

Sermon 1 June 2014 "Moving On"  
John 17:1-11 Acts 1:6-14

*Prayer: God of heaven and earth, we celebrate the Christ who came to live as one of us. We celebrate the Christ who would stop at nothing – not even death – to proclaim God's love for all people. We celebrate the Christ who rose from death to show that there is no end to God's love. And we celebrate the Christ who, in leaving this earth, entrusted to us the task of continuing this work. Amen.*

"Heaven is under our feet as well as over our heads." So said Henry David Thoreau, (19th century)  
Heaven being under our feet as well as over our heads is one of the foundational themes in both texts today. Heaven is not only something that happens when we die – it begins with each first breath!

We are creatures of earth and heaven and we believe the connection is held in us because: because of God's Holy Spirit; because Jesus completed his work on earth; because God allowed it all to happen; **because God loves**. None of this absolves us from suffering, being hurt, being in pain, worrying, having bad things happen to us... any more than it stops joy bursting within or delight washing over us or warmth flooding through us or having the sheer pleasure of hearing a bird call or seeing a loved one's smile....

We **are** creatures of heaven and earth, God's creation, loved and so precious to him he gave us Jesus whose job it was to make sure we could claim our **heavenly birth-right**. Today's Bible readings bring us to the point in Jesus story that having achieved that, – having completed his job, Jesus moved on.

He is praying that his Father will take him back home, the 'hour' has come he says. John's gospel is so thoughtfully written, remember Jesus first miracle was of turning water in to wine at his cousins wedding? Remember when Mary asks him to help stop family embarrassment and he says "Woman my hour has not yet come"? Well – now it has come, the hour of the cross has arrived, and Jesus prays.

As Jesus accepts the 'hour', he gives his last advice and prays his last prayer which, is in John's Gospel, a very public prayer. He prays straight to God (His Father), in front of his disciples, and so in front of us, as we are 'today's' listeners. And before you're side-tracked, yes the argument is circular!

Jesus prays that God will glorify him, so that God will be glorified. Remember the Youth Band Song, Glorify? We sang it two weeks ago. This is one of the sources for the words, and I invite you to mentally tag that song with this prayer of Jesus: his last prayer offered for his listening disciples **before** the hour of the cross was on him. Facing all that he was – this is an incredible statement of faith. His words simply glow from the depth of the relationship he has; with trust in whom he is praying and the complete confidence that what he asks for will happen. CV

Before he moved to the cross, Jesus asked that he be glorified **so that he would** glorify God in return with the gift of his life. The English word glory is from the Greek word '*doxa*' which means to make radiant and clothe with splendour. The path Jesus was now on, the way of the cross, **we know** was a downward descent into nothingness and annihilation, But Jesus proclaims it, the path of true glory where God would be on display – in him – through him – radiant, shining in full strength **because** Jesus completed the work he had been sent to do.

The work it says, **the** work Jesus completed was to give eternal-life (e-life) to all who have been given to him. \*Here it says that to have E-life is to know God, and Jesus who was sent. \*(O.WesleyAllen,Jr. (New Proclamation Year A 2008)) The Greek has two words for "life", *bios* and *zoe*. *Bios* refers to living organisms. The word here is *zoe*, which means true life, life at its core. The word for "know" is *ginosko*, which means intimate, even mystical, knowledge.

This intimate knowledge which brings "life eternal" comes by revelation, not reason--**it is gift**, not acquisition. It is being "born from above" (3:7) and is, you might say, a tap into the Life Source itself. (Petty) To have E-life is to be part of the Jesus – God family **circle** – **now** and *not* something that begins with death. E-life is possible for us **because** Jesus completed his work. cV

Warning:- this is a scary bit - E-life is possible because a) Jesus was given all power to give e-life and b) as Jesus completed his work he prayed 1. For his disciples 2. Prays for us – that we will have the power and protection to continue to complete his work and that we will be one as He and His father are. **An essential part** of our E-life is belonging in God, through Jesus to one another, ever growing the circle of belonging – **today, now**.

Today matters, how you live matters it is *not* as simple as waiting until you are in heaven to 'be good', to make wise choices, to accept that you are a child of God, beloved and precious and chosen and that you have a place to fill in God through Jesus' family. **Today matters**; get moving we have things to do, places to go and people to meet – work to be done. CV

When I *read the Acts passage* I wondered if Angels were allowed to be sarcastic. Vs 11 "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky?"

*Of course* there is more to the background. We've jumped a few months in time from John with Jesus' final prayer, through Easter events; through all the experiences of the Risen Jesus being present with the disciples and others to today's Bible reading in Acts where Jesus *is finally* taken home to God. Where he **was** finally glorified into God's presence *because* the two men in white continued their words with: "This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven,..." But as the watching disciples stand/ watch, the two men (angels) say ""why do you stand here looking into the sky?" cV

When this life gets too hard; when the going gets uncomfortable; when we can't see a way forward; when our world shatters... we have this human tendency to avoid the issue. And while giving points for creativity and real curiosity, the question the disciples ask Jesus about restoring the kingdom of Israel deserves the answer it gets.

Avoidance of acknowledgement of Jesus work gets us no-where; our job is to get on with it, to get moving to be Jesus witnesses to the best of our ability. We are to begin wherever we find ourselves whether that is Jerusalem or Bucklands Beach; Judea or Pakuranga and to keep going to the ends of the earth. *It's not to* stand around looking up to 'Heaven' and being no earthly use!

This is not to say anything about our arriving in *due* time in heaven! God alone knows the day and the time for that – **but until that point**, today's scriptures tell us we have a job to do. It begins with prayer – just as Jesus began everything he did in prayer – so did his disciples, and then it moves out into the world to the ends of the earth.

According to today's scripture, our job is to glorify Jesus to the ends of the earth. Vs 10 "All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them." Jesus asked God to glorify him so that He, Jesus could glorify God and now we read that *Jesus glory comes from* his disciples. When we do Jesus work, we make him shine which is to put him on display.

The promise of Jesus prayer is that we will not be doing his work alone – he is praying for us – praying for our protection and that we will have the power to do as he did. Jesus has gifted us room in the circle of God's family with his life of obedience and transparency. As we come to know both God and him we are gifted e-life, and the covering of Jesus prayer for protection and power to enable us to continue his work until it is completed and all the earth display his glory. It's up to us now – he has moved on! Amen.