Deled Dy Deyrnas | Thy Kingdom Come



Chi yw fy nhystion

You are my Witnesses

Dydd Iau'r Dyrchafael-Dydd y Pentecost Ascension-Pentecost Each day through this special season, we will be looking at the Scriptures, answering questions, and pausing for thought. Every day apart from on the first day, we will look at a passage from the Acts of the Apostles. Today we begin with a passage from Luke's Gospel. Luke also wrote Acts.

Please use this booklet in conjunction with the Thy Kingdom Come Prayer diary, and remember to stop and pray at 12 Noon each day.

Ascension Day

Grant, we pray, almighty God, that as we believe your only-begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ to have ascended into the heavens, so we in heart and mind may also ascend and with him continually dwell; who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Luke 24, 44-53

Then he said to them, '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 worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and they were continually in the temple blessing God.

Reflection

The Ascension marked the end of Jesus' physical ministry on earth. Jesus sits now at God's side where he is worshipped and adored. Jesus did two things before he left his disciples. First, he opened their minds that they might understand the scriptures. My prayer for us is that we would be people who take the Scriptures seriously. Secondly, Jesus commissioned his friends as witnesses of what they had seen and experienced. A witness is someone who testifies to the truth. The word and mission were at the heart of the early church. I hope that is what you want for us in Bro Madryn.

Questions

- 1. If you had to describe the gospel in a sentence, what would it be?
- 2. What would it have been like for the disciples to stay in the city
- 3. Who witnessed to you and who do you witness to?

Standing looking at the horizon
The Son has disappeared
Enthroned beyond our eyes
Standing looking at the horizon
For people who have not yet heard
Discovering they live amongst us
Yearning to understand
Standing looking at the horizon
Hearing whispered words
You are my witnesses till the end of every age.

Friday 19 May

Acts 18: 9-18

⁹ One night the Lord said to Paul in a vision, 'Do not be afraid, but speak and do not be silent; ¹⁰ for I am with you, and no one will lay a hand on you to harm you, for there are many in this city who are my people.' ¹¹ He stayed there for a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

¹² But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him before the tribunal. ¹³ They said, 'This man is persuading people to worship God in ways that are contrary to the law.' ¹⁴ Just as Paul was about to speak, Gallio said to the Jews, 'If it were a matter of crime or serious villainy, I would be justified in accepting the complaint of you Jews; ¹⁵ but since it is a matter of questions about words and names and your own law, see to it yourselves; I do not wish to be a judge of these matters.' ¹⁶ And he dismissed them from the tribunal. ¹⁷ Then all of them ^[h] seized Sosthenes, the official of the synagogue, and beat him in front of the tribunal. But Gallio paid no attention to any of these things.

¹⁸ After staying there for a considerable time, Paul said farewell to the believers^[] and sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila. At Cenchreae he had his hair cut, for he was under a vow.

Reflection

This event takes place within a decade of Jesus' ascension. Those who stood near Jerusalem had been witnesses. Now, Paul is in Corinth. He stays there for 18 months teaching the word of God amongst them. What he taught obviously disturbed the people as he is brought before those in authority. Paul stands accused of teaching people to worship God in ways that appeared to be contrary to the law of God. What could these words be? At the heart of Paul's message was this: God's grace and love were freely available to all regardless of ethnicity, class, gender or education. I wonder how inclusive and understandable to others is our worship? How clear are we with our message? Paul moves on eventually before he said farewell to the believers. How far would you be willing to go for the sake of the Gospel

Questions

- 1. How would you describe the Apostle Paul
- 2. Do you think Christians should ever be silent about their faith?
- 3. Is the Christian faith sometimes misunderstood today and what can we do about it?

He stood alone in the Temple
Then you could hear the gentle tap, tap, tap
The tap of sticks for those who could not see
Joining hands with children to dance around the king
Hosanna and Halelujah was the song upon their lips
It is still a message we carry today
A message about a God who causes us to dance and sing
(after Matthew 21:14-15)

Saturday 20 May

Acts 18: 23-26

²³ After spending some time there he departed and went from place to place through the region of Galatia^[] and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

²⁴ Now there came to Ephesus a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria. He was an eloquent man, well-versed in the scriptures. ²⁵ He had been instructed in the Way of the Lord; and he spoke with burning enthusiasm and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. ²⁶ He began to speak boldly in the synagogue; but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained the Way of God to him more accurately.

