

One of my earliest and fondest childhood memories was when I was as a boy of six or seven. I was reading a book with my friend Debbie, the most beautiful girl in school. Debbie was rubbing my chest. She said she liked the feeling of the wool in my jumper which my Mum made me. I felt loved. I felt safe. I felt happy.

For forty days now we have been celebrating with joyful hearts the victory of Christ over sin and death. Today we celebrate his ascension into heaven to take his throne – his victorious reign, over the ruler of the kings of the earth.

Returning to God the Father in heaven, from whence he first came to us, the loop of God's action, to permanently establish the kingdom of God himself in his world, is complete.

'It is finished!' Jesus said, as he gave up his spirit on the cross, to reconcile the world to God. Today, the crucified One, has been raised up into heaven. Of the power of God, the Apostle says, 'God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion'.

And, not only that, 'But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ, and raised us up with

him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that...he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus’.

In the words of the collect, ‘You have raised our human nature to the throne of heaven.’

This is not something any of us can achieve on our own:

‘For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God— not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we may walk in them.’

And what are the good works that characterise the new human nature of the Christian, and the worldwide Christian church, that has been raised to the throne of heaven, by the power and the love of God?

‘By this we know that we love...when we love God and obey his commandments. For the love of God is this, that we obey his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome, for whatever is born of God conquers the world. And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith’.

The love of God conquers the world. By the victory of God, once, for all, in Jesus Christ, the Messiah of God.

As we read in our psalm, ‘O sing to the Lord a new song: for he has done marvellous things. His right hand and his holy arm: they have got him the victory. The Lord has made known his salvation: he has revealed his just deliverance, in the sight of the nations. He has remembered his mercy and faithfulness towards the house of Israel: and all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God’.

Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah of God. In him, the Jewish messianic hope, is being fulfilled today, throughout the world. By the victory of God, and the salvation, and the deliverance of God, throughout all the nations of the world. Amongst all the people of the world. In Jesus Christ, God is making all things new.

By his life of humble obedience to God in this world, Jesus is the inaugurator of the new humanity, the final form of humanity. Our original human nature, is opposed to God, and to his commandments; is disobedient to God, pushes back, on his positive commands. In Jesus Christ, the new humanity, the final humanity, the future of humanity, has dawned in the world. A future for humanity, in harmony with God, and his righteous will, expressed in God’s positive commands, both the law of Moses, which Jesus confirmed, and the words and works of Jesus, the Son of God. A future for humanity, in

harmony with God, and on this basis, with every other human being.  
The future of humanity, in the kingdom of God.

It is this future kingdom of God, that has come into the world in Jesus Christ. And this future, becomes present, to all who repent, and believe, in the good news of the kingdom of God. The future of salvation is now, is now present reality, to all who give their life, in baptism and faith, to the one who gave his life for them.

Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of Man ‘lifted up’, we hear in the Gospel of John. The term ‘lifted up’ has double meaning. Jesus is the Christ lifted up into heaven, where he now reigns, at the right hand of God, far above all ruler and authority and principality and power, with all authority in heaven and on earth, that is, with all of the power and authority of God himself now given to him, into his hands. And Jesus is the Christ lifted up in his earthly life on the cross. Where he entered into the existential conditions of all human life on earth – all of the sins of all of the human race, all of the guilt, all of the consequences – all of the misery, all of the suffering, all of the death, both spiritual and physical – all of it, he took away from us, and from the human race, by bearing it himself, once, so that we, and the human race, might be reconciled to God, and on this basis, with all who are in Christ.

Reconciled to God, by the death of Christ, and on this basis with all who are in Christ, the worldwide fellowship of the Christian church is the present sign, of future hope. The present sign, of the future hope, for the human race, and creation itself.

An anticipation of the day, when, at Christ's return, God himself will come in final judgment, and salvation of the world. When all who have died in Christ shall be raised. When God will become all in all. When all this imperfect, that is, all things, will be made perfect. When, out of the old, God will make all things new.

When all shall be well. And all manner of things shall be well.