



**Hymn: StF 297 Christ is alive**

Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BWfC5uGMLig&t=9s>

Christ is alive! Let Christians sing.  
The cross stands empty to the sky.  
Let streets and homes with praises ring.  
Love, drowned in death, shall never die.

Christ is alive! No longer bound  
to distant years in Palestine,  
but saving, healing, here and now,  
and touching every place and time.

In every insult, rift and war,  
where colour, scorn or wealth divide,

Christ suffers still, yet loves the more,  
and lives, where even hope has died.

Women and men, in age and youth,  
can feel the Spirit, hear the call,  
and find the way, the life, the truth,  
revealed in Jesus, freed for all.

Christ is alive and comes to bring  
good news to this and every age,  
till earth and sky and ocean ring  
with joy, with justice, love, and praise.

**Reading: Acts 1:6-14**

Then they gathered round him and asked him, 'Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?'

He said to them: 'It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.'

After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. 'Men of Galilee,' they said, 'why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.'

Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day's walk from the city. When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James, son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

**Hymn: StF 52 He is exalted**

Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vUq4QDrEiY>

He is exalted  
The King is exalted on high  
I will praise Him  
He is exalted, forever exalted  
And I will praise His name

He is the Lord  
Forever His truth shall reign  
Heaven and earth  
Rejoice in His holy name  
He is exalted  
The King is exalted on high

**Hymn: StF 332 Lord, I lift your name on high**

Watch on YouTube [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=COQ6cni\\_TG8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=COQ6cni_TG8)

Lord, I lift Your name on high  
Lord, I love to sing Your praises  
I'm so glad You're in my life  
I'm so glad You came to save us  
You came from heaven to earth

To show the way  
From the earth to the cross  
My debt to pay  
From the cross to the grave  
From the grave to the sky  
Lord, I lift Your name on high

## Prayer

Risen, ascended Lord, you came down **to lift us up.**  
You descended to earth **that earth might ascend to heaven.**  
You descended to the dead **that the dead might rise to life.**  
In our struggles **lift us up.**  
In our tiredness **lift us up.**  
Lift us Lord **out of darkness into light, out of despair into hope.**  
Lift us Lord **out of sadness into joy, out of failure into trust.**  
Lift us Lord **out of anger into forgiveness out of pride into humility.**  
Lift us Lord **out of doubt into faith out of loneliness into community.**  
Lift us Lord out of death into life.  
Lift us into your heart **to be with you for all eternity.**  
Amen. (Prepared by the Mounts Bay United Benefice and adapted from Liturgies from Lindisfarne)

## Message – ‘Expectancy’

As I looked at our Bible reading, one word came to my mind and that word was expectancy. In one online dictionary expectancy is described as the feeling that something exciting or pleasant is going to happen. There’s another similar word that I could have used. That word is expectation and the same dictionary defines expectation as the feeling of expecting that something will happen.

So, expectation is defined as the feeling of expecting something to happen and expectancy is defined as the feeling that something exciting or pleasant is going to happen. At first glance there doesn’t seem much difference between the two but there are two key differences.

The first should be obvious from the definitions themselves. Expectancy focuses on positive things that might happen – described as exciting or pleasant things - whereas expectation can form around anything likely to happen and could give rise to negative thoughts just as much as positive. Thus, we might be dreading meeting someone who has caused us pain in the past. That’s a pretty negative state of mind but what do we say if the meeting goes well? “Contrary to expectation, it didn’t go as badly as I thought it might.”

The other difference is to do with the way that most people use the two words. Expectation usually has to do with more specific, precise outcomes that we expect to happen whereas expectancy is more general. Let’s illustrate that by looking at Ipswich’s promotion to the Premier League. Some people may have expectation. We’re going to stay up or we’re going to get relegated. We’re going to achieve a certain number of points or maybe get into the European qualification places. Those are specific outcomes. Whereas to simply say that you feel more hopeful of our staying up than last time, that is expectancy as you wait to see what happens. I’m not a fan of the world of gambling but another way of seeing it is that you can place a bet on expectation because it relates to a clear, specific outcome whereas you can’t place a bet on the more general sense of expectancy.

