

**Sermon Easter 7 (The Sunday after Ascension Day) 2016**

Following the seasons and lectionary of the Anglican Church we often seem to be in a period of waiting. In Advent we wait and prepare ourselves for the Incarnation, in Lent we are waiting and preparing for the Crucifixion, then for a terrible few hours we wait for the Resurrection; now we are waiting for the Holy Spirit. The one who will guide us, teach us, empower us and enable us to carry out God's plans.

In some ways, our faith is about waiting and preparation but also about being. Because we have a God who was and is and is to come. Heaven on earth is to come but we live as if it is here already.

We wait for Jesus to come again in glory and yet he is here with us. We don't have to wait for Pentecost, we don't have to wait to start to live the new Resurrection life that Jesus promised; the Lord reigns, Jesus, in his glory is close to us and our joy should be infectious.

Are we sharing that joy? Or are we making our faith hard work, full of religious rules? Are we attractive to others, making them want to know what this Jesus thing is all about?

Paul and Silas were in chains in prison but still praising God and singing hymns and even though they were supernaturally set free from their chains they stayed where they were and reassured the guard. Their faith led to the guard and all his family being saved by baptism. That's infectious faith, the faith that made others want to join them. Do we smile, give thanks to God and praise him or do we moan? Stuck in a dark cell in shackles, would I feel sorry for myself? Probably.

From the Gospel reading we hear Jesus himself interceding for us "Holy Father, I ask not only on behalf of these but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word". Isn't that amazing? Before he died Jesus prayed for us and for all the others who will come after us. Praying that we also will have the Father's glory – "The glory that you have given me I have given

them, so that they may be one as we are one.” You have the Father’s glory. He brought light and life to the world. That is our task. To display God’s love and bring others to him, to tell them, paraphrasing John’s words, that the world will know that all are loved by God in the same way that Jesus was loved, we are all the sons and daughters of God, beloved children. And we don’t have to wait for that love and glory, it is ours today to claim.

We are asked to respond to the request to ‘Come’, that we will choose to drink freely of the water of life that is offered to us. If we wish for the water of life because we are thirsty, we will be given it, anyone who hears the Lord’s call will be welcome. No waiting, just washing our robes clean by repentance, and all will have the right to the tree of life and be able to enter through the gates of heaven.

This is the hope that we are asked to share, the joy that we are asked to spread. People who are newly in love have a glow, something about them that makes people smile, something that

is attractive. Is our faith attractive? In our being as well as in our waiting do others want to join us? The one who was, and is, and is to come wants all of us rejoicing when he comes, he waits to claim his own. We are to follow in the footsteps of Jesus and the disciples and by word and action bring others to know the one who has come to save.

We are told in the psalm set for today:

“Light has sprung up for the righteous, and joyful gladness for those who are true-hearted. Rejoice in the Lord, you righteous, and give thanks to his holy name.”

And so, as we wait and prepare for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit in our lives, may we be ready to accept the gifts he offers, and let them bear fruit in our lives so that we are ready to say: “Come Lord Jesus.”