

## Sunday after Ascension 2026

May I speak with the love and grace of the living God. Amen.

**And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you.**

Jesus leaves his disciples. He has been in this world with us, has seen the beauty and joy of human experience, but also the very worst of it, the hatred, the power games, fear, the greed and selfishness that led to his humiliation, abandonment, torture and death. Jesus knows what it means to be human, to live in this world at the best and worst of times. And as he leaves, returning to God the Father, out of our sight, he is aware of all that. He knows that the disciples, although overjoyed about his resurrection are nonetheless shaken and fearful after the scary and bloody experience of Jesus' death on a cross. And having gone through all that himself, he knows how scary it must be for them to be left alone again in this world.

I think we too can understand how scary it can be to be in this world. There is much reason for anxiety, uncertainty and fear in the world we live in right now. Greed, hatred and power games we can easily see in the wars wage in many places across the world at the moment, particularly Iran and Ukraine. The greed that leads to an ever-expanding gap between the superrich, and those who do not have enough to pay rent or buy food. The pressures, fears and anxieties that come with another sharp increase of daily costs. Businesses struggling to keep afloat and more people fearing for their jobs or struggling to find work. Adding to that our personal worries about loved ones, about health and all the small and great things we care about. And as yesterday's different marches here in London showed, there are a lot of people in this

country who feel forgotten and unheard. So, like the disciples at the time of Jesus' ascension, we need all the support available to navigate this world. Jesus' leaving seems a bit counterproductive in the midst of all that, then and now.

And Jesus knows all that, then and now. There is no way he simply abandons the disciples or us. Jesus prayed, for the Holy Spirit to come and equip the disciples, to comfort them, strengthen them and help them to go on in sharing the good news of God's Kingdom as he leaves them behind in this world. He was also praying for us, who live in this world and choose to follow him 2000 years later.

Jesus knew, then and now, we need help to figure out what it means to follow him in the often less than ideal circumstances we find in this world. We need comfort and strength to keep going. We need wisdom, creativity and courage as we try to speak and act in ways that are shaped by God's love and care for each and every human being and all of creation. We need the Holy Spirit to empower us to live courageously in the face of fear. We need the Holy Spirit to love and care for others as Jesus calls us to do, even when it's hard. We need the Holy Spirit to comfort us so we can get back up again when the worries, the pressures and the struggles of this world have us despairing.

Jesus knew we need the Holy Spirit and he prayed for the disciples then and for us now, that we might be filled with the Holy Spirit. And he instructed the disciples to wait and pray, until their helper, the Holy Spirit would arrive. Next Sunday at Pentecost we will celebrate the first time the disciples received the Holy Spirit, ten days after Jesus returned to the Father. For ten days they prayed and waited.

Like the disciples then, we need the Holy Spirit to help us, as we try and follow Jesus in this world. And so the time between Ascension and Pentecost remains a particular invitation to us to wait and pray. Some of you have maybe already made space for that with the 24-hour prayer that was happening here Friday to Saturday, but I would invite us all to think how we can make a little space this coming week to wait and pray. We are in great need for the Holy Spirit to help us, equip us and comfort us as try and figure out what it means to follow Jesus in this world.

**And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world**

Come Holy Spirit, come.

Amen.