



BREAKING OPEN

Scripture Study



The Ascended Christ and the Politics of Divine Care

SEVENTH SUNDAY
OF EASTER
May 17th 2026

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A weekly reflection based on the teachings at St Peter's by the Lake, Paynesville, together with a study guide based on the readings, some liturgical resources RCL Lectionary, and a weekly devotion

Revised Common Lectionary Related

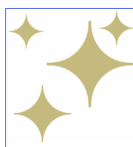
The Fifth Sunday of Easter

Acts 1.6-14

Psalm 68.1-10, 32-35

1 Peter 4.12-14; 5.6-11

John 17.1-11



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Book of Common Prayer (1662) Collects

O God the King of Glory, who hast
exalted thine only Son Jesus Christ
with great triumph unto thy
kingdom in heaven:

We beseech thee, leave us not comfortless;
but send to us thine Holy Ghost to
comfort us,

and exalt us unto the same place whither
our Saviour Christ is gone before;

who liveth and reigneth with thee and the
Holy Ghost,

one God, world without end.

INTRODUCTION

Greetings from the land of Synod and the other important networking that is necessary to prepare for the coming of the Holy Spirit!

As you enter this week, let your main purpose be to show Christlike care in practical ways. Take a specific action: connect to someone who feels alone, offer help to a neighbour, or listen with patience and kindness. Make your care a visible sign of His presence: practical, attentive, full of love.

Let the Ascension of Christ propel us into action. We are called as a Church to remain in the world with courage and compassion, embodying Christ's love and care for the vulnerable. Let us wait with purpose, serve with faithfulness, and boldly demonstrate Christlike care to all we encounter.

- * Ascension's Meaning: Not an escape, but a call to remain and be witnesses to the ends of the earth.
- * Salvation's Nature: Not a single moment or decision, but a calling to step deeper into the world with Christ's heart and attention.
- * God's Care: Not domination or indifference, but a sovereignty that leans towards the vulnerable, exemplified by being a father to orphans and protector of widows.
- * Christ's Ascension and Reign: Christ's ascension is not about distance but about reigning through presence in acts of care, sustenance, and restoration.
- * The Church's Call to Humility and Care: The Church is called to humility, enduring challenges with faith, and caring for others as Christ does.
- * Waiting as Purposeful Attentiveness: Waiting is not passive but a posture of the heart, involving prayer, service, and support, recognising the Spirit's faithful, though not always dramatic, work.
- * Christ's Presence: The Ascended Christ remains with us, guiding and supporting us through trust and grace.
- * Our call to action is clear: Instead of escaping the world, we are summoned to love it as Christ does. We are to show care and create connections to others in practical, intentional ways.
- This week, step forward with confidence. Find ways to embody Christ's love—connect with someone isolated, serve a neighbour, or extend kindness. May your care, rooted in Christ, shine as a living witness of His presence.

As we walk lightly on sacred ground,
teach us Lord to make known your kingdom,
and let this reflect in all that we do and say.

A pastoral epistle for a waiting Church

Sometimes faith weighs heavily. The sky presses down. The ground beneath us thins. If you know this weight, you are not alone. These trials shape the journey. Even here, God meets us with gentle care.

Voices ascend with haste.
Timelines are drawn.
Scriptures are pressed into service as maps of escape.

At such moments, it can feel as though the faithful life is being reduced to a single question:

“Are you ready to leave?”

But in these days between Ascension and Pentecost, Scripture asks another question.

“Are you ready to remain?”

In the opening of Acts of the Apostles, the disciples are still looking upward.

“Lord, is this the time?”

It is not an unreasonable question.
They have seen death undone.
According to Christian belief, after witnessing the resurrected Jesus and his ascension to Heaven, his followers would have expected a new sense of direction and contentment.

They do not receive a schedule. They are given a commission.
Not escape, but a frontier.
“You will be my witnesses... to the ends of the earth.”

The Ascension is not a way out.
It is a faith placed in us.

Here, the Church must proceed with caution.

Sometimes, salvation is spoken of as a single moment.
a single decision,
a private certainty,
a guarantee of departure.

But Christ's life does not end in a moment.
It opens into a calling.

