

Easter 6 - 25 May 2025

Acts 16: 9-15 and John 14: 23-29

A Sermon by Mark Willis, Lay Reader

May I speak in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

The empty tomb and the risen Christ is celebrated for fifty days from Easter Day until Pentecost, when the disciples receive the Holy Spirit.

During these fifty days some readings follow the events as they happen. In earlier weeks we have journeyed with Jesus as he appears to the disciples on several occasions. This coming week we will witness his ascension into heaven.

Other readings have returned to the evening of the Last Supper, when Jesus spent a long time explaining why he needs to be sacrificed and to prepare us his disciples for the time after he has returned to our Father in heaven. Our reading today is one such narrative which looks forward to the time when Jesus is no longer with us on earth. So what does it say?

Jesus starts by asking us to obey his teachings. Numerous though his teachings are, today I will risk paraphrasing them by suggesting that we are asked simply to share with others the same gifts that we receive from God – the gift of unconditional love and the gift of forgiveness for our wrongdoing.

Simple though that sounds, every time we come here it is important for us to recognise where we have failed to do just that, and earnestly to strive to do better. We are imperfect human beings.

God knows that we need help. And so, to those who believe, the Holy Spirit is sent to be a permanent presence of God within us.

A presence which confirms that we have eternal life in the presence of God. Not something which we have to wait for, but which starts now. With that assurance, we don't need to be troubled, we don't need to be afraid. We can enjoy a peace that comes from simply being a child of God.

A presence which will also guide us in our understanding of the truth, comfort us when we feel alone, empower us in our service to God and to one another, and tell us when we are straying from God's will. I know that I have already

caused Jesus a huge amount of pain when he suffered on the cross for my wrongdoing, and I don't want to hurt him again if I can help it.

If we seek to be more consistent in serving others with love and forgiveness, we need the Holy Spirit to guide us through our busy lives, to tell us when we are straying from God's will. We therefore need to keep ourselves topped up with the Holy Spirit.

Does anyone present here today drive a car? Good. I have some questions for you.

We know how important it is to keep our car fuel topped up. Put your hand up if you look to fill up again when the fuel reserve has fallen to half full? Put your hand up if you look to fill up again when the fuel reserve is quarter full? Put your hand up if you think 'E' at the bottom of the fuel gauge means 'Enough to keep going'?

I never want to run out of fuel in the car. That shouldn't happen, because there are lots of refuelling stations for our cars, as long as we are prepared to pay the price asked.

Neither do I ever want to run out of the Holy Spirit. Fortunately, there are many ways to keep our levels of the Holy Spirit topped up for life, all of which are completely free:

How about a planned stop at a rest area each day for a period of prayer?

How about a look at our route map to check that we are on the correct path?

How about a visit to a service station (such as this church) to allow the ministry team to repair any leaks and refill you here from the original source?

How about joining an enthusiasts' group to meet and talk further about our common problems and solutions?

How about carrying extra Holy Spirit that we can share with anyone else who has let their levels become low?

The Holy Spirit flows within us and through us as comforter, counsellor, guide, helper, intercessor and transformer of our lives.

Becoming overfilled with the Holy Spirit is what we offer, every week, here at St Botolph's.

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.