

Welcome to our Ascension Sunday service. Today we celebrate the risen Christ ascending to the Father — not disappearing from the world, but reigning over it, praying for it, and remaining present with us through the Holy Spirit.

Today is about hope, purpose, and promise:

Christ reigns.

Christ intercedes.

Christ is with us.

Christ will come again.

Call to Worship

Christ is risen and ascended to the Father.

Jesus reigns in glory and power.

Jesus Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

And through him heaven is opened to us.

Come, let us worship the King who reigns forever.

Hymn: STF 319 - Christ Triumphant ever reigning

- 1 Christ triumphant, ever reigning,
Saviour, Master, King!
Lord of heaven, our lives sustaining,
hear us as we sing:
*Yours the glory and the crown,
the high renown, the eternal name!*
- 2 Word incarnate, truth revealing,
Son of Man on earth!
Power and majesty concealing
by your humble birth:
- 3 Suffering servant, scorned, ill-treated,
victim crucified!
Death is through the cross defeated,
sinners justified:
- 4 Priestly king, enthroned for ever
high in heaven above!
Sin and death and hell shall never
stifle hymns of love:
- 5 So, our hearts and voices raising
through the ages long,
ceaselessly upon you gazing,
this shall be our song:

Michael Saward (b. 1932) | Reproduced from *Singing the Faith* Electronic Words Edition, number 319

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
ascended in glory,
reigning in love,
present with your people through the Holy Spirit,
draw near to us today.

Lift our eyes above fear and distraction.
Remind us that our lives are held in your hands.
Encourage us with the hope of heaven,
strengthen us for your mission on earth,
and fill us with joy in your presence.

May this time together renew our faith, deepen our hope, and awaken our hearts to your kingdom.

For you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Prayer of Confession

Lord Jesus,
we confess that we often live with our eyes fixed only on the things around us.

We forget that you reign above every power and every fear.
We become discouraged, distracted, and weary.
We confess the times we have failed to trust your presence, ignored your calling, or neglected your love.

Forgive us.

Lift our hearts again toward your kingdom.
Teach us to live with hope, courage, and joy.
Renew us through your Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Words of Assurance

Hear the good news:

Christ who died is risen.
Christ who rose has ascended.
Christ who reigns intercedes for us.

In Jesus Christ we are forgiven, loved, and welcomed into the life of God.

Thanks be to God.

Song: STF 52 - He is exalted

He is exalted,
the King is exalted on high,
I will praise him.
He is exalted,
forever exalted
and I will praise his name!
He is the Lord,

forever his truth shall reign.
Heaven and earth
rejoice in his holy name.
He is exalted,
the King is exalted on high!

Twila Paris (b. 1958) | Reproduced from *Singing the Faith* Electronic Words Edition, number 52

Bible Reading: Acts 1:1-11

Jesus Taken Up Into Heaven

¹ In my former book, *Theophilus*, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach ² until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. ³ After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. ⁴ On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. ⁵ For John baptized with^[a] water, but in a few days you will be baptized with^[b] the Holy Spirit.”

⁶ Then they gathered around him and asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”

⁷ He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

⁹ After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

¹⁰ They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. ¹¹ “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”

Prayers of intercession

Lord Jesus Christ, ascended and reigning,

Hear the prayers of your people

We pray for the church throughout the world,

Fill us with the power of your Holy Spirit.

Help us be faithful witnesses of your love and truth

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer

We pray for nations and leaders.

Bring wisdom where there is confusion, peace where there is violence, and justice where there is oppression.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for those who are struggling today-

The anxious, the lonely, the grieving, the sick, the exhausted.

May they know the comfort of your presence and the strength of your peace.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We prayer for our communities, friends and families.

Help us to reflect your kindness and grace in everyday life.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer

We thank you that Christ intercedes for us and prepares a place for us.

Keep us faithful and hopeful until the day he comes in glory.

Amen

The Lord's Prayer:

Our Father who art in heaven

Hallowed be thy name

Thy kingdom come

They will be done,

On earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses

As we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation

But deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,

Forever and ever, Amen.

