



Easter 5 2021 BCP 8.30 am

St John 16.23 – end

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

On Thursday of this week, we shall gather once again around this holy table to celebrate our Lord's Ascension, the day when his enigmatic post-resurrection appearances to his disciples comes to an end and his physical presence in a particular time and place is transposed into a deep and abiding knowledge of Christ's living presence with all people everywhere.

In this morning's Gospel, Jesus prepares his disciples for his leave-taking; he does so in much the same way as he had prepared them for his crucifixion on Calvary. Then they had been travelling to Jerusalem, now they will be sent out from Jerusalem to the very ends of the then know world.

Jesus' leave-taking of his disciples had been a gradual process which had been unfolding over a period of 40 days from the resurrection.

To begin with, Jesus had made himself known physically to the disciples as they had broken bread together, as they had gathered together for prayer and as they had come together in fellowship to study the scriptures.

Wherever and whenever the disciples had gathered together in his name, there he was, as he promised them he would be, in their midst.

More often than not, the disciples did not recognize this post-resurrection Jesus straight away – just as Mary Magdalene had not recognised him in the Garden or Thomas had not recognised him in the Upper Room.

But each time the disciples encountered Jesus, the penny eventually, although this Jesus, was in so many ways different from the Jesus they had known before.

So, Jesus tells his disciples, as his Ascension approaches, that now, although he will no longer be with them physically, they must, in faith, not be afraid to ask the Father for anything.

Ask and you will receive, seek and you will find, knock and the door upon which you are knocking will be opened to you, promises Jesus.

The Christ who came from the Father, is about to return to the Father, but even so, he promises that he will be with

them and, indeed, with all who will come after them, the women and men down through the ages will come to faith through their testimony and the witnesses of all who succeed them as apostles and evangelists.

No more riddles, no more conundrums, no more mystery, no more figures of speech.

Those who will accompany Jesus in the Way, proclaiming the Kingdom, living the Gospel, will do so as his friends, forever-friends from whom nothing will be hidden, nothing will be held back; those to whom nothing will be denied as they worship, and witness, serve, live, work and die in the power of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, the Advocate, the One who will hold them in the Father's Love and Life just as Jesus is held eternally in that Love and Life.

Amen.