

Sermon on Wednesday 27 May

Rev. Bill Church

I have recently taken on a new allotment, which sounds daft for a person my age. But it has provided welcome physical exercise and it is also a sort of voyage of discovery, trying to discover: which crops grow well and which do not; how the new plot reacts when it rains; and, more relevantly, when it does not rain, which parts are shaded, where frost hits worst, what are the bad weeds (plenty - buttercup, both kinds of bindweed, couch grass, horsetail, etc, etc...)?

In the same way, sometimes we have to work out how things are in a new situation, and how we should respond.

Jesus' disciples had to do this: During the three years they followed him and he led them, taught them, corrected them, protected them, loved them. During the three days after the crucifixion when they thought they had lost him for ever. During the forty days after the resurrection when he was with them again in a different way. And then, again, for the days after he was taken up at the Ascension.

That was another great heavenly affirmation that Jesus of Nazareth was, is, as one with the King of Glory praised in

the Psalm - as we sing in the Te Deum: "Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ".

But what did the Ascension mean for the disciples. Was it another bereavement, another loss?

It must have been a shock – the angels scold the disciples for standing around gawping up towards heaven, but they soon returned to Jerusalem "with great joy".

Had Jesus abandoned them, left them to fend for themselves? No, Jesus promised them: "I am with you always to the end of the age," even if they could no longer enjoy his physical company. Were they out of a job?

Far from it – they were given the modest task of making all nations disciples of Jesus.

What, on their own?

No, they were to wait in Jerusalem for the promised Holy Spirit, who would lead them.

So, there they were, in the waiting room, not like nervous patients browsing *Country Life* or a gardening magazine in the dentist's waiting room, but sharing a common life of prayer and worship in the Temple,

waiting and working out how things were in the new situation and how they should respond.

This is not specifically a Covid sermon – Covid is just a rather extreme example of a new situation where we have to work out how things are and how we should respond.

We are not yet allowed to pray physically together nor can we yet worship physically in our Temple, but, as always, we can pray and worship as best we can in different ways and look forward with hope to easier times and try our best to hear the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