Reflection

Paul with Priscilla and Aquila had come to Ephesus, and Paul had left them in the city to go throughout the region of Galatia strengthening the followers of Jesus there. In his letter to the churches in Galatia, Paul is clear and forthright, there is one gospel and Jesus is the centre to all that we do.

Priscilla and Aquila encounter Apollos, who seems to have been orthodox in every way. He is a disciple, speaks with burning enthusiasm, and teaches accurately. Apollos is missing out a little. He knows about the baptism of repentance introduced by John the Baptist, but presumably nothing about the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Priscilla and Aquila take time to work with Apollos and explain more

about the faith to him. How many conversations about the faith do we have with each other I wonder?

Questions

- 1. Priscilla and Aquila took time to teach Apollos the faith. Who has taught you the faith? Give thanks for them today.
- 2. How do you think Paul strengthened the disciples?
- 3. What is it do you think that Apollos did not know about?

One last look, a raised hand in blessing Smiles and tears in our eyes Wind moving their hair and clothes And then he was gone Galileans, why are you stood looking? It was to time go. Another would come. Time had changed because of him. The horizons had become bigger We walked hand in hand towards them.

Sunday 21 May

Acts 1: 6-11

⁶ So when they had come together, they asked him, 'Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?' ⁷ He replied, 'It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.' ⁹ When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰ While he was going and they were gazing up towards heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. ¹¹ They said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up towards heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.'

Reflection

What an emotional rollercoaster the disciples and friends of Jesus

must have been on. From Palm Sunday to Good Friday, triumph and disaster followed by the trauma of Easter Day. Jesus had spent time with them opening the scriptures with them. It was important to Jesus, within this time of changing, that his friends wrestled with the scriptures. The story contained within our holy texts is one of a God who pushes us outwards. The men and women stood with Jesus on the hill outside of Jerusalem would in a few years' time be accused of turning the world upside down. Are we willing together to turn our worlds and the Llyn upside down by following Jesus.

Questions

- 1. What do you think the power from high the disciples received was?
- 2. How do you think the Holy Spirit works in the life of the church and in your life?
- 3. The disciples asked Jesus a question. What question would you ask him?

When will you do this Lord? When will you bring about change? I am afraid I don't like your answer.

Not knowing makes me squirm.

Perhaps that's one of the roles of the Spirit

To cajole, to remind, and to take my hand

The Spirit helps me to be uncomfortable with the unknown

And to remember that I allow change to happen, beginning with me.

Monday 22 May

Acts 20: 17-27

¹⁷ From Miletus he sent a message to Ephesus, asking the elders of the church to meet him. ¹⁸ When they came to him, he said to them:

You yourselves know how I lived among you the entire time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, ¹⁹ serving the Lord with all humility and with tears, enduring the trials that came to me through the plots of the Jews. ²⁰ I did not shrink from doing anything helpful, proclaiming the message to you and teaching you publicly and from house to house, ²¹ as I testified to both Jews and Greeks about repentance

towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus. ²² And now, as a captive to the Spirit, ^[a] I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, ²³ except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and persecutions are waiting for me. ²⁴ But I do not count my life of any value to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the good news of God's grace.

²⁵ 'And now I know that none of you, among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom, will ever see my face again. ²⁶ Therefore I declare to you this day that I am not responsible for the blood of any of you, ²⁷ for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God.

Reflection

Humility is not a word that we usually associate with the Apostle Paul. At least I don't. from his letters, he comes across as forthright, and perhaps a bit prickly. Here he is about to begin his journey to Jerusalem and then to Rome. Paul has gathered his leaders around him and reminded them of how diligent he was in proclaiming the gospel. How diligent are we in doing so? How purposeful am I as your vicar in ensuring that all men, women, and children in our area have the opportunity to hear the good news about Jesus? Would I testify about Jesus even if I could get into trouble? Would I put Jesus first in everything? Paul's humility mirrors than of Jesus. The man from Tarsus was changed as he followed the man from Nazareth.