Hymn: STF 317 - At the name of Jesus

- 1 At the name of Jesus
every knee shall bow,
every tongue confess him
King of Glory now.
'Tis the Father's pleasure
we should call him Lord,
who from the beginning
was the mighty Word.

- 2 Humbled for a season,
to receive a name
from the lips of sinners
unto whom he came,
faithfully he bore it
spotless to the last,
brought it back victorious
when from death he passed:
- 3 Bore it up triumphant
with its human light,
through all ranks of creatures
to the central height,
to the throne of Godhead,
to the Father's breast;
filled it with the glory
of that perfect rest.
- 4 In your hearts enthrone him;
there let him subdue
all that is not holy,
all that is not true;
crown him as your captain
in temptation's hour:
let his will enfold you
in its light and power.
- 5 For this same Lord Jesus
shall return again,
with his Father's glory,
with his angel train;
all the wreaths of empire
meet upon his brow,
and our hearts confess him
King of Glory now.

Caroline Maria Noel (1817–1877)

Reproduced from *Singing the Faith* Electronic Words Edition, number 317.

“Why the Ascension Matters”

Luke 24: 44-end

⁴⁴He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.”

⁴⁵Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶He told them, “This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

The Ascension of Jesus

⁵⁰When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. ⁵¹While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. ⁵²Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. ⁵³And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.

When we think about the big moments of Jesus' life, we usually think of Christmas, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday. But sometimes the Ascension gets overlooked. It can seem like a strange ending — Jesus rises into heaven, disappears into the clouds, and the disciples stand there staring upward wondering what just happened.

But the Ascension is not an afterthought. It is one of the most important events in the Christian story. Without the Ascension, Easter is unfinished. Without the Ascension we wouldn't have Pentecost and look at the transformation to tired, fearful disciples that brings. Power from on high, but I mustn't get carried away and preach next week's sermon now!

The Ascension tells us who Jesus is now, where we now belong, and what hope we have for the future.

Jesus Is Enthroned as King

The Ascension means Jesus is enthroned as Lord over all creation.

Scripture says he sits at the "right hand of God." It's about authority, honour, and kingship.

The crucified and risen Jesus is now the reigning King.

This matters because it means the world is not abandoned or chaotic. Christ reigns over history, nations, powers, suffering, and even death itself. This is what victory looks like.

Sometimes the world feels unstable and frightening. But Ascension Sunday reminds us that above every earthly ruler, above every conflict, above every anxiety, Jesus Christ reigns.

And the remarkable thing is this: the one on the throne still bears the scars of love of sacrifice, of the cross.

The ruler of the universe is not cruel or distant. He is the risen Christ who gave himself for the world.

The Ascension Completes Christ's Saving Work

The Ascension is the crowning act of redemption.

Jesus did not simply rise from the dead and then drift away. The Ascension confirms that his mission was accomplished and accepted by the Father.

The cross was not a failure.

The resurrection was not temporary.

The salvation of God was complete.

Christ enters heaven victorious.

Hebrews describes Jesus entering the heavenly sanctuary on our behalf. The Ascension tells us that sin, death, and separation from God have truly been overcome.

Because Christ ascended, we know redemption is finished and secure.

The Ascension Makes Pentecost Possible

Jesus told the disciples that it was necessary for him to go so the Holy Spirit could come.

Before the Ascension, Jesus was physically present in one place at one time. But through the Holy Spirit, Christ is now present everywhere among his people.

The Ascension is not the end of Christ’s presence. It is the beginning of a new and universal presence.

Jesus is present:

- in his Church,
- through the Spirit,
- in worship,
- in prayer,
- in acts of love,
- and wherever people gather in his name

This means none of us walk alone.

Christ is with us “to the end of the age.”

Jesus Continues His Ministry as Our High Priest

Sometimes we imagine that Jesus completed his work and is now simply watching from heaven.

But Scripture says something much more encouraging.

Jesus continues his ministry even now.

He intercedes for us.

He prays for us.

He represents humanity before the Father.

The Ascended Christ is our great High Priest.

