

**Collect, Readings and Sermon**  
**Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> May 2026**  
**Seventh Sunday of Easter**

**Collect**

O God the King of glory,  
you have exalted your only Son Jesus Christ  
with great triumph to your kingdom in  
heaven: we beseech you, leave us not  
comfortless,  
but send your Holy Spirit to strengthen us  
and exalt us to the place where our Saviour Christ is gone before,  
who is alive and reigns with you  
and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

**Acts 1:6-14**

So when they had come together, they asked him, 'Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?' He replied, 'It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. 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.' When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. While he was going and they were gazing up towards heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. 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.'

Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey away. When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.

**1 Peter 4:12-14, 5:6-11**

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that is taking place among you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice in so far as you are sharing Christ's sufferings, so that you may also be glad and shout for joy when his glory is revealed. If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory, which is the Spirit of God, is resting on you.

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you. Discipline yourselves; keep alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour. Resist him, steadfast in your faith, for you know that your brothers and sisters throughout the world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering. And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.

### **John 17:1-11**

After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, 'Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed.

'I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.

### **Post Communion**

Eternal Giver of love and power,  
your Son Jesus Christ has sent us into all the world  
to preach the gospel of his kingdom:  
confirm us in this mission,  
and help us to live the good news we proclaim;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

## Sermon

On Thursday, all of the clergy from Llandaff Diocese met together at St. David's church in Neath. This was for a meeting which is called the College of Clergy. It is an opportunity for different groups and teams working across the Diocese to share important information that we all need to know. One of the subjects that was discussed was vocations. First we heard from the person who is responsible for supporting individuals as they explore whether they are called to ordained ministry, as a priest in the church.

I expect that over the years, across the churches of this Ministry Area, there have been individuals who have felt the call to ordained ministry, and of course a number of curates like Henry, who are still in training but have already been ordained, have been supported in these churches.

On the whole, we are quite familiar with talking about vocation, or calling, in the context of people who end up serving the church as ministers. The part of the presentation that I found especially interesting, though, was when we heard about progress with lay vocations. How is it that lay people – those people who are not priests – are called by God to serve?

One of the reasons that I found this conversation so interesting was because on Thursday evening, after the College of Clergy meeting, I had a meeting with the Lay Pastoral Visitors who serve this Ministry Area. This is a relatively small group of people who have received training and spend some of their time visiting those who are unable to attend church. Sometimes they will take home communion, and on other occasions they will simply spend time in conversation with people at home, in hospital or in care homes.

It always fills my heart with joy when I get glimpses of people fulfilling a calling from God. And it is so very important that we recognise that each one of us is called by God. When we use words like vocation and calling, we need to remember that God works in each one of our lives, and there are countless ways in which we can be serving God. The idea of vocation should never be limited to those who serve as ministers. When I met with the Lay Pastoral Visitors, I had a real sense of God calling them into that role. There are others who volunteer

across the Ministry Area who likewise have a strong sense of God calling them to serve in that way.

So, if God is calling each one of us, perhaps the most important question is about how we discern what God is calling us to do – or to be. And there is something about this morning's readings that help us in this, I think.

The reading from the Acts of the Apostles speaks of Jesus's ascension into Heaven, that moment when the resurrected Jesus finally leaves the earth. The reading is so rich, both in its imagery, and in its ideas. Even as he leaves the earth, Jesus reminds the disciples that there are some things that are not for them to know. It is so understandable that, as Jesus is about to leave them, they want to have as much clarity as possible about the path that lies ahead. But his response is: 'It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority.' Perhaps the first and most important thing to remember as we try to work out how God is calling us is that we won't know everything. That's why we use the word discernment. There is something slightly tentative about it. You might remember that in last week's reading from Acts Paul talk about "groping" for understanding. Sometimes it can feel like this is what we are engaged in. And that's important to acknowledge, because none of us fully know God.

The reading continues, though, with a little more reassurance. We may not know everything, but Jesus assures his disciples: '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.' Two important things to notice here. First, the gift of the Holy Spirit, which we will celebrate next Sunday on the feast of Pentecost. This is a way in which we can be connected with God. The Spirit is at work in each one of us and in the world, and we seek to connect with that Spirit in order to discern God's call on each one of us. And the second thing is that the disciples are called to be witnesses. Witnesses to all that Jesus stood for.

And we are called to be the same. As we try to understand God's call on each of our lives, both as individuals and as a church, we should be asking whether what we are hearing

enables us to be witnesses to the gospel; witnesses to all that Jesus's life was about in terms of love and service.

One of my favourite images from the Acts reading is of the disciples staring up into heaven, and the "men in white robes" saying: '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.' In this image of the disciples desperately seeking Jesus, I am reminded that for all of us, trying to understand what God is calling us to do is not easy. Those who have gone before us have wanted clearer guidance. They have wanted Jesus back in person to tell them what to do.

What is so wonderfully reassuring is what the disciples then decide to do. They return to the Upper Room, a place that they had spent time with Jesus and received bread and wine. We might say that they went to church. And they spent time praying together with those who had known Jesus best. So if we are ever wondering how we might find the way, perhaps we could do worse than spending some time in prayer alongside others who are seeking to find the way. Others who have spent time reading the scriptures.

In the Gospel reading, Jesus tries to help the disciples to understand their intimate connection with God. The time that they spent getting to know Jesus connected them with God the father. And so it is for us, too. We spend time in prayer, and we spend time with others who also pray and read their Bibles because that is what helps us to remain connected with God.

How do we know if we have found the right path? Well, I do think it's important to recognise that we may never really know that with certainty. In part that is because we are human and therefore capable of making mistakes. In part it is because we will only ever see a small part of the truth that is to be found in God. And in part it is because God's call is not static. What we are called to in one season of our lives may look quite different in another. We need to keep on connecting with God as we seek to follow over the years.

I do want to suggest, though, that a lack of certainty is not a bad thing. I am a little cautious when someone sounds too certain about what God has called them to do because we always need to be capable of listening, too. Nevertheless, a lack of certainty doesn't mean a lack of conviction. Which is where the epistle can also be helpful. If we think that the sign we have chosen the wrong path is that things are a bit tough, Peter reminds us that in fact the path of discipleship can be very hard indeed. Which is part of why it is so important to have fellow travellers along the way; supporting one another as we seek to find the way forward; praying together; and witnessing to the good news of God's love. The final words of Jesus's prayer in the gospel reading are so important: "Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one." We can be assured of God's love and protection as together we explore our vocation.

Amen