

## **‘Thy Kingdom Come’ Podcast 4, Partners in the Gospel, Saturday 23 May 2020**

Following my Introduction on Wednesday to our daily podcasts for this *Thy Kingdom Come* season, Mark’s podcasts for Ascension Day and yesterday were entitled, ‘Local boy makes good’ and ‘Our man in heaven’. These titles capture concisely the essence of how we are to understand the Ascension.

Another clear description of the Ascension is given by Bishop John in his most recent book, ‘Five Events that made Christianity’ (that is, Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, the Ascension and Pentecost). He describes the Ascension as ‘The leaver who remained’, and then Pentecost as ‘The Promise’. We are exploring both of these events during this *Thy Kingdom Come* season and, in line with a thread running through Bishop John’s book, we are asking ‘What does it mean for us?’. Bishop John will offer us further food for thought in three podcasts he has recorded for Wednesday to Friday of this coming week.

Meanwhile, here is another concise description of the Ascension, from the Prayer Diary for the Anglican mission agency USPG (United Society Partners in the Gospel). It is written by USPG’s Director of Mission Engagement, Canon Richard Bartlett:

“‘Ascension’ is our word for what is beyond our understanding: Christ our risen Lord cannot be contained within the frame of our human perspective.

The ascension of Christ tilts the universe for us, giving us a fresh perspective and meaning for the world. Jesus has taken our humanity to God, just as by his birth he brought divinity into our humanity. Now he has handed over his mission to human beings, a mission which will be empowered by the Holy Spirit. The divisions between divine and human, between heaven and earth, have been blurred and will never be the same again.

During the last 2,000 years, Christ’s mission has taken many forms and has spread, in the power of the Holy Spirit, from Jerusalem to the ‘ends of the world’. What a privilege we have in USPG to witness and participate in God’s mission today.’

USPG (United Society *Partners* in the Gospel) understands God’s mission to be founded on *partnership*. It is first and foremost God’s mission, inspired and empowered by his Holy Spirit. In mission we work in partnership with him and with our neighbours, near and far. So at the very heart of this *Thy Kingdom Come* season is prayer: we are seeking to build our partnership, our relationship, with God by both asking that the coming of his Kingdom may be fulfilled – and by discerning the action (in thought and word and deed) he is asking of us.

At St Mary’s, we are building a mission support link with USPG – by which we can be involved in God’s mission all around the world. The worldwide Church, which includes the worldwide Anglican Communion (of which the Church of England is only a tiny part), is called – commissioned – to reach out to the world in ‘mission engagement’. We are to be a channel of God’s grace and to demonstrate his love in action.

As we build worldwide partnerships each of us is also seeking locally to be a channel of God's grace and to demonstrate his love in action. Amidst the present lockdown the many examples of need show just how important it is for we who are St Mary's church to be working in partnership with those around us.

I close with two prayers we can be using during this *Thy Kingdom Come* season, both acknowledging God's mission to be inspired and empowered by his Holy Spirit.

God the Sender, send us.

God the Sent, come with us.

God the Strengtheners of those who go, empower us.

That we may go with you and find those who will call you

Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Amen.

(from Wales)

Through Christ, who ever lives to make intercession for us,  
let us pray to the Lord.

Lift up our hearts to the heavenly places  
and inspire us to serve you as a royal priesthood:  
*Father, by your Spirit, bring in your kingdom.*

Let all peoples acknowledge your kingdom  
and grant on earth the blessing of peace:  
*Father, by your Spirit, bring in your kingdom.*

Send down upon us the gift of the Spirit  
and renew your Church with power from on high:  
*Father, by your Spirit, bring in your kingdom.*

May peace abound and righteousness flourish,  
that we may vanquish injustice and wrong:  
*Father, by your Spirit, bring in your kingdom.*

Help us to proclaim the good news of salvation,  
and grant us the needful gifts of your grace:  
*Father, by your Spirit, bring in your kingdom.*

Let us commend the world, for which Christ prays,  
to the mercy and protection of God.

(Common Worship, Daily Prayer)

Amen.