

Liturgy

Seventh Sunday of Easter
Year A
Ascension of the Lord

GATHERING

The LORD reigns!

He is clothed with majesty,
and girded with strength.

His throne is established from of old;

He is from everlasting.

O clap your hands, all peoples;

Shout to God with loud songs of joy.

**For the LORD Most High is awesome,
a great King over all the earth.**

He sits on His holy throne.

God has gone up with a shout,

the LORD with the sound of a trumpet.

Sing praises to God; sing His praises!

We sing praises to our King! We will shout His praises!

For majestic on high is the LORD!

– from Psalms 47 and 93

Rejoice the Lord Is King

Rejoice the Lord is King;

Your Lord and King adore!

Rejoice, give thanks and sing,

And triumph evermore.

Lift up your heart; lift up your voice!

Give thanks and sing: Rejoice, rejoice!

The Lord is King!

Jesus, the Savior reigns,

The God of truth and love.

When He had purged our stains,

He took His seat above.

Lift up your heart; lift up your voice!

Give thanks and sing: Rejoice, rejoice!

The Lord is King!

His kingdom cannot fail;

He rules o'er earth and heav'n.

The keys of death and hell

Are to our Jesus giv'n.

Lift up your heart; lift up your voice!

Give thanks and sing: Rejoice, rejoice!

The Lord is King! The Lord is King!

The Lord is King!

Setting and chorus: Ellen Koehler Copyright ©2010 Ellen Koehler. All Rights Reserved.

Original text: Charles Wesley, 1744. Original hymn tune: DARWALL'S 148th, John Darwall, 1770.

*LECTIONARY for the seventh Sunday
of Easter, Year A:*

Acts 1:1-11

Psalm 47 or 93

Ephesians 1:15-23

Luke 24:44-53

This seventh Sunday of Eastertide brings us very near to the end of the fifty-day liturgical period that begins with Resurrection Sunday and culminates next week, on the Day of Pentecost. In this season, as we ponder the ongoing meaning and significance of Christ's sacrifice and resurrection for the redemption of all of God's creation, a focus on His Ascension is eminently meaningful. For we remember that the meeting of the risen Christ on the mountaintop, where He had instructed His disciples to wait for Him, was an encounter that was to direct not only the rest of their lives but the entire course of history.

On the Sunday following the fortieth day after Easter, Christians traditionally commemorate the Ascension of the Lord—the moment when Christ, having completed His saving work on earth, ascended in bodily form into heaven, where He now sits at the right hand of the Father. There, in His three-fold office of Prophet, Priest, and King, He rules as Christus Victor, speaks to us through the Holy Spirit, and continues to make intercession for us all. The Ascension is a moment filled with meaning and central to our faith, for it manifests Christ's sovereignty and power, and demonstrates, in arresting visual display, that Jesus—at once fully God and fully human—is present now with the Father. And it is also filled with hope and assurance. Listen to the words of the angelic witnesses in Acts 1:10-11: "And while [the disciples] looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.'" (NKJV)

INVOCATION

Prayers of adoration, praise, and thanksgiving for God's presence

A Hymn of Glory Let us Sing

A hymn of glory let us sing;
New songs throughout the world shall ring.
Christ, by a road before untrod
Ascendeth to the throne of God.

O risen Christ, ascended Lord,
All praise to Thee let earth accord.
Who art, while endless ages run,
With Father and with Spirit One.

O grant us thitherward to tend,
And with unwearied hearts ascend,
Unto Thy kingdom's throne, where Thou
As is our faith, art seated now.

Words: The Venerable Bede (673-735), *Hymnum canamus Domino*;
translated from Latin to English by Benjamin Webb, 1854.
Hymn tune: JAM LUCIS ORTO SIDERE, 15th cent.
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PROFESSION OF FAITH

Leader: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing
in the heavenly places in Christ:

He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world,
that we would be holy and blameless before Him;
*In love, He predestined us to adoption as His children,
in accordance with His pleasure and His will;*

In Him we have redemption through His blood,
the forgiveness of our sins, according to His grace;
*He has made known to us the mystery of His will,
to bring all things in heaven and on earth into unity in Christ;*

Having believed in Him, we were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,
the guarantee of our inheritance in Him, to the praise of His glory.

*In the exceeding greatness of His power, He raised Christ from the dead
and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,
far above all principality and power and might and dominion,
and above every name that is named,
not only in this age but also in the age to come.*

**He has put all things in subjection under His feet,
and gave Him as head over all things to the church,
which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.**

— from Ephesians 1:3-23

A Hymn of Glory Let us Sing

Be Thou our Joy and strong Defense,
Who art our future Recompense.
So shall the light that springs from Thee
Be ours through all eternity.

