

**May 16, 2021**

**Rev Jen's 55th Love Letter From Lockdown**

**Seventh Sunday of Easter – Ascension**

Dearest followers of Jesus,

Ascend! Go up! Come up! The end is near, the end is almost here, and we are ascending too.

Ascension Day is the day commemorating the ascension of Jesus into Heaven from the Mount of Olives (Acts 1:-11), celebrated in the church on the fortieth day after easter, a Thursday.

The ascension of Jesus is the departure of Jesus from the earth to heaven marking the end of his post resurrection appearances to his disciples.

In the text today we encounter Jesus as he petitions God on behalf of his disciples as he passes responsibility for God's mission in the world to the disciples. Jesus is asking God on behalf of those to whom the mission will now be entrusted. A transition is occurring. Responsibility is shifting.

For what does Jesus ask for his disciples? Protection and sanctification.

"Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one." (John 17:11). Jesus is asking that the followers be kept in the circle of protection for those who call upon the Holy name. And he verifies the unity and oneness with the Father through him. The unity and oneness of the spiritual connection provides protection. Then and now.

Jesus says "I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. I am not asking that you take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one." (John 17:14-15).

Being aware that we are spiritual beings having an earthly experience, we can say that we do not "belong to the world" even though we live, breathe, and have our being here. We belong to God, as Jesus did. And Jesus is not asking for God to take us out of the world via death but to protect us from the evil one in this life. Jesus is asking for our protection here and now in this life. Protection to help us resist evil and to deliver us from evil. This is powerful protection.

How does this happen? What is the process of protection? "Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth" (John 17:17). Sanctify them. Sanctify: to make holy or sacred. To make holy by purifying from sin.

And we are made sacred in the truth. And the truth is God's word. So we are to listen for God's word. We are to study and live by God's word. This process of sanctification is our spiritual evolution as we are purified and made holy. We are "made sacred" by the truth that GOD IS!

We are made holy when we live this reality on earth as it is in heaven. We are of this world but not in it. We know to whom we belong.

And we are not afraid...of this current pandemic and all that changes that have occurred.

We are not afraid of the grief, sadness and deep emotion that is rising and releasing in humanity at this moment in time.

We are not afraid of dying knowing that we are one with God.

We are not afraid of living. We bravely go where we are called and sent to be. To love and to serve as we are able.

We have a responsibility to follow Jesus and believe in all times and places that "Your word is truth" and that "Thy will be done".

Oh Lord, may it be so. May we be careful, not fearful. May we rise above and beyond the limits of this time and space. May we ascend in prayer and be at one with the source of our being. May old definitions and ways of being give way to the new life in Christ and may we go forth protected and sanctified by the Holy Name.

In the presence, power, and purpose of the name of Jesus Christ we pray.

Protect us and make us holy as we transition from this community of faith to another.

"As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world." (John 17:18).

People of God. Followers of Jesus. It's time to go. It's time for us to leave this place and to journey to another. Know that you go protected. Know that you go with responsibility for your part of the relationship with God.

Go knowing that you are not alone. God is with you. And in the unity and oneness of the spirit, we are all together. We are one. Lean into this lesson. Lean into this love. It is for you and with you. And it is still very, very, very good.

Tears of grief, tears of sadness and tears of joy well up and overflow. This is the way it goes. This is transition.

Thanks be to God for it all.

With love from Rev Jen.