Questions

- 1. What opposition do you think we encounter when we talk about Jesus?
- 2. When was the last time the whole parish was visited house to house? Is that important?
- 3. How would you say following Jesus has changed you?

Faithful God, Uncomfortable One Challenging me to change Calling me gently. Encouraging me onwards Wanting me to be Christlike: shaped by loved and humility I take your hand, and wonder Wonder where you will lead as we journey together Faithful God, Uncomfortable One Walking with me; one step at a time.

Tuesday 23 May

Acts 19: 1-10

While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul passed through the inland regions and came to Ephesus, where he found some disciples. ² He said to them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?' They replied, 'No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.' ³ Then he said, 'Into what then were you baptized?' They answered, 'Into John's baptism.' ⁴ Paul said, 'John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, in Jesus.' ⁵ On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶ When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied— ⁷ altogether there were about twelve of them.

⁸ He entered the synagogue and for three months spoke out boldly, and argued persuasively about the kingdom of God. ⁹ When some stubbornly refused to believe and spoke evil of the Way before the congregation, he left them, taking the disciples with him, and argued daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. ^[a] ¹⁰ This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia, both Jews and Greeks, heard the word of the Lord.

Reflection

Apollos is now in Corinth and Paul in Ephesus. These two are just two amongst many who preached the gospel throughout the then known world. Paul meets believers in Ephesus, and checks out what they believe. Paul challenges them and encourages them to discover more about their faith. I wonder how much sometimes I want to learn about

my faith, and pray God gives me the desire to yearn for more. The Apostle starts in the synagogue, but when he is opposed, he moves on and argues daily for the faith. Paul is not afraid to be out there day and night for his faith. Paul both inspires and challenges me. Luke finishes this passage by saying all heard the word of the Lord. Would it not be wonderful if we could say, all within Bro Madryn, whether Welsh or English, heard the word of the Lord.

Questions

- 1. When did someone last challenge you to grow in your faith? How did you react?
- 2. Is it important to you that you continually grow in your faith?
- 3. Does Paul more challenge or inspire you.

Day after day, night after night
Contending for the faith.
Building block after building block
Jesus is the foundation stone.
A stone that causes us to stumble and others to fall
Day after day, night after night
Dispelling the darkness, and calling us into the light.

Wednesday 24 May

Acts 19: 28-38

²⁸ When they heard this, they were enraged and shouted, 'Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!' ²⁹ The city was filled with the confusion; and people [a] rushed together to the theatre, dragging with them Gaius and Macedonians Aristarchus, who were Paul's travellingcompanions. 30 Paul wished to go into the crowd, but the disciples would not let him: 31 even some officials of the province of Asia, by who were friendly to him, sent him a message urging him not to venture into the theatre. ³² Meanwhile, some were shouting one thing, some another; for the assembly was in confusion, and most of them did not know why they had come together. 33 Some of the crowd gave instructions to Alexander, whom the Jews had pushed forward. And Alexander motioned for silence and tried to make a defence before

the people. ³⁴ But when they recognized that he was a Jew, for about two hours all of them shouted in unison, 'Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!' ³⁵ But when the town clerk had quietened the crowd, he said, 'Citizens of Ephesus, who is there that does not know that the city of the Ephesians is the temple-keeper of the great Artemis and of the statue that fell from heaven? ^[C] ³⁶ Since these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rash. ³⁷ You have brought these men here who are neither temple-robbers nor blasphemers of our ^[d] goddess. ³⁸ If therefore Demetrius and the artisans with him have a complaint against anyone, the courts are open, and there are proconsuls; let them bring charges there against one another.

Reflection

The message of the gospel disturbed people. In Ephesus, lots of employment was generated by worship of Artemis. The great temple was there, and silversmiths made lots of money from the cult. As people became followers of Jesus, they stopped following Artemis, and this threatened many people. There was uproar and confusion. The officials in Ephesus tried to calm the storm by reminding people that Artemis was great, and they should act calmly and rashly, and the courts were open if they wanted to complain against Paul and other Christians. Such a scenario is far away from our current situation. The Christian faith in Wales is not opposed, rather it is ignored because it seems to threaten no one and we have not in general been good at articulating our message. I pray that would change, and that change would start with me.