Words: The Venerable Bede (673-735), *Hymnum canamus Domino*;
translated from Latin to English by Benjamin Webb, 1854.
Hymn tune: JAM LUCIS ORTO SIDERE, 15th cent.
Setting: Ellen Koehler. Copyright ©2013 Ellen Koehler. All Rights Reserved

Music for Rejoice, the Lord Is King is available in the music catalog as a lead sheet, arranged for voice and piano, and as a choral arrangement that begins for two voices and expands to four parts. This setting is joyful, with a 6/8 meter. The melody is loosely based on the traditional hymn tune. Verse two of Rejoice, the Lord Is King! is particularly appropriate for Ascension Sunday.

Here's a link:

<https://clerestorynotes.com/live/sheetmusic/rejoice-lord-king>

I retained the modal tune for the ancient Ascension hymn, A Hymn of Glory Let Us Sing. Each verse is harmonized differently, which builds the interest and anticipation of the music and words together. The song is both a hymn of praise and a prayer of longing. Three verses are used here, at Invocation (verses 1, 4, and 2, in that order), and verse 3 below, following the Profession of Faith. The third verse— in this ordering, “O grant us thitherward to tend ...” — is a natural flow into a Profession of Faith, especially one that focuses on Christ's victory and His place, now, in the heavenly places. Music for A Hymn of Glory Let us Sing is available by request; write to us at clerestorynotes@gmail.com.

This Profession of Faith is taken from the Epistle passage of the lectionary. It is written for antiphonal congregational reading. The Leader (pastor, worship leader or other designated reader) reads the first line. The lines in regular and italicized fonts may be designated so that parts of the congregation are speaking to each other. Typical designations are for opposite sides of the room, or men and women.

This verse of the ancient hymn may be sung as a choral response (choir or worship team) to the Profession of Faith, or by the entire congregation.

PRAYERS OF CONFESSION

God demonstrated His own love for us in this:

While we were yet sinners,
Christ died for us.

*Let us therefore come boldly before the throne of grace,
that we may receive mercy
and find grace to help in time of need.*

– Romans 5:8, Hebrews 4:16

Almighty God,

**You have raised Jesus from death to life,
and have seated Him at Your right hand in the heavenly places
that He might fill all things.**

**Yet, we confess that we have not always bowed before Him,
and have not always acknowledged His rule.**

**We have not always followed His leading,
and have failed to glorify Him in our lives.**

[Silence]

Forgive us, we pray.

**In Your grace, raise us from sin
that we may walk faithfully in Your ways
and delight in Your will,
to the glory of Your Name.
Amen.**

Agnus Dei (Canticle 20)

Lord Jesus Christ, Lamb of God,
You take away the sin of the world: Have mercy on us.
Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God,
You are seated at the right hand of the Father: Receive our prayer.

For You alone are Lord Most High,
The Holy One, our heav'nly King.
We worship You, we give You thanks,
We praise You for Your glory.

You alone are Lord Most High,
The Holy One, our heav'nly King.
We worship You, we give You thanks,
We praise You for Your glory.
Almighty God and Father. Amen.

Setting: Ellen Koehler. Copyright ©2010 Ellen Koehler. All Rights Reserved.
Based on the ancient hymn text, Gloria in excelsis ("*Glory to God in the highest*")

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

This is the good news of our pardon in His grace:

God, who is rich in mercy,
because of His great love for us,
even when we were dead in our sins and transgressions,
made us alive together with Christ –

By grace we have been saved –

*And He raised us up with Him,
and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,
so that in the ages to come He might show
the exceeding riches of His grace
in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*

Thanks be to God!

– Ephesians 2:4-7

*Based on the ancient hymn text,
Gloria in excelsis, this setting of
Agnus Dei addresses the ascended
Lamb of God, who alone is Lord Most
High and worthy of worship.*

*Agnus Dei (Canticle 20) is available
in the music catalog as a lead sheet
and scored for voice and piano or
keyboard (on request).*

Here's a link:

<https://clerestorynotes.com/live/sheetmusic/agnus-dei-canticle-20>

*In this passage from Ephesians 2 the
focus is on Christ's position now, in
the heavenly places, and is a wonder-
ful assurance text in its promise and
declaration that we are even now
seated there, too, with Christ.*

TIME OF OFFERING

Words and prayers of thanksgiving and praise

The King In All His Beauty

O, lift your eyes to Heaven, see
The Holy One eternal.
Behold the Lord of Majesty
Exalted in His temple.
As symphonies of angels' praise
Now strain to sound His glory,
Come worship, fall before His grace:
The King in all His beauty.

Chorus

How worthy, how worthy;
How worthy: the King in all His beauty.

Now see the King who wears a crown,
One made of shame and splinters,
The sacrifice for ruined man,
The substitute for sinners.
As Earth is stained with royal blood
And quakes with love and fury,
He breathes His last and bows His head:
The King in all His beauty.

Now see the Savior lifted up:
The Lamb who reigns in splendor,
The hope of every tribe and tongue,
His kingdom is forever.
Bring praise and honor to His courts,
Bring wisdom, power, blessing;
For endless ages we'll adore
The King in all His beauty.

