

A Liturgy for Ascension Day

Opening Sentences

Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you.
Let not your heart be troubled, and do not be afraid."
—John 14:27

The Sursum Corda (Latin for "lifted hearts")

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

Psalm

O clap your hands together, all you peoples;
O cry aloud unto God with shouts of joy.
For the LORD Most High is to be feared;
he is the great King over all the earth.
God has gone up with a shout of triumph,
the LORD with the sound of the trumpet.
O sing praises, sing praises unto our God;
O sing praises, sing praises unto our King.
For God is the King of all the earth;
think upon his mighty acts and praise him with a song.

—Psalm 47:1-2, 5-7 New Coverdale

Poem

Easter Wings

Lord, who created man in wealth and store,
Though foolishly he lost the same,
Decaying more and more,
Till he became
Most poor:
With thee
Oh let me rise
As larks, harmoniously,
And sing this day thy victories:
Then shall the fall further the flight in me.

My tender age in sorrow did begin:
And still with sicknesses and shame
Thou didst so punish sin,
That I became
Most thin.
With thee
Let me combine
And feel this day thy victory:
For, if I imp my wing on thine
Affliction shall advance the flight in me.

—George Herbert

The Readings

May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory,
give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him,
having the eyes of your hearts enlightened,
that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you,
what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,
and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe,
according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ,
when he raised him from the dead
and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places.

—Ephesians 1:17-20, ESV

Jesus said to his disciples, “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 worshiped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and they were continually in the temple blessing God.

—Luke 24:44-53, ESV

Reflection

The car swung to the right into the rutted lane and the cool tang of the sea came to meet them. They were silent while Nadine watched for what to returning Eliots was the first sight of home, the two cornfields that marked the place where the lane swung east toward Little Village; the cultivated one upon the landward side of the lane, and the wild one that had sprung up year by year ever since a

grain ship had been wrecked there in the marsh, which bore thereafter a strange stunted harvest that could not be reaped, but only revered for the mystery of its renewal...

It was that moment of approaching sunset when the flaming patches of gorse, the wild marsh flowers, the sea grasses, the crimson peaty earth, and the creeks and gullies of blue water were yielding to the last demands of the sun all that they possessed of glory. The line of the distant sea was jade green, the sky turquoise. The old Castle, build upon a tongue of land jutting out into the Estuary to the east, had parted with its usual somberness and gathered an amber warmth into its old stones. Beyond the Estuary the white cliffs of the Island had lost the hard chalky look that had been theirs when the sun was high, and seemed fashioned all of pearl.

And now they were in Little Village, with the glinting Harbor to the right of them, the cottages among their fuchsias and tamarisks to the left, and before them the old oak wood that protected Damerosehay, with the broken gate leading into it...

The moss grew thickly on the drive; and on the lichened boughs of the old gnarled oak trees the new coral-tipped young leaves were burning like candles. It was strange, thought Nadine, that creatures so gloriously fresh and young as those bright leaves could draw their life from anything so old and twisted as those oak trees. It gave one hope. About the twisted roots of the trees a few late narcissuses held up their white stars most proudly in the grass, and to the left of the drive the beautiful wrought-iron gateway that pierced the high red-brick garden wall gave her a glimpse of heavenly color: flame-colored tulips, forget-me-nots, deep red wallflowers, and golden broom. The scent of the flowers came over the wall in great gusts of perfume, and somewhere in the unseen garden a blackbird was singing in the ilex tree.

—Elizabeth Goudge, *Pilgrim's Inn*

Closing Prayer

Almighty God, whose only-begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ ascended into heaven: May our hearts and minds also there ascend, and with him continually dwell; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

—Book of Common Prayer

Benediction

On this day of Ascension and in the days to come, may you know the presence of our Risen and Ascended Lord with you and within you. May you be upheld by the power of His Spirit and, like a lark, ascend in joy to the heavenly places where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. May you be strengthened to live awake and attentive to the beauty of His goodness in the land of the living. **Amen.**

Resources:

“Easter Wings” by George Herbert is available online. It can also be found in [George Herbert: 100 Poems](#).
[Pilgrim's Inn](#) by Elizabeth Goudge
[The Book of Common Prayer](#)

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