Questions

- 1. In what ways do you think the Christian faith should cause offence?
- 2. Do you struggle with how people react to your faith?
- 3. Would you still go to church publicly if it was opposed?

You do not fit the mould, the image we have of you. Not a rider on a white charger, or a mighty person of valour The rich did not flock to you, nor religious leaders run to your aid You spent your time with those on the outside. Indeed, that is where I met you. For you invited me in. You always break the mould.

Thursday 25 May

Acts 22. 30; 23. 6-11

³⁰ Since he wanted to find out what Paul was being accused of by the Jews, the next day he released him and ordered the chief priests and the entire council to meet. He brought Paul down and had him stand before them.

⁶ When Paul noticed that some were Sadducees and others were Pharisees, he called out in the council, 'Brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees. I am on trial concerning the hope of the resurrection^[a] of the dead.' ⁷ When he said this, a dissension began between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. ⁸ (The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, or angel, or spirit; but the Pharisees acknowledge all three.) ⁹ Then a great clamour arose, and certain scribes of the Pharisees' group stood up and contended, 'We find nothing wrong with this man. What if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?' ¹⁰ When the dissension became violent, the tribune, fearing that they would tear Paul to pieces, ordered the soldiers to go down, take him by force, and bring him into the barracks.

¹¹ That night the Lord stood near him and said, 'Keep up your courage! For just as you have testified for me in Jerusalem, so you must bear witness also in Rome.'

Reflection

Paul is before the Sanhedrin. This was the council which Jesus was on trial before. It was a mixture of Pharisees and Sadducees. Paul was a Pharisee, and tells the council that he is on trial because of his belief in the resurrection. This causes a scrap between the Pharisees who believe in the resurrection (not of Jesus) and the Sadducees who did not. The theological argument was so fierce, the roman forces intervened. Paul receives assurance (if that is the right

word) from Jesus that he must bear witness in Rome as well as in Jerusalem. The word witness in Greek (the language of the New Testament) is the same as the word witness. Again, for me, the question is raised how willing am I to bear witness to my faith? How willing dare I ask, are you?

Questions

- 1. Have you ever heard an intense theological debate? Is it something you would enjoy?
- 2. What do you think of Paul exploiting the division in the council?
- 3. How easy is it, for you to be a witness?

Help me to be faithful
Faithful to your calling
The calling of your voice
Still my heart to listen to you
Help to me a witness to your truth
Allow me to see others changed,
and may that change begin with me.

Friday 26 May

Acts 25, 13-21

¹³ After several days had passed, King Agrippa and Bernice arrived at Caesarea to welcome Festus. ¹⁴ Since they were staying there for several days, Festus laid Paul's case before the king, saying, 'There is a man here who was left in prison by Felix. ¹⁵ When I was in Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me about him and asked for a sentence against him. ¹⁶ I told them that it was not the custom of the Romans to hand over anyone before the accused had met the accusers face to face and had been given an opportunity to make a defence against the charge. ¹⁷ So when they met here, I lost no time, but on the next day took my seat on the tribunal and ordered the man to be brought. ¹⁸ When the accusers stood up, they did not charge him with any of the crimes^[a] that I was expecting. ¹⁹ Instead they had certain points of disagreement with him about their own religion and about a certain Jesus, who had died, but

whom Paul asserted to be alive. ²⁰ Since I was at a loss how to investigate these questions, I asked whether he wished to go to Jerusalem and be tried there on these charges. ^[5] ²¹ But when Paul had appealed to be kept in custody for the decision of his Imperial Majesty, I ordered him to be held until I could send him to the emperor.'

