

You're welcome

Jo Jones *reflects on* Acts 16:9-15;
Revelation 21:10. 22 – 22:5 and John 14:23-29

Our scriptures are a wonderful mix of stories of everyday life, inspired vision and grappling with the meaning of faith. Today's readings represent all three. In Acts, Paul and his companions encounter Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. By inclusion of this simple detail, those who heard this story would have understood Lydia to be a successful merchant. Yet for all her status she is humble in hearing and receiving the word of the Lord. Lydia is among a group of women who hear Paul speak; the Lord opens her heart and she and her household are baptised. Her response – to offer Paul and friends her home as a place to stay. This story is ancient, yet we bring it to life each time we too hear the word of God and in response open our homes – and our lives – to God.

Once we do this we can gain the peace of Christ (John 14:27), and we can delight in the vision of a time when we will live in the new Jerusalem, through which flows the river of the water of life, whose source is God and the Lamb (Revelation 22:1). We can grapple with understanding our faith, with the Holy Spirit as our teacher (John 14:26).

But all of this begins with the everyday example of Lydia's openness, willingness to listen and respond. ☺

Lord God, thank you that your Gospel is at home in our ordinary lives. Like Lydia, may we hear your word and, inspired, open our homes and our churches for all who need a place to be refreshed. Amen.

Ascension Day

by Julia McGuinness

As Jesus' friends stood with him on the Mount of Olives, forty days after his resurrection, they asked if he was about to deliver Israel from Roman oppression. Jesus replied by commissioning them to wait. Then he disappeared from sight, somehow caught up in the clouds.

Jesus' return to glory at God's right hand marked the completion of his earthly mission of salvation. As the pioneer of our heavenly destiny, he went ahead to prepare

a place for his followers. And Jesus' physical departure heralded his spiritual presence, in the Holy Spirit's outpouring upon believers.

Perhaps we have asked Jesus for something and felt abandoned on a hillside to peer at the sky in vain. Like the disciples, we're called to leave our nostalgic star-gazing and return to the fray of ordinary living. As we let Jesus go into heaven and continue on our way in expectant trust, his power is released into our earthly situation.

Unlooked-for turning points can have momentous consequences. ☺

Beating the Bounds

by Lisa Tulfer

The custom of beating the bounds has seen something of a revival in recent years. The customs associated with the Rogation Days (the Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday before Ascension Day) are often moved to the Sunday before, which is now known as Rogation Sunday. It is not only about praying for the crops in the fields, but

– depending on the nature of the parish – also for the shops, businesses, workers, students and visitors.

Although the ancient practice had been in decline since its peak around 1700, it has survived in the Rogationtide processions in places such as Oxford, the Tower of London, and St Albans. From Veryan in Cornwall to Bellerby in North Yorkshire, people walk the boundaries of their parishes at Rogationtide. Prayer (before, during and after the walk) plays an important part, as does food – either in the form refreshments along the route or a hearty pub lunch at the end. ☺

“They alone love the Creator perfectly who manifest a pure love for their neighbours.”

St Bede (c. 672-735), English Benedictine monk, historian and writer