Now that we’ve got those words straight in our minds, let’s see how they relate to our reading. It’s Luke’s account of the Ascension and what goes on around it. It’s another glimpse into the immediate post-Easter life of the early Christians and happened forty days after Easter which is why you may have celebrated it this last Thursday. As we consider the passage, let’s see how it relates to expectation and expectancy.

It begins with the disciples asking Jesus a question. ‘Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?’ It’s a Messiah related question. If, because of his resurrection and coming ascension, Jesus has now truly been revealed as God’s Messiah, is that now going to be revealed to the world? Is Jesus now going to take over leadership of Israel and, as prophesied in the Old Testament, bring a new era of God’s reign to the world? That’s a specific outcome. It’s an expectation. Is it an expectation that Jesus confirms for us here? Yes and no. He doesn’t deny it’s going to happen but the words of his reply take us away from specifics. They give rise to a more general state of expectancy for the disciples and for us rather than a precise expectation because what he says is this. ‘It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.’

As we look at the words of our readings, there are three things we can mark down as expectations (or we might call them promises) that are given to us.

Number one: After Jesus ascends into Heaven, the disciples are told that one day he ‘will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven’.

Number two: They are told that they will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on them.

Number three: They are told they will be witnesses for Jesus in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Those are expectations for us as well. Expectations that Jesus will, on an unspecified date in the future, come again to bring a new Heaven and a new earth into being; that we have God's Holy Spirit in us that will bring us power to live life the Jesus way; and thirdly that Jesus wants us to witness to him and to our experience of his reality and that together with his other followers that witness will extend to every part of the world.

Those are expectations and I hope they give rise to a sense of expectation within us. They are specific outcomes; specific promises to us from within the passage but let me remind you that the word we started with wasn't expectation but expectancy. We defined that as a more general state of positivity and hope attached to 'exciting or pleasant things' that we anticipate happening.

So, if we apply that to our reading, we could say that as Christians we have expectancy because of the expectations we have just listed.

We have a sense of expectancy because we believe that Jesus will come again. We may not know specifics but we do know that however bad we feel the world may be getting, humans will never have the final say as to its outcome. Jesus will come again to make all things new and will bring God's complete reign into being.

We also have expectancy because God's Spirit is with us and to add Paul's words to those of Jesus, the Holy Spirit does 'not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-control'. Somebody once wisely said that if you want to make God laugh, tell God your plans. We can often add our human expectations to the expectations that God gives us and build our own human plans on top of that. Expectancy cuts us off from such folly. Expectancy says 'I know God is going to do great things but I cannot know all the specifics. Expectancy looks to the wind of the Holy Spirit blowing powerfully in our sails and looks forward to the journey wherever it may take us.

Finally, we have expectancy because we are told we will be witnesses for Jesus as part of a massive worldwide movement. Jesus doesn't want anyone to miss out. Jesus wants everyone to hear the good news about him. Jesus wants everyone to be exposed to the liberating and transforming love that can only be found in him. We should rejoice in that expectancy because Jesus calls us to be part of a global mission that can genuinely change this world and its people.

It's fitting that our passage finished with reference to prayer. Those that had listened to his words and witnessed his ascension, we are told, met constantly together in prayer. As we recognise our global connectedness, prayer is a means of sharing that sense of expectancy that we all have whilst at the same time reinforcing it. Prayer connects us to one another and to the Jesus who gives us our instructions for this interim period until he come again. And prayer unleashes the power of the Holy Spirit. In last week's lectionary reading, Jesus promised that whoever believes in him will be able to do the works he did and, quote, even greater things than these. That only happens because of the power of his Holy Spirit and, for me, that caps off our sense of expectancy. Not because I know exactly what those things are going to look like but because I wait, in the words of the dictionary definition with which we started, for the exciting or pleasant things and, we can add, the utterly amazing things that are going to happen.

