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“Go and get busy” By Forbes T Maupa © Ecumenical Service

Acts 1 vs. 1-11: The Ascension

Easter season greetings to you all my sisters and brothers and indeed welcome to the Anglican Parish of St John's the Baptist Pinetown. May this spirit of love and unity continue to prevail among us; together we can achieve even the unimaginable. Today we meet to commemorate Ascension Day, this is indeed a special day to remember because it became a precursor to an important event that led to the founding of what we now call Church. Jesus had long promised

“Still, I am telling you the truth: it is for your own good that I am going, because unless I go, the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you”¹

Today therefore marks that critical time towards the promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit without whom we can't be church! Jesus can be understood here as creating that “necessary space” on Ascension day and in the Anglican tradition we extinguish the flame of the Paschal Candle to signify that departure and relight it on Pentecost to symbolise the coming of the Holy Spirit!

As we have come to know, Jesus' closest friends at the time seemed to deliberately forget what Jesus had told them. So instead of remembering the intended coming of the Holy Spirit to be necessitated by Jesus' departure, they asked instead,

“Lord, has the time come for you to restore the kingdom to Israel”².

I would want to suggest that (like all of us today with our governments) the need for liberation from the oppressive Roman Empire remained central in the minds of Jesus' disciples. At this stage, physical comfort made more sense than the promise of the Holy Spirit. It is not surprising that a lot of us seek power, control and so on more than we

¹ John 16 vs. 7 NJB

² Acts 1 vs. 7 NJB

seek what God intends for humanity. Even within church circles, people would rather be leaders, elders, pastors or whatever than wait have the promise of the Holy Spirit. The kind of questions we ask, suggest the kind of things we desire the most or at least worry us the most. So let us pause here and ask ourselves what kind of questions we are asking and what expectations we have.

What follows is narration of the “Ascension” which suggests going up and Luke records: “As Jesus said this he was lifted up while they looked on, and a cloud took him from their sight. They were still staring into the sky as he went, when suddenly two men in white were standing beside them and they said, ‘Why are you Galileans standing here looking into the sky? This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven will come back in the same way as you have seen him go to heaven’”³

I am not sure whether the disciples remained “staring into the sky” out of marvel, disappointment or desperation. I am not sure for how long they would have remained there had they not been “interrupted” the two individuals in white. Whatever their thoughts were (they could have been as many different thoughts as they were disciples), the point I want to draw out of this is, “Get on with life and ministry”. Whatever has happened, good or bad, it is not the place to wait and stare but rather get back to the city and get busy. Is Jesus returning the kingdom to Israel, to the Christians? Is Jesus coming soon, maybe in the New Year? Is the rapture at hand? Whatever our thoughts maybe, there is no need to stop and stare. What has to happen will happen but we will get busy with what we have been called to do. People sit in debates around when and how Jesus will come and yet forget that the Ascension had to do with preparation for the coming of the Holy Spirit through whom the disciples could “get busy” here on earth. Stop staring and get busy! Amen

³ Acts 1 vs. 9-11 NJB