



## Newcastle City Temple Connected

Reimagining Church Together

Dear Friends

For those who regularly tune in to watch Coronation Street you will know that they are currently running a harrowing story line based on the true-life horror of what happened to Sophie Lancaster who was kicked to death in an unprovoked, brutal attack, as one of her killers - Ryan Herbert, later stated: "for looking like a goth". The unprovoked attack, on Sophie and boyfriend Robert Maltby, happened in Bacup, Rossendale, Lancashire, on the 11 August 2007. A stones throw from where I was born, and grew up.

British Soaps have never been afraid to tackle big issues—and this storyline based on this dreadful hate-crime is no exception. Perpetrators of Hate Crime will usually target those who are in already stigmatized and minority groups. Hate Crime is defined as *a crime, typically one involving violence, that is motivated by prejudice on the basis of race, religion, sexual orientation, or other grounds.*

We've seen a rise in Hate-Crime here in the UK over recent years - in year ending March 2020, there were 105,090 hate crimes recorded by the police in England and Wales, an increase of 8 per cent compared with year ending March 2019 (97,446 offences). This figure excludes Greater Manchester police who were unable to supply data following the implementation of a new IT system in July 2019 - and so the reality will of course be greater!

Church history records the accounts of Christians who have been persecuted for their faith. In the late 19th century early magistrates refused to prosecute mob violence against Salvation Army victims. In many places publicans and brothel keepers stirred up violent opposition against the Salvation Army - largely for it's stance on teetotalism, the abuse of alcohol and other immoral behaviors.

Along England's south coast, this response coalesced into a group that called itself the Skeleton Army. These Skeleton mobs would attack The Salvation Army, by throwing eggs, dead animals, burning coals—whatever came to hand. There were riots in Exeter, Worthing, Guildford, and Hastings, and brawls in 67 towns and villages. In one year alone, 1882, 669 Salvationists were knocked down or brutally assaulted and 60 buildings were virtually wrecked by the mob. And the Police turned a blind eye!

Today we are thinking about Christ's Ascension & the fact that before He was taken into heaven He commanded His disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they had been 'clothed with power from on high' (Luke 24:49).

We recall the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20), and recognize how Christ has called each one of us for service in the world. A few years ago, whilst reading John Stotts 'Life in Christ' I remember being greatly challenged by these words *'Britain today seems to belong to a different world. Now the Church is not persecuted so much as ignored...Nobody opposes it any longer, because really it neither says nor does anything much to oppose. My own conviction, for what it is worth, is that if we Christians were to compromise less, we would undoubtedly suffer more...'Christ's love compels us.'* It is from a profound sense of indebtedness to the Christ who has loved us that *'for his sake' we should be prompt to obey, eager to witness, and ready to suffer. To live 'for Christ' is to live always within sight of the Cross.'* (Stott, 'Life in Christ' 1991:92,93)

*'Britain today seems to belong to a different world. Now the Church is not persecuted so much as ignored!'* Oh that God, would reveal to us – the steps which we must take in reversing this fact. We should regard it a privilege and a duty to be witnesses for Christ, as we draw on our own experience, which comes from our own intimate relationship with Jesus; and power of the Holy Spirit whose presence has been promised to all who would receive it.

Have a good week!

Every Blessing  
*Major Liz Hancock*

# NCT SA Connected

Reimagining Church - Let's Worship Together



**SUNDAY 9th May 2021**

**Theme:** Up! Up! and Away!

**Bible Text:** Luke 24:44-53, Acts 1:1-11

**Opening Band Piece:** Llainfair Hail the day that sees Him rise (SASB 221) <https://youtu.be/tpNXooUAMe0>

**Suggested Songs:** Before the throne of God above (SASB 243) <https://youtu.be/ITuDnGh1jg>  
He is Lord (SASB 222) <https://youtu.be/4seLlpdJkag>  
All hail the Lamb (SASB 236) <https://youtu.be/RDpLqi1dtIs>  
Lord I lift your name on high (SASB 379) <https://youtu.be/dLL5or7I3q8>  
Majesty Worship His Majesty (SASB 382) [https://youtu.be/AgSvkAYn\\_Vo](https://youtu.be/AgSvkAYn_Vo)  
All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name (SASB 73) <https://youtu.be/GunSkdkVc5I>

**Suggested Songster Piece:** Closer than <https://youtu.be/vPuckRyno5w>

## UP! UP AND AWAY!

Thursday 13th May is Ascension Day, a day which commemorates the Christian belief of the bodily Ascension of Jesus into heaven. Tucked in between Easter and Pentecost, Ascension Day isn't as widely celebrated as these other key festivals in the Christian Calendar – and yet, without The Ascension we wouldn't have Pentecost, or for that matter Easter. Jesus wasn't resurrected only to die again. Jesus was resurrected to be lifted into heaven and live forever with God, so that we can know that there is life beyond this life. And Jesus also had to ascend so we could experience the Holy Spirit, so that we could get on with the business of spreading His message throughout the world; According to John 16:7, Jesus said, *"But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you"*.



It's my hope that as I share some thoughts on The Ascension through, that God through the power and presence of His Holy Spirit will enlighten your hearts and minds to a deeper understanding and an appreciation of the significance of this event - and encourage you therefore to pray for yourselves this ***Prayer of illumination...***

*In the words of Scripture we hear of the power of Christ and the promise of the Holy Spirit. Today the ancient story comes alive in our hearts. We await your Spirit from on high, O God. Come, Lord Jesus. Come, Holy Spirit, into our lives. Amen.*

Of Jesus someone has said...

