

Our Man in Heaven.

An Ascensiontide Reflection by Mark Beresford-Peirse.

If in his earthly ministry Jesus had sometimes been seen as the local boy who made good, it was very different at the end. The cross spoke of defeat, shame and darkness. Easter turned all this upside down, at least for his friends and the others who learnt about it. Not only was he alive, but he'd shown that God's life and love were stronger than death and evil. Now a new stage was beginning. Jesus would no longer be physically present, but he'd be with them and indeed be present in all places, available for all people.

He was King and Lord of all, with a job for his followers to do - taking the good news of his kingdom, or kingship, far and wide. He would supply what they needed for that work and would be at the centre of operations, but also alongside them and within them, through his Spirit. In the letter to the Church at Ephesus Christ is said to be far above all rule, authority, power and dominion, and God has placed everything under his feet, making him head over everything. He is, in fact, our man in Heaven. Like an ambassador in a foreign country, he acts in our interests, is on our side, knows us and what we need, and is also in the right place - in this case, at God's right hand to use the Christian imagery expressing Christ's divinity. He's our God but he's also our brother and he's taken us up with him to the Father's heart.

All this can surely help us at this time. One of the difficult things is the lack of control most of us feel at least some of the time. Normally we do feel we have some control of things, through familiar routines and tasks, easy contact with others and the freedom to come and go, etc. When such things are whipped away from under our feet, we're bound to feel some uncertainty. There are practical things which help, ordinary everyday things, as well as some really resourceful, even whacky ones. Making or growing things, exercise, music, nature and so much more play their part. We've also been in touch with each other via computer or phone or across the street or garden fence. Thank God for all that and the way it keeps us steady and also connected, caring and cared for. God is in it all, isn't he making up for our feelings of lack of control.

Could it also be that wanting to feel in control is a spiritual challenge for us to tackle? Our human tendency is to try to control things which often includes controlling people, in subtle ways. We also make life harder on ourselves, and often on others by clinging too tightly to things, which makes us tense and anxious. If we can somehow let go a bit, we

become more free and more able to give and to receive. "Take my yoke upon you," Jesus says.

"My yoke is easy and my burden is light."

It fits us and allows us to be our true selves. He invites us to trust him go with him and let him be at the centre of our life. Our Risen, Ascended Lord is, deep down, in control of things, and nothing can separate us from his love. He knows us and longs to give us what we need.

In a Sunday service from St. David's Cathedral David's last words were quoted: "Be joyful, keep the faith, and do the little things." We have the promise of Christ's presence and power through his spirit, to help us in that joy and faith and in doing the little, or indeed big, things. Among those many, many things could be, for lots of us, making donations to some of the charities so badly hit recently. There is less income and often more work to do. Our churches too need to be maintaining their ministry.

Perhaps St. David might just also have had in mind some of the lovely, human things God's providence gives, from singing or making music to baking bread or cake. Our King is the King of Love. He has things for us to do and things to give us, some little, some bigger. There will be learning and challenges but there will also be fun.