

*Christ Church New  
Southgate & Friern Barnet*

*14 May 2023*

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*Welcome*

Hymn: Tell out my soul

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord!  
Unnumbered blessings give my spirit voice;  
Tender to me the promise of His Word;  
In God my Savior shall my heart rejoice.

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of His name!  
Make known His might, the deeds His arm  
has done;  
His mercy sure, from age to age the same;  
His holy Name, the Lord, the mighty One.

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of His might!  
Powers and dominions lay their glory by;  
Proud hearts and stubborn wills are put to  
flight;  
The hungry fed, the humble lifted high.

Tell out, my soul, the glories of His Word!  
Firm is His promise, and His mercy sure.  
Tell out my soul, the greatness of the Lord  
To children's children and forevermore!

Jesus is risen. **Alleluia.**  
Jesus is ascended. **Amen.**  
Jesus sent his Spirit. **Alleluia.**  
Jesus is here. His Spirit is with us. **Alleluia.**  
Thanks be to God! **Alleluia! Amen!**

Song: Sing a hymn to God's great glory,  
just and holy all his ways.  
Let us tell redemption's story  
singing songs of thankful praise.  
God, who long ago created  
music to inspire the heart,

lifts our souls, that stimulated  
we may play our joyful part.

Sing a hymn of Christ's salvation,  
our Messiah, Servant, Priest;  
building us a true foundation,  
giving us a holy feast.  
He who lived and died for others  
from his virgin mother's womb  
now unites us, sisters, brothers,  
through his conquest of the tomb

Sing a hymn, in which shall feature  
all the Spirit's living power;  
animating every creature  
day by day and hour by hour  
Sing, oh sing, in rhythm's motion  
joining music, words and beat;  
till the tongue and mind's devotion  
in exultant worship meet.

Sing forever, all creation,  
to the Trinity above.  
Let the church in every nation  
join in bonds of holy love.  
Music of the highest order,  
instruments and voices blend,  
overcoming all disorder:  
Songs of praise shall never end.

*Reading: Acts 1.6-14*

<sup>6</sup>When the apostles met together with Jesus,  
they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time  
give the Kingdom back to Israel?"

<sup>7</sup>Jesus said to them, "The times and  
occasions are set by my Father's own  
authority, and it is not for you to know  
when they will be. <sup>8</sup>But when the Holy Spirit  
comes upon you, you will be filled with  
power, and you will be witnesses for me in  
Jerusalem, in all of Judea and Samaria, and  
to the ends of the earth." <sup>9</sup>After saying this,  
he was taken up to heaven as they watched  
him, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

<sup>10</sup>They still had their eyes fixed on the sky as he went away, when two men dressed in white suddenly stood beside them <sup>11</sup>and said, “Galileans, why are you standing there looking up at the sky? This Jesus, who was taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way that you saw him go to heaven.”

<sup>12</sup>Then the apostles went back to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, which is about half a mile away from the city. <sup>13</sup>They entered the city and went up to the room where they were staying: Peter, John, James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, Simon the Patriot, and Judas son of James. <sup>14</sup>They gathered frequently to pray as a group, together with the women and with Mary the mother of Jesus and with his brothers.

### *Prayer*

Lord Jesus, by your ascension you left our world,  
but you did not abandon us.  
You promised the Spirit –  
who comes to us and makes a home within us,  
who reminds us of you,  
who guides and protects us  
and surrounds us with God’s love.  
Help us to be aware of your presence today.  
**Amen.**

Song: I'm gonna jump up and down  
Gonna spin right around  
I'm gonna praise Your name forever  
I'm gonna shout out loud!  
Gonna deafen the crowd  
I'm gonna send my praise to heaven

I will run this race and I will never stop  
I'll follow Jesus 'til the day I drop  
I can do all things through Christ who

strengthens me  
(Christ who strengthens me)  
When you've got such a lot  
When you've got not a lot  
What?  
Be happy!

*All age: Symbols of worship activity*

*Sermon: For every ending, God finds a new beginning.*

How many accounts of Jesus’ life are there in the bible? At least four, one from each gospel, plus Paul’s interpretation of his life too. How many creation stories are there? Two, Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 give us two different accounts of how humanity was brought into being. And how many stories of the ascension are there? There are two. The first is at the end of Luke’s gospel. Luke 24.51 As Jesus was blessing them, he departed from them and was taken up into heaven. They worshipped him and went back into Jerusalem filled with great joy and spent all their time in the Temple giving thanks to God. And the second is the one we have heard already today from the beginning of Acts Acts1.8: when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you will be filled with power and you will be my witnesses to the ends of the earth. He was taken up in a cloud and hidden from their sight. The apostles were not filled with joy, they gawped at the sky and didn’t know what to do.

