

Sunday after Ascension Acts 1:6-11

We sometimes expect stories to end with '*they lived happily ever after.*' but the story of Jesus ends in a mysterious way, with Jesus disappearing into the clouds. The scene has often been painted as a caricature, with Jesus' feet sticking out below a cloud!

Then the story takes off in a whole new direction!

This is because the story of Jesus is not yet over....

Let's consider three aspects of this new reality:

1. Jesus' work on earth was finished, completed.

Jesus' incarnation, life, ministry, teaching, passion of cross and resurrection, are now all complete. His work needed a proper ending rather than the resurrection appearances to simply trail away.

But Jesus' work as part of the Trinity, Son of God, continues in heaven. Jesus said, '*I go to prepare a place for you.. I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.*' (John 14:2f)

What a joy to know that we will join him in heaven. There must have been great joy in heaven as Jesus returned, faithful to the end. If the prodigal son had such a wonderful party, imagine the celebration in heaven when Jesus returned!

Jesus is pictured seated in heaven (**Hebrews 10:12-13**) a sign that his work is finished.

The way of salvation, reconciliation, peace, eternal life is now open for ever.

One thing that encourages me is to know that Jesus still intercedes for us in heaven.

Romans 8:34 '*It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us.*' He is our advocate in heaven. His work on earth is complete, but Jesus still prays for us continually.

In the struggles we face, he is on our side, his love for us is unchanged.

2. Jesus' work on earth was handed over to the Church (Christ's body on earth)

Jesus couldn't be everywhere, but a billion Christians can!

The disciples were now equipped:

– by **Jesus' teaching and example**, which was gradually written down in the Scriptures, inspired and guided by Holy Spirit, to be a record for all time.

- by the **Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8)** The Holy Spirit would equip the disciples with physical, spiritual and moral energy. But the disciples had to wait for the fullness of this gift, poured out at Pentecost. Their task was to continue Jesus' ministry of bringing in the Kingdom of God, which touches the whole of our lives. (eg '*Thy kingdom come.*' in the Lord's Prayer.) God's Kingdom **will** come, so, we work and pray and give of ourselves for that end.

- by **his instructions Mt 28:18-20** In Matthew's account of the ascension, Jesus commissions his disciples to *teach, make disciples, and baptise* as the sign of belonging; and, of course, he instructs us to remember him in breaking bread and taking wine together. We look forward to be able to do this together again soon.

3. Jesus will return (Acts 1:11)

Not a matter for speculation, as no-one will know when, although there have been many predictions. There is an end point, to which the world is heading, a goal for all creation.

'At the name of Jesus every knee should bend, every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord'. (Phil 2:10-11) One day Jesus will rise from his throne and pronounce final judgment and blessing upon all people and all things, putting all things right.

Our task is to be ready, to be found carrying on the work of Christ here on earth.

So, may Christ's ascension encourage us, that we are on the winning side, good **will** triumph over evil, God's Kingdom **will** come, and God's Spirit is with us, as we work towards that day, when we will join the risen, ascended Christ in glory.