



*Jesus hasn't just gone away.
He has gone deeper into the heart of reality —
our reality and God's.
He has become far more
than a visible friend and companion;
he has shown himself to be
the very centre of our life,
the source of our loving energy in the world
and the source of our prayerful,
trustful waiting on God.*

—Rowan Williams

ASCENSION OF THE LORD 21 MAY 2020

Glorified, Risen and Ascended One,
we cannot comprehend the mysteries of this day
when we remember your parting from this earth.
But we do know something of change
and the mixture of feelings that come from farewells.
We know of our need for you at all times,
and with hearts full of faith and trust,
pray that by your Spirit you will remain with us always.
So, open our minds and hearts
and send your Spirit to us we pray
that we might receive your love and peace. Amen.

Luke 24:44–53

Then Jesus said to the disciples, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

You are witnesses of these things. And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high." Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and they were continually in the temple blessing God.

- What sticks with you from this Gospel reading?
- What do you sense might be the connection with what is happening in your life at this time?

At the conclusion of the Gospel reading, Jesus withdraws for a final time. In Luke's telling, Jesus withdraws often to be with God in prayer. But this time, Jesus will not return. You might be able to imagine how they felt. Life has changed. An emptiness exists. A hole is created by loss and grief.

Jesus instructs the disciples to wait for the promised "power from on high to come." In Luke-Acts, this is the gift of the Holy Spirit which they will receive anew on Pentecost. For now, they are in an in-between space—what was is no longer and what will be is yet to be revealed. Much like us, they are in the messy middle.

An Ascension Day blessing by Jan Richardson invites us to remain still. Rather than rushing ahead to establish a new normal, might we give our full attention to each moment, ready to receive the gifts that come by Something Beyond our good plans and efforts?

Stay
A Blessing for Ascension Day

I know how your mind
rushes ahead
trying to fathom
what could follow this.
What will you do,
where will you go,
how will you live?

You will want
to outrun the grief.
You will want
to keep turning toward
the horizon,
watching for what was lost
to come back,
to return to you
and never leave again.

For now
hear me when I say
all you need to do
is to still yourself
is to turn toward one another
is to stay.

Wait
and see what comes
to fill
the gaping hole
in your chest.
Wait with your hands open
to receive what could never come
except to what is empty
and hollow.

You cannot know it now,
cannot even imagine
what lies ahead
but I tell you
the day is coming
when breath will
fill your lungs
as it never has before
and with your own ears
you will hear words
coming to you new
and startling.
You will dream dreams
and you will see the world
ablaze with blessing.

Wait for it.
Still yourself.
Stay.

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