It strikes me that this tension between Luke and Acts tells us something important about God. Whatever situation we find ourselves in, whether our hearts have been broken and it feels like the end of the world, or if we have found ourselves in a blissful place and never want it to end, God looks at the world in a different way to us. At the end of Luke, Jesus leaves and his disciples are happy, happy that he lived, died and resurrected, and now back

in heaven – all they can do is praise God. What a great end to a book. We might ask at the end of Luke, is that it?

No, it is not. For every ending – good or bad, is only part of the story with God. In every situation and in every way, God consistently looks at the world and wonders what could change here? How can the kingdom grow here? In every end, there is a new start coming. Or as one door closes, a window opens.

For in the books of Acts, Jesus going back to heaven is only the beginning of the story. The Holy Spirit is about to arrive, change is coming and it's going to radically change the world.

I remember somewhat foolishly overthinking pregnancy and birth before our first child was born. I, like so many other mothers, read a lot of books, blogs, websites. I listened to podcasts and watched 'one born every minute' to ready myself for what was about to come. So much so that we got home, I panicked – I knew so much about pregnancy but nothing about babies. What do we do with an actual baby now? Of course, the adventure had only just begun.

To every situation that seems like the end, God is present with us in every challenging and testing time. He gives us patience, peace and courage in demanding and difficult days. But to every ending, God looks for a new start, God looks for what might happen next. For every ending, God finds a new beginning.

A family friend moved to a very pretty village in Gloucestershire when she retired. Newnham is on the banks of the Severn was a popular place even in Roman times as a good place to cross the river. It became a port by the 17<sup>th</sup> century and was a wealthy trading centre for wood, animal skins, glass, cider and coal. It had a ship building industry, livestock markets and was connected by rail. Today the beautiful buildings remain but industry has

gone and nearly all the shops have been converted to housing. I don't know why this particular village changed so much, but there was one line in a history of the place that said:

*There was little new building in the town between the mid 19th century and the mid 20<sup>th</sup>.*

How easy is it for us to stand still and not build. How easy it for us to not want to things to change, to find ourselves stuck gazing up at the sky watching for Jesus and not doing anything? The God of our story, the God of the bible, the God of the whole world, looks at every situation and looks to make change.

God looked to the apostles who had faithfully served Jesus and asked them to move. He asked them – via his angels – to get a move on. Jesus had already told they would be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth. He told them that the Holy Spirit would be given to them at Jerusalem. And they were rooted to the spot. He will come back the angels told them. But in the meantime, there are things to be done. For an end to be a new beginning for the apostles, they need to be active. They are called to be filled by the Spirit. They are called to be witnesses to Jesus, powered by the Holy Spirit. They are to witness to their town, city, region and the whole world. Their habit was prayer. Prayer all together in one place, equipped and blessed by God, women and men gathered ready for a new beginning with the Spirit of God.

This is the new addition of the Baptist Union magazine. It's online too here. There are endings for many churches here in London and across the UK, 1000s of churches are small and fragile. And yet, here are stories of churches that thought it was the end and something new has happened and growth has come. Even our own church, just back in 1991 two churches had to acknowledge that something had ended but a new day had come.

I saw on a blog that the previously closed down pub in Newnham is being renovated, new plans are coming into being to gather the community and build again. In every end, a new start is possible.

Being a follower of Jesus means listening to Jesus and being inspired by him for he is our saviour and Lord. But it also means that the Spirit must lead us on, to a new day as his prayerful and powerful witnesses. In every end, there is a new start coming with God.

### *Communion*

Song: Living bread in mercy broken,  
Jesus' body for our need;  
we give thanks as we receive it  
for this bread is life indeed.

Cup of wine, the blood of Jesus,  
poured out freely for our sin;  
as we drink we know forgiveness  
for this cup has grace within.

Loving saviour, bread of heaven,  
here you meet us with your grace;  
daily may we know your presence  
and abide in you always.

### *Prayers for the world*

Song: 1 Tell all the world of Jesus ,  
our Saviour, Lord and King;  
and let the whole creation  
of his salvation sing:  
proclaim his glorious greatness,  
in nature and in grace,  
creator and redeemer,  
the Lord of time and space.

2 Tell all the world of Jesus,  
that everyone may find

the joy of his forgiveness  
true peace of heart and mind.  
Proclaim his perfect goodness,  
his deep, unfailing care,  
his love so rich in mercy,  
a love beyond compare

3 Tell all the world of Jesus,  
that everyone may know  
of his almighty triumph  
defeating every foe.  
Proclaim his coming glory,  
when sin is overthrown,  
and he shall reign in splendour  
the King upon his throne!  
*Proclaim... greatness!*  
*Proclaim... goodness!*  
*Proclaim... glory!*  
*Greatness! Goodness!*  
*Glory! Jesus!*

### *Blessing*

Send us out, O Lord,  
waiting expectantly for your Spirit,  
looking for signs of your presence with us,  
looking for signs of your work in action.  
Support us, strengthen us, establish us,  
now and in all the weeks to come,  
that we may show your glory,  
and know your blessing and peace.  
**Amen.**