To confess Jesus as Lord is not to leave the world behind,
but to step more deeply into it.
with His heart,
His hands,
His attention.

Psalm 68 paints a vision of God enthroned. Not shallow triumph, but something deeper.

Here is a God who:

- * rides upon the heavens,
- * scatters what destroys,
- * receives the praise of nations,

and yet, at the same time,

“Father of orphans and protector of widows...
God gives the forsaken a home.”

This is what it means for God to care.

Not domination.
Not escape nor indifference as certainty.
Not indifference masquerading as certainty.

But sovereignty that leans to the vulnerable. With the Ascended Christ,
we must question our imagination.

Christ does not ascend in order to be distant.
He ascends in order to reign.
His reign is not a spectacle, but attention.

Where the lonely are gathered — He is present.
Where the poor are sustained — His kingdom is visible.
Where dignity is restored — His authority is at work.

This is not a metaphor.

It is mission.

In the First Epistle of Peter, the Church is reminded that this life will not be easy.

There will be strain.
There will be misunderstanding.

At times, faith feels less like triumph and more like endurance.

But the answer is not withdrawal.

It is humility:

“Humble yourselves... so that he may exalt you in due time.
Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you.”

Notice that word: cares.

The same God who reigns cares.

And the Church that bears His name is called to do likewise.

Here, waiting regains meaning. Faithful waiting is not passive. It is a posture of the heart. In these days between, we turn to practices that form us: gathering in prayer, serving neighbours, sustaining each other in friendship and encouragement. In these acts, waiting gains purpose.

The disciples in Acts do not scatter into speculation.
They gather in prayer.

Waiting is not absence.

It is attentiveness.

It is the quiet, steady choice to stay with the work given to us.

It is recognising that the Spirit's work is rarely dramatic, but always faithful.

Waiting is where we are held.

It is where we learn to hold others.

In every generation, the Church resists hope's drift toward escape.

Readiness means embodying Jesus' kingdom by caring for the needy and sharing the good news, not using it as a reason to retreat from love and service.

Until the end of the age.

To the ends of the earth.

To love the Lord is not to secure escape.

It is to live in the present reality.

* to gather when others are scattered,

* to serve when others withdraw,

* to remain when others look only to the sky.

The Ascended Christ has not left us behind.

He has sent us forward in trust.

And in that trust, we are not left alone.

We are held.

Held in prayer, as in the Gospel of John 17:

“Holy Father, protect them...
that they may be one, as we are one.”

Held in care.

Held in purpose.

Held within the quiet, steady work of grace.

So let us not rush to escape the world.

Let us learn, instead, to love it.
as Christ does from the throne.

Not distantly.

Not abstractly.

But with closeness.

With faith.

And with a care that reflects His own.

Discussion Questions

1. Are we looking up to escape, or outward to serve?

“The Ascension is not an evacuation plan. It is an entrustment.”

Deepening:

Rowan Williams often suggests that the risen life is not about leaving the world behind, but about seeing it truthfully in God. Where might our faith subtly drift toward escape rather than engagement?

Name one place — local, relational, or communal — where you are being called not to withdraw, but to remain present in love.

2. What kind of 'Lord' do we actually confess?

"The enthroned God gathers the lonely and sustains the poor."

Deepening:

The language of "Lord and Saviour" can become abstract or transactional. But the Christ revealed in Psalms 68 reigns through care, not control.

- Henri Nouwen reminds us that the authority of Christ is revealed in vulnerability and compassion. Does our image of Jesus lead us toward service, or toward certainty without responsibility?
- Action:
Where have you seen Christ's authority expressed not in power, but in quiet, sustaining care this week?

3. Is our 'salvation' a moment we remember, or a life we are living?

"To confess Jesus as Lord is not to step out of the world, but to step more deeply into it."

Deepening:

There is a real pastoral danger in reducing salvation to a single past event. Richard Rohr speaks of transformation as an ongoing participation in divine life, not a one-time transaction.

- How does our understanding of salvation shape the way we live now — especially in difficult or ordinary moments?
- Action:
Identify one concrete way your daily life (not just your memory of faith) reflects your belonging to Christ.

4. What does it mean to wait faithfully?

"Waiting is not absence. It is attentiveness."

