



St Marylebone
Parish Church

Ascension Day 2020

Readings:

The Acts of the Apostles (1.4-11)

The Holy Gospel according to St Luke (24.44-end)

Alleluia! Christ is Risen!

Lots has been taken away from us.

Liberty. Relationships. Places. People – either through isolation or worse, through sickness and death.

Perhaps, our carefree assumptions about life.

We may have lost security and livelihood.

Lots has been taken away from us.

And now Jesus has gone away too? Up into heaven, to self-isolate in the unity of the Trinity?

But to quote Dr Ian Paisley (and I never thought I'd say *that* in a sermon), 'no, no, no'.

Today is not about what is taken away from us, but what is given.

Today we celebrate that Jesus – the human being who shares the Divine nature: the God-Man. Was truly real, did walk this earth as we do, He died, and defeated death by rising again, and then He went home to heaven. Right now, *a human being is in heaven.*

Truly and actually, and thereby assuring us that our destiny – our true homeland is there too.

Today is not about what is taken away from us, but what is given.

Jesus has not been taken away from us. Instead, we have been given concrete hope that we will be truly at home in heaven. Our life ‘hid with Christ in God’ lies ahead of us. He is the first fruits. We will follow.

And *that* hope, which is for everyone, forever, is why this Feast of the Ascension is a *great* feast and truly worth celebrating, even in lockdown. Feast today!

So here we are – with the Apostles, 40 days after the Resurrection of the Lord, gawping up into heaven. Except unlike them on that first Ascension Day, we know exactly what’s going on.

It doesn’t stop all that’s happening around us, all these other things that are still being taken away from us, and those we love, and those across our world who’s lives are most difficult and had nothing left to lose in the first place.

It doesn’t stop that.

But blimey, it’s a promise and hope, an eternal destiny worth living towards. Life in all its fullness, a double measure, pressed, down and spilling over. Perfect love.

We’re not there yet, but with God’s Holy Spirit as our guide and companion we are on the pilgrim path together. Alleluia. Amen.