When we feel weak, forgotten, or overwhelmed, we remember that Jesus speaks our name before God.

We are not abandoned.

The Ascension Gives Us Hope for the Future

The angels told the disciples:

“This same Jesus... will come back.”

The Ascension always points forward to Christ’s return.

And until that day, the Church has work to do.

Notice that after the Ascension, the disciples stop staring into heaven and return to Jerusalem with joy. Ascension faith is not escapism. It does not pull us away from the world. It sends us into the world with hope and purpose.

Paul says in Colossians:

“Set your hearts on things above.”

That does not mean ignoring earthly life. It means living on earth with heaven’s values:

- love,
- justice,
- mercy,
- courage,
- forgiveness,
- peace,
- and hope.

Because Christ reigns, what we do matters.

Why the Ascension Matters

a) Christ reigns.

Jesus isn't gone — he's enthroned. Ephesians 1:20–23 says God “seated him at his right hand, far above all rule and authority.” That means no power, no crisis, no government, no loss has the last word.

The Ascension assures us that our Lord is not passive; he reigns in love, working through history even when we don't see it.

b) Christ intercedes.

Romans 8:34 reminds us: “Christ Jesus... is at the right hand of God and intercedes for us.” You don't have to pray perfectly; the risen Christ prays with you and for you. He carries your burdens even when your words fall short. Isn't that comforting?

c) Christ commissions.

Before ascending, Jesus said, “You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

The Ascension is not a farewell — it's a sending. We're not left behind; we're sent forward.

Conclusion

Living the Ascension Today

But we do live in tension. The now and not yet, So what does it look like?

- Lift your eyes — remember who is in charge. Not fear, not politics, not death — but Jesus.
- Lift your hands — keep serving, praying, and working for love's sake.
- Lift your heart — stay open to the Spirit's renewal.

We are the witnesses he spoke about.

The same Spirit who met them in that upper room meets us in online rooms, living rooms, hospital rooms — everywhere his people gather and pray.

Because Jesus ascended, the gospel is not trapped in one place — it's free to inhabit every space.

So friends, don't just look up — live out the risen life of Christ.

Wait, pray, watch, and go — until his kingdom comes in full.

Ascension Sunday reminds us:

Christ reigns as King.

Redemption is complete.

Humanity is welcomed into heaven.

The Holy Spirit has been given.

Jesus intercedes for us.

Christ is present even in seeming absence.

And one day he will come again.

So today we lift our eyes with hope.

Not because we escape the world,
but because Christ reigns over it.

Amen.

Hymn: STF 347 - Crown him with many crowns

- 1 Crown him with many crowns,
the Lamb upon his throne.
Hark! how the heavenly anthem drowns
all music but its own.
Awake, my soul, and sing
of him who died for thee,
and hail him as thy matchless King
through all eternity.
- 2 Crown him the Son of God,
before the worlds began;
and ye who tread where he has trod,
crown him the Son of Man,
who every grief has known
that wrings the human breast,
and takes and bears them for his own,
that all in him may rest.
- 3 Crown him the Lord of life,
who triumphed o'er the grave,
and rose victorious in the strife
for those he came to save.
His glories now we sing,
who died, and rose on high;
who died, eternal life to bring,
and lives, that death may die.
- 4 Crown him the Lord of peace,
whose power a sceptre sways
from pole to pole, that wars may cease,
absorbed in prayer and praise.
His reign shall know no end,
and round his piercèd feet
fair flowers of paradise extend
their fragrance ever sweet.
- 5 Crown him the Lord of love;
behold his hands and side —
rich wounds, yet visible above,
in beauty glorified.
All hail, Redeemer, hail!
for thou hast died for me;
thy praise and glory shall not fail
throughout eternity.

Matthew Bridges (1800–1894) and Godfrey Thring (1823–1903)
Reproduced from *Singing the Faith* Electronic Words Edition, number 347.

Blessing

May the ascended Christ
lift your hearts and strengthen your hope.

May the Holy Spirit empower you
to live with courage, joy, and peace.

And may the blessing of God almighty,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.

Amen.