

From the Rector's Study, the Rev. Bryce Sangster  
Sunday, May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024, Ascension of the Lord  
Acts 1:1-11, Psalm 47, Ephesians 1:15-23, Luke 24:44-53

The ascension makes sense in its historical context. The understanding of the earth between heaven and hell. And heaven being above the destination but now our view or understanding of the universe has changed. The idea of the circle rather than hierarchy, and the connectedness of all things seems to be of greater value.

Wally Lamb at the end of his book, *I know this much is true*, says it very well.  
*"I am not a smart man, particularly, but one day, at long last, I stumbled from the dark woods of my own, and my family's, and my country's past, holding in my hands these truths: that love grows from the rich loam of forgiveness; that mongrels make good dogs; that the evidence of God exists in the roundness of things.*

This says something about relationships, forgiveness, imperfection and circles and connection. Yet the idea of Jesus leaving has value for us and in support of others.

And in an early verse that the start of today's gospel, verse 41, while in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering....

And with Jesus leaving what are the disciples left with? The answer coming into Pentecost is the Holy Spirit. But what does this mean? There has to be more to this. Joy, disbelief, and wonder. Not just one or two but all three together.

The problem: might these three cause an issue with the statement by Jesus calling for the repentance and forgiveness of sins proclaimed to all nations. The E word, evangelism. Does particularly disbelieving or doubt inhibit us from proclaiming repentance and forgiveness of sins to all nations? It seems to me the model of evangelism we think of most often has an element of certainty that goes beyond faith or belief.

A comment by Bishop Jim Cruickshank comes to mind, the opposite of faith is not doubt but fear or certainty. And where is the starting point?

I have mentioned before, and it bears repeating, about moving from a model of evangelism based on Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus. To Jesus walking with the two from Jerusalem to Emmaus. Walking with them in the wrong direction, and the starting point is listening to their questions their concerns and where there starting from even if it's going in the wrong direction. And bringing joy, disbelief and wonder to the table. All three.

And I can't help thinking wearing a clergy collar can close conversation and discussion. A number of years ago I was visiting someone on the psych ward of the hospital in Belleville wearing a clergy collar the staff asked me to leave because another patient became agitated in seeing me in my collar.

It was always interesting when travelling by bus or train or plane at some point my seatmate would ask what do I do and in answering the question the person took some time of silence, but then began a conversation in response to my answer.

And we come back to in Ephesians, *the eyes of the heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you.*

I am reminded of what is said in Hebrews 11:1-3, *Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, by faith<sup>1d</sup> our ancestors received approval.<sup>3</sup> By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible.<sup>1b</sup>*

This idea of hope is having something to do with the future. And yes, it may have to do with hoping for the good things we are experiencing to continue and to maybe improve, but there is also a sense of waiting something which we cannot see at the moment. And it seems that we need this hope more when we are not enjoying life and we are in our facing difficult situations.

The expression which comes to mind, is the light at the end of the tunnel. And hopefully this light is not an oncoming train.

Then again, evangelism is maybe not so much one person having the answers to give to the other, but the journey together in the spirit. The mystery of life and circling back around again. There may in fact be upward movement, but it is not in a straight line but more like a coil. We circle around and hopefully move higher and higher to follow the metaphor. And maybe there are similarities between the parts of the coil on that side of the circle and we can be off support for each other as we continue to journey.

And the mystery. The summary of the law, to love God, others, and self. And in the loving, we are to be aware of the mystery, not just of God, but of others and ourselves. Or to ask it another way, is it truly love or something else if all is known about the object or subject of our love? Loving even in the face of uncertainty.

Maybe that is the point of the ascension. The movement up, the movement with hope and the movement with love.

*Amen*

Do not be dismayed by the brokenness in the world.

All things break.

And all things can be mended.

Not with time, as they say, but with intention.

So go. Love intentionally, extravagantly, unconditionally.

The broken world waits in darkness for the light that is you.

(Source: L.R.Knost)