*In the wilderness He conquered sin. On the cross He conquered death. In the grave He conquered hell. And now in space, as He ascends to the Father, He has conquered Satan himself. Behind Him is the persecution of men. Before Him is the applause of angels. Behind Him is a cross. Before Him there is a crown. Behind Him is Calvary. Before Him is all of heaven's glory.*

The Ascension of Jesus took place 40 days after Easter Sunday, and over time many people have been puzzled as to why Jesus waited around on Earth 40 days after His resurrection, but that period is no accident.

Scripture tells us that Jesus had endured the Devil's temptation for 40 days in the wilderness at the beginning of his public ministry, but now the tables were turned.



## Continued...

In the post-resurrection period Jesus triumphantly paraded His victory over the Devil and all his works. During this time, the conqueror of death displayed His supremacy before His faithful followers so that they might share in the joy of His victory. But there was another reason. Those 40 days of His appearing after the resurrection were of immense value to the believers for they established the reality of His lordship.

Jesus spent those 40 days teaching His disciples, and as a result they were drastically changed.

When Jesus ascended into heaven, He did so in triumph and glory, having accomplished all that was necessary for our salvation.

*Philippians 2:9 tells us... 'God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name.'*

The eminent theologian Karl Barth said that *"when Jesus ascended He went to two places. Firstly, He went to that place, absolutely inaccessible to us, that hidden sphere that we cannot enter or attain, the place we call heaven." Secondly, Barth says, 'by going to heaven, Jesus went to God and was "placed as man at the side of God" .*

If the crucifixion is the event where Christ defeated the power of SIN, and the resurrection is the event where Christ defeated the power of DEATH, then the Ascension is the event where Christ defeated the POWERS OF EVIL. The ascension is the final act of God's triumph over the devil and over all the forces that oppose God.

Paul in Ephesians 1:20-22 writes:

***'(God) raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet ...'***

Take the words *Rule, Authority, Power* and *Dominion*, and we have the names given by the Jews to the demonic forces that opposed God, and it is precisely these spiritual powers that Paul says Christ defeated through his ascension, through his exaltation.

Some have tried to argue the case that if Christ has ascended into heaven, then this must mean that Christ is now absent from his world... a view supported by those who try to claim that God cannot possibly be in control – for we live in world so tattered and torn by the effects of war, terrorism, poverty, abuse and so on. If your God Reigns they mock – then how can we explain such things as these.

## The Back Pew – Jeff Larson



and the Lord after speaking to them was taken up into Heaven to the Father.. to which one of the disciples in a nervous outburst shouted words not uttered again until Buzz LightYear. **Mk 16:19, Lk 24:50**

... How? Well take a look at the effect that the ascension had on the disciples. Notice how in Acts chapter 1, they don't remain standing, rooted to the spot, completely overwhelmed by the fact that Jesus has returned to heaven. No! Rather their thoughts return almost immediately to earth – and to the work which needed to be done.

Christ's final words before being taken up into heaven before their very eyes were words of commission as he assigned them the task of carrying on his work on earth...

***"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."* (Acts 1:8)**

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Continued...

Alister McGrath suggests that;

*'Faith in The Ascension does not mean any diminished interest in the world – it means a renewed commitment to that world, and new resources with which to meet its needs and cares. In no way does the ascension of Christ mean that Christ is now absent from His world. It is utterly impossible to read Acts, and gain the impression that Jesus is no longer present with His people! The Ascension does not mean, and was never intended to mean, that Christ is now restricted to some limited region! Far from it, through the resurrection, Christ broke down the barriers of time and space, allowing Himself to be available to all (symbolised by the ripping of the temple curtain, as recorded in Matthew 27:51).'*

The Doctrine of The Ascension assures us that Christ has been exalted and glorified and that His power and glory can be revealed and reflected in our lives – for the ascended Christ lives in believers through the Spirit – take a look at these words from Galatians 2:20;

***'I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me'.***

And the Christ who was exalted to heaven may also be exalted in our lives – Philippians 1:20 says as much;

***'I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death'.***

## Prayer

Risen and Ascended Christ, you have raised our human nature to the throne of heaven: help us to seek and serve you, that we may join you at the Father's side, where you reign with the Spirit in glory, now and for ever. Amen.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS FOR THE WEEK AHEAD

**Tuesday 11th May 11am** - Coffee Morning via Zoom

<https://zoom.us/j/94036559399?pwd=TKZmSS9jWtNzTGU1NW5mY2JoNFIRUT09>

Meeting ID: 940 3655 9399    Passcode: Coffee

**Thursday 13th May - ASCENSION DAY**

**Thursday 13th May 7pm** - BM Bob Dare's House Group (Spirit LYFE Session 2)

**Sunday 16th May 10am** - Candidates Sunday Morning Worship via Zoom

<https://zoom.us/j/97311064719?pwd=VXJxWEFBVGU1WFpPSjk2UUFWNWlvdz09>

Meeting ID: 973 1106 4719    Passcode: Worship

## THY KINGDOM COME 2021

**Thy Kingdom Come** is a global prayer movement that invites Christians around the world to pray for more people to come to know Jesus. Christians from more than 170 countries and 65 denominations have taken part. **Thy Kingdom Come** runs between Ascension and Pentecost, and therefore will be taking place from 13-23 May.

Further details can be found via the following link:

<https://www.thykingdomcome.global>

Those who receive the Salvation Army Periodicals (Salvationist / War Cry) have already received a complementary copy of the **Thy Kingdom Come** prayer journal—which is a really lovely resource and I have a number still available if anyone else would like one, simply let me know.