Deepening:

In Acts of the Apostles 1, the disciples wait together in prayer. This is not passive delay, but active trust.

- Rowan Williams writes that true waiting is a refusal to force meaning or control outcomes. It is the discipline of staying present when clarity has not yet arrived.
- Action:
Where in your life are you being asked to wait — not by withdrawing, but by remaining attentive, prayerful, and open?

This all-week devotional will take a deeper dive into this weekend's sermon.

Day 1 — Entrusted, Not Escaping Acts of the Apostles 1:6–11



The disciples are still looking upward, searching for resolution. But Jesus redirects them. The question is not when this will end. But where will you be sent?

Ascension is not a departure into absence. It is the moment of entrusting. The Church is not waiting to leave — it is being sent to remain.

- Where in my life am I waiting for escape instead of embracing entrustment?
- What might it mean, practically, to be a "witness" in my current circumstances?
- Am I more focused on understanding God's timeline or participating in God's mission?
- Lord, turn my gaze from speculation to faithful presence.
- Give me the courage to live as one entrusted, not withdrawn.

Day 2 — The God Who Reigns by Caring Psalms 68:4–6

God is enthroned — riding upon the heavens — yet His reign is revealed in care for the vulnerable: the orphan, the widow, the lonely.

Divine authority is not distant or detached. It bends toward those most easily overlooked. This is the shape of God's kingdom.

- How does my image of God shape the way I treat others, especially the vulnerable?
- Where do I see God's care quietly at work in the world around me?
- In what ways might I be tempted to admire God's power without imitating His compassion?

- Lord, reshape my understanding of power through your compassion.
- Open my eyes to those whom you are already gathering and sustaining.

Day 3 — Salvation as a Life, Not a Moment First Epistle of Peter 5:6–7

Faith is not secured in a single past event. It unfolds as a life lived in humility, trust, and ongoing surrender.

To “cast our anxieties on God” is not passive resignation. It is active trust that frees us to love and serve, even when life feels uncertain.

- Have I reduced my faith to something I once decided, rather than something I am continually living?
- What anxieties am I holding onto instead of entrusting to God?
- How might my daily actions reflect a deeper participation in Christ’s life?
- Lord, draw me into a living, growing faith, not a static memory.
- Teach me to trust you enough to love and serve freely.

Day 4 — Waiting That Remains Present Acts of the Apostles 1:12–14

The disciples wait — but not idly. They gather, pray, and remain together. Waiting becomes a space of formation.

Waiting is not an absence from responsibility. It is attentiveness to God’s timing while staying faithful to God’s work.

- Where am I being called to wait, and how am I responding to that waiting?
- Do I see waiting as delay, or as a place where God is shaping me?
- How can I remain attentive and engaged while clarity has not yet arrived?
- Lord, form me in the waiting, not just in the doing.
- Help me to remain present, faithful, and open to your Spirit.

Day 5 — Held in Prayer, Sent in Love Gospel of John 17:9–11

Jesus prays for His disciples. Before they act, before they fully understand, they are already held in divine care.

The mission of the Church flows from this: we are held, so that we may hold others; loved, so that we may love.

- What does it mean for me to be held by God, even when I do not feel it?
- Who in my life needs to experience that same sense of being held and not forgotten?
- How might I become a visible sign of God’s care in my daily relationships?
- Lord, remind me that I am held in your care and in your prayers.
- Send me to embody your love in ways that gather, sustain, and restore.

Closing Note

This week is not about finding answers quickly.

*It is about learning to remain —
to live as those entrusted,
to care as those who have been cared for,
and to trust that even in waiting,
we are already held within the life of God.*

End notes and further reading

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Harrington, Daniel J Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of Matthew
Moloney, Francis J, SBD, Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of John
Johnson, Luke Timothy: Sacra Pagina: The Gospel on Luke
Collins, Raymond F., Sacra Pagina: First Corinthians
Andrew McGowan substack.com/@abmcg
N.T. Wright, Twelve months of Sundays Year A
Andrew Pratt, pastor and hymn writer (theworshipcloud.com)

Let your faith and relationships
be shaped by love and patience
for God's love is
revealed in lives, not letters.



Brabarlung Totem

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