Reflection

I earlier said that Paul was quite a prickly person. I think I am right. He was though the right mixture of person to be an apostle who was commissioned to speak to Gentiles and Jews alike. Paul was born in Tarsus, growing up in the Greek world. He became a Pharisee. As a result, he would have been used to dealing with different cultures, and probably lived and breathed a number of languages. In this passage, two figures of authority discuss Paul's case. They are not Christians and do not understand the differences between Christianity and Judaism. Paul's teaching had upset many people but it centred entirely on Jesus. Paul was a Roman Citizen too and had appealed to the Emperor as was his right. He was going to bear witness on the biggest stage that Roman afforded, the court of Caesar.

Questions

- 1. What type of people or groups do you feel most comfortable with when talking about Jesus?
- 2. If you had been Paul, would you have appealed to the Emperor?
- 3. You have probably been praying for five people over the last few days, will you invite them to worship with you on Sunday?

Jesus or the Emperor
The choice was pretty stark
There was no room in Caesar's world,
For other lords and kings.
A choice between a servant,
And one who reigned supreme
Between one who demanded obedience
And one who asked people simply to follow
Jesus or the Emperor
The choice was pretty stark

For now it seemed, that crosses Were made and shaped for kings.

Saturday 27 May

Acts 28. 16-20, 30, 31

¹⁶ When we came into Rome, Paul was allowed to live by himself, with the soldier who was guarding him.

¹⁷ Three days later he called together the local leaders of the Jews. When they had assembled, he said to them, 'Brothers, though I had done nothing against our people or the customs of our ancestors, yet I was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans. ¹⁸ When they had examined me, the Romans^[a] wanted to release me, because there was no reason for the death penalty in my case. ¹⁹ But when the Jews objected, I was compelled to appeal to the emperor—even though I had no charge to bring against my nation. ²⁰ For this reason therefore I have asked to see you and speak with you, ^[b] since it is for the sake of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain.'

³⁰ He lived there for two whole years at his own expense^[a] and welcomed all who came to him, ³¹ proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.

Reflection

Paul was finally in Rome. In time, he would appear before Caesar, and would be put to death for his faith. Paul took the opportunity to speak to those he loved the most once again, the Jewish people. He wanted to assure them that he had not betrayed their faith, rather his belief in Jesus as Messiah was consonant with all that had gone before. At a time when Paul could be forgiven for not continuing to minister, he keeps going proclaiming that God reigns supreme and teaching about Jesus, who for the Apostle remained always the centre of everything.

Questions

- 1. What do you think Paul taught about Jesus whilst he was waiting to appear before Caesar?
- 2. Has your view of Paul changed at all as you have read these passages from Acts over the last few days?
- 3. What do you understand by the term 'kingdom of God'?

Humble and Vulnerable
Wise and strong
Teacher and Shepherd
Laughing and Crying
Mourning and Dancing
Let me introduce you to my Jesus

Storyteller and Wanderer Son, brother, and friend Miracle worker and friend of the friendless Angered by religious hypocrisy Gentle and stern My Jesus calls me his friend.

Sunday 28 May

Acts 2: 1-11

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ² And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³ Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

⁵ Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. ⁶ And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. ⁷ Amazed and astonished, they asked, 'Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? ⁸ And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? ⁹ Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and

residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹ Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power.' ¹² All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, 'What does this mean?' ¹³ But others sneered and said, 'They are filled with new wine.'

Reflection

As a boy growing up in Sheffield, Pentecost or Whitsun was the only Sunday in the year when the church went outside. Everything went outside: candles, robes, hymnbooks etc. It was our celebration of the birthday of the church. The day of Pentecost was the day when the disciples filled with the Spirit of God. They were filled with the Spirit so they could take the message of Jesus out into the world.

Questions

- 1. What ways do you take Jesus into your world?
- 2. What ways can our churches take Jesus into the world?
- 3. Can you think of three things that you have learnt over the last ten days?

Tongues of fire, rushing wind
Different languages paint a new world
Jew and Greek, Cyprian and Mesopotamian
Gathered in one space.
An invitation is given, a response requested
Will you be at the service,
The service of the King of Kings?

The Bible passages are from the New Revised Standard Version The reflections, questions and poems were written by Kevin Ellis



Yr Eglwys Yng Nghymru yn Mro Madryn The Church in Wales in Bro Madryn