



## Sermon at the Cathedral Eucharist

Seventh Sunday of Easter

29th May 2022

readings: [Acts 16.16-34](#), [Revelation 22.12-14, 16-17, 20-end](#), [John 17.20-end](#)

I speak in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

I get the Church Times every week. It's like a comic for Vicars, and even though I'm due to retire at the end of July I am still drawn to look at the jobs section towards the back of the paper. I guess that it's force of habit, but it's always been interesting to see what is happening around the Church of England. Strangely I have never really been tempted to leave the Wirksworth Team Ministry, which is where I went to when I finished here as the Canon Pastor.

That title disappeared and since then there has been a Canon Missioner, and now the Cathedral is advertising, I see, for a Canon for Community Learning.

I prepared this sermon a couple of weeks ago, so I'm not sure whether there have been any takers, but I do realise why the Cathedral wishes to appoint someone who will help all of you and others too, to be nurtured and developed in the Faith and to use that understanding to engage with the many communities to which this place relates.

There is so much about this city and the county which is fascinating. It's such a diverse city and yet it has around it a rural blanket and also a great chunk of post-industrial 'bits' that are in the north of the Diocese. In my opinion, it's always been difficult for the Cathedral to relate to these very different communities, and yet it is vital to do so.

But in order to do so there needs to be a clear understanding of what this place is about and how its ministry can be effective.

Being effective is not just about putting on more stuff like services and events. It's about understanding where we are in relation to the Faith we profess. It's about 'doing theology' together, and hopefully that what the Canon for Community Learning will help you to do.

Just at the moment, we are in between Ascension and Pentecost in the Church's calendar. It's a bit of a no man's land, as we finish our celebration of Easter and wait for the season of the Holy Spirit.

There's a change of gear, in a way, and having concentrated for so long on the incarnate Lord and all that he did, now we move on into the way in which the Holy Spirit leads us into new things on our Christian journey.

But there's a bit of tidying up to do first, and it's to do with the Ascension, which was celebrated just the other day. Part of the Eucharistic prayer for that day helps us to put the jig-saw pieces into place when it comes to the end of Jesus' ministry, and the coming of the Holy Spirit. It says:

*And now we give you thanks, because after his most glorious resurrection, he appeared to his disciples and in their sight ascended into heaven to prepare a place for us; that where he is, thither we might also ascend, and reign with him in glory.*

The Ascension is a God given link between the earthly ministry of Jesus and the continuing ministry of the Risen ascended and glorified Christ, who continues to pray for his people at the right hand of God.

In other words, the Jesus who loved his people when he was on earth continues to love us now and prepares a place for us at the end of time.

What might be described as the doctrine of the Ascension is actually a well thought out piece of theology which understands the way in which God makes a plan for the future of creation, when all things will be gathered up in Christ.

Such doctrines provide a theological framework for us to use so that we don't say too much that is heretical—but in fact, we can all do theology; it's a very practical thing to do, when we understand that doing things theologically is about thinking with the purposes of God in mind.

Thinking theologically is about having a strategy which achieves the aims of God. Jesus did this sort of thing all the time, much to the annoyance of the religious hierarchy.

He recruited his disciples (an odd choice for the most part but he seemed to know what he was doing). He sent them out to prepare the ground for his arrival, and when he got to a town or village he would preach the word, heal the sick and point people in the direction of God before moving on.

And today, we read of his final strategy, laid out in that section of John's Gospel just before he is arrested and tried. Having completed his work, he now commends his disciples to his Father.

Sometimes this high priestly prayer of Jesus is used as a proof text for the need for Christian unity, but actually what Jesus is praying for is continuity in the Church and theology helps to provide such continuity while at the same time enabling us to explore afresh what Jesus is calling us to in the here and now.

John the Evangelist would have written this before there was any splitting apart of the Church. He understood the need for the Church to continue to develop the ministry of Christ in its words and deeds.

That applies just as much to us today as it did to the early Christians, the danger that we often fall into is that it's only when we come to church that we give much thought to the matter of faith.

We are caught up in a busy world and the pressures upon each of us are considerable. Even retired people are often heard to say that they are as busy as ever. When this is so then God can get squeezed out of the picture, and faith is only given attention on a Sunday morning.

We shouldn't compartmentalise our faith, instead we ought to think theologically then our lives will be open to the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

Doing theology is not just something which a student might study, it's a way of "Godward" thinking which helps us to define our faith and live it out.

It strikes me that this is what such a new post for the Cathedral will help the Cathedral Community to develop. It's not as though you haven't been doing this kind of thing before, but now, in these challenging times when the Church casts around to be meaningful within a secular society, we will need to be clear in the way that we think, and sure in the things that we believe.

It sounds a fun thing to do, and I wish you all well in it.

Amen.

***Revd Canon David Truby, Team Rector, Wirksworth Team Ministry.***