**Hymn: StF 167 Colours of Day**

Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=97q04r5z5RQ>

Colours of day dawn into the mind  
The sun has come up, the night is behind,  
Go down to the city, into the street,  
and let's give the message to the people we meet

The light of the world is risen again;  
the people of darkness are needing a friend.

So light up the fire ....

So light up the fire and let the flame burn,  
open the door, let Jesus return.  
Take seeds of his Spirit, let the fruit grow,  
tell the people of Jesus, let his love show.

Open your eyes, look into the sky,  
the darkness has come, the sun came to die,  
The evening draws on, the sun disappears,  
but Jesus is living, his Spirit is near.

Go through the park, on into the town;  
the sun still shines on; it never goes down.

So light up the fire ....

## Prayer

After I had written my sermon, I discovered that in some parts of the Church today is known as Expectation Sunday as it falls between Ascension Day and Pentecost. That name is based upon the expectation noted above of the disciples waiting for the coming of the promised Holy Spirit. We also noted that for those of us on the other side of Pentecost, the presence of the Spirit with us leads us into a sense of expectancy and hope for all that God can do in this world.

Our prayers of intercession build upon this sense of expectancy and use the words of a song, Build Your Kingdom Here. If you want to watch a video of the song before praying, you can find it here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r-4bEbk1m\\_c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r-4bEbk1m_c). After each section we pause in stillness to bring to God the situations locally and worldwide that come to mind. If you are using these prayers for a congregation the words of the chorus (indicated in bold print) can be used as a collective refrain between sections.

**Build Your kingdom here, Let the darkness fear, Show Your mighty hand, Heal our streets and land**  
**Set Your church on fire, Win this nation back. Change the atmosphere, Build Your kingdom here, We pray** (Pause)

Come set Your rule and reign, In our hearts again, Increase in us we pray, Unveil why we're made  
Come set our hearts ablaze with hope, Like wildfire in our very souls, Holy Spirit, come invade us now  
We are Your church. We need Your power in us (Pause)

**Build Your kingdom here, Let the darkness fear, Show Your mighty hand, Heal our streets and land**  
**Set Your church on fire, Win this nation back. Change the atmosphere, Build Your kingdom here, We pray** (Pause)

We seek Your kingdom first, We hunger and we thirst, Refuse to waste our lives, For You're our joy and prize  
To see the captive hearts released, The hurt, the sick, the poor at peace, We lay down our lives for Heaven's cause  
We are Your church, We pray revive the earth (Pause)

**Build Your kingdom here, Let the darkness fear, Show Your mighty hand, Heal our streets and land**  
**Set Your church on fire, Win this nation back. Change the atmosphere, Build Your kingdom here, We pray** (Pause)

Unleash Your kingdom's power, Reaching the near and far, No force of hell can stop, Your beauty changing hearts  
You made us for much more than this, Awake the kingdom seed in us, Fill us with the strength and love of Christ  
We are Your church, We are the hope on earth (Pause)

**Build Your kingdom here, Let the darkness fear, Show Your mighty hand, Heal our streets and land**  
**Set Your church on fire, Win this nation back. Change the atmosphere, Build Your kingdom here, We pray** Amen

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## The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name; your kingdom come; your will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

**Hymn: StF 335 Rejoice! The Lord is King** Watch on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AhEUCSzaU8M>

Rejoice the Lord is King!  
Your Lord and King adore!  
Rejoice, give thanks and sing, and  
triumph evermore.  
Lift up your heart! Lift up your  
voice!  
Rejoice! again I say, rejoice!

Jesus, the Saviour reigns,  
the God of truth and love:  
when he had purged our stains,  
he took his seat above.  
Lift up your heart...

His kingdom cannot fail;  
he rules o'er earth and heaven;  
the keys of death and hell  
are to our Jesus given.  
Lift up your heart...

He sits at God's right hand  
till all his foes submit,  
and bow to his command,  
and fall beneath his feet:  
Lift up your heart...

Rejoice in glorious hope!  
Jesus the Judge shall come  
and take his servants up  
to their eternal home:  
We soon shall hear the archangel's  
voice,  
The trump of God shall sound,  
rejoice!