

Ascension

Today we remember Jesus' **ascension** into heaven, entrusting his disciples with carrying on his work and spreading the Good News. This is our mission, to tell others about God's love revealed in Jesus, and show in our lives the difference he makes. We are all here today because we have found something real and good in belonging to this church and following Jesus. If it is good for us, then we will want others to discover this for themselves.

The Ascension was a sign that Jesus' work on earth was finished, completed.

Jesus' incarnation, life, ministry, teaching, death on the cross, and resurrection, are now all complete. But Jesus' work as part of the Trinity, as Son of God, continues in heaven.

Jesus told his disciples, *'I go to prepare a place for you and later you will come to be with me again'* (John 14:2) Jesus has done all that is necessary to make it possible for us to join him. What is needed now is for people to hear this good news, understand it and respond to it. We can all pray for others to find the love of God in their lives.

After Jesus' ascension, his work on earth was handed over to the disciples, and they formed the church.

The disciples were then **equipped** to spread the good news in **three ways**:

1. Jesus' teaching and example, which was gradually written down in the Scriptures, inspired and guided by the Holy Spirit as they were written. We all have this in our Bibles.

2. Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit would energise the disciples, giving them courage and wisdom, guiding their preaching and speaking, giving them the gifts they needed to evangelise and grow the Church. This really began on the Day of Pentecost. And the Holy Spirit is with us today, to help us.

The disciples' task was to continue Jesus' ministry of spreading the Kingdom of God.

3. Jesus' commands. In Matthew's account of the ascension, Jesus says, *'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.'* (Matthew 28:19-20)

Jesus commissions his followers to *make disciples, baptise and teach*, and, of course, he also told us to remember him in breaking bread and taking wine together.

So, this is our task today, to carry on with this work of making disciples.

But firstly, we are to be disciples ourselves, learning, growing, and living out our faith.

Then we can seek to draw others to follow Jesus, remembering it is only the Holy Spirit who can open people's hearts and minds to understand God's love for them and to discover it for themselves. But we can pray, and we can show the love of God in our lives, and be willing to speak of it to others.

Finally, we recall that **Jesus will return.**

As the disciples stood looking up to where Jesus had ascended from them, they are told, *'This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.'* (Acts 1:11)

This is not a matter for speculation, as no-one will know when Jesus may return, although there have been many predictions. As Christians, we believe that there is an end point to which the world is heading, a goal for all creation.

As Paul puts it, *'At the name of Jesus every knee should bend, every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord'*. (Philippians 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. May God help us so to do this.