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Love Your Enemies Publishing, Messenger Hymns. Matthew Boswell, Matthew Papa.

THE WORD

Acts 1:1-11

Ephesians 1:15-23

Luke 24:44-53

Matthew 28:16-20

THE TABLE

Remembering the Body of Christ

Passing of the Peace

The Lord be with you! **And also with you!**
Lift up your hearts. **We lift them up to the Lord.**
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give Him thanks and praise.

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again!

We include Matthew's narrative of the Ascension here as a comparative reference.

The Lord's Prayer (spoken)

**Our Father, Who art in heaven,
Hallowed be Thy name.
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
And forgive us our debts
As we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the kingdom,
And the power, and the glory,
Forever. Amen**

Before the Throne of God Above

Before the Throne of God above
I have a strong and perfect plea,
A great High Priest whose Name is Love,
Who ever lives and pleads for me.
My name is graven on His hands;
My name is written on His heart.
I know that while in Heav'n He stands,
No tongue can bid me thence depart;
No tongue can bid me thence depart.

When Satan tempts me to despair,
And tells me of the guilt within,
Upward I look and see Him there
Who made an end to all my sin.
Because the sinless Savior died
My sinful soul is counted free;
For God the just is satisfied
To look on Him and pardon me,
To look on Him and pardon me.

Before Him there, the risen Lamb,
My perfect spotless righteousness,
The great unchangeable I Am,
The King of glory and of grace:
One with Himself I cannot die;
My soul is purchased by His Blood.
My life is hid with Christ on high,
With Christ my Savior and my God
With Christ my Savior and my God.

Words by Charitie Lees Bancroft (1863). Music: Vikki Cook. ©1997 Sovereign Grace Worship.
CCLI Song #2306412. This setting: Ellen Koehler ©2014.

King of Wisdom and Light

Holy, holy, holy, God of power and might:
Heaven is filled with Your glory, King of wisdom and light.

We worship You, We praise You,
God Most High;
We worship You, We praise You,
King and Lord, Jesus Christ.

CCLI Song #2514352 ©1998 International Liturgy Publications; Jim Cowan.

This song, so fitting for Table, speaks of Christ's ongoing work as Prophet and Intercessor.

Other/additional song suggestions:
- Alleluia! Sing to Jesus (*Hymn tune: HYFRYDOL, Rowland Prichard, 1830. William Dix composed the lyrics for this beloved classic as a communion hymn for Ascension Sunday in 1866*)
- Revelation Song (CCLI Song #4447960; ©2004 Gateway Create Publishing. Jennie Lee Riddle)
- Be Unto Your Name (CCLI Song #2177476; ©1998 Integrity's Hosanna! Music; Gary Sadler and Lynn DeShazo)

SENDING FORTH
The Life of the Body

Rejoice the Lord Is King (verse 4)

Rejoice in glorious hope! Our Lord, the Judge, shall come
And take His servants up to their eternal home.
Lift up your heart; lift up your voice!
Give thanks and sing: Rejoice, rejoice! The Lord is King!
The Lord is King! The Lord is King!

Setting and chorus: Ellen Koehler Copyright ©2010 Ellen Koehler. All Rights Reserved.
Original text: Charles Wesley, 1744. Original hymn tune: DARWALL'S 148th, John Darwall, 1770

Benediction:

Jesus Christ, this man who is God,
participated in our humanity to die for us and to be resurrected for us,
and He now has ascended to the very throne of God
to continually represent us to the Father.

**Therefore He is able to save completely
those who come to God through Him,
because He always lives to intercede for them.**

We have a High Priest, who sat down at the right hand
of the throne of the Majesty in heaven,

**And who serves in the sanctuary,
the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by man.**

He who did everything that ever needed to be done to save us now continually
stands before the Father interceding for us!

Thanks be to God: Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Adapted from Hebrews 7 and 8, and Robert Webber,
*Ancient-Future Time: Forming Spirituality through the
Christian Year* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004)

A thought about worship – “The early church fathers saw the ascension of the Lord as the lifting up of the human nature of Jesus to the throne of God. The eternal Word was united to a perfect human nature in Jesus. Because Jesus participated in our human nature (without sin) and because through faith we are united with Jesus, our human but redeemed nature, united with Jesus, is lifted to the very throne of God. Leo the Great, an early church father, puts this profound truth this way: ‘For on this day not only have we been confirmed in our possession of paradise, but we have entered heaven in the person of Christ; through his ineffable grace we have regained far more than we had lost through the devil’s hatred.’” (Robert E. Webber, *Ancient-Future Time: Forming Spirituality through the Christian Year* [Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004], 159.)

Lectionary for next week: Acts 2:1-21; Numbers 11:24-30; Psalm 104:24-34, 35b;
1 Corinthians 12:3b-13; John 7:37-39; John 20:19-23.

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*The fourth verse of the Gathering
hymn bookends the service with the
declaration of Christ’s ongoing reign
in power and glory, and the confident
hope of eternity with Him.*