

Why do you stand staring into the sky?

This eucharist re-works the Ascension Day story from Acts 1. We are, rightly, cautious about the way in which we tell the Ascension story. In this scientific age, we know that Jesus' body did not literally go up into the clouds and it would be easy to get lost in a navel-gazing exercise which focused upon what 'really happened.' Here we attempt to focus our attention instead on the meaning behind the story.

Why do you stand staring into the sky?
Jesus isn't there.

We have flown above the clouds and know that
Jesus isn't there.

We have left the earth's gravitational pull but
Jesus isn't there.

We have searched the sky with radio telescopes and
Jesus isn't there.

Why do you stand staring into the sky?
Jesus isn't there.

Have you looked in Zimbabwe, among the peacemakers?
He might be there.

Have you looked in Yarl's Wood for the lawyers, working for free?
He might be there.

Have you looked through the protesters demanding freedom in Tibet?
He might be there.

Have you looked among the victims of violence in Iraq
He might be there.

Have you looked in the poppy fields of Afghanistan?
He might be planting wheat there.

What about a cathedral, built to the glory of God?
Jesus isn't in stained glass.

Or a lively church singing beautiful songs?
Jesus isn't in a hymn book.

Perhaps he is in the pulpit, proclaiming the Word of God.
Jesus isn't in a sermon.

Teaching children right and wrong, morals and tradition.
Jesus doesn't lecture or preach.

Where two or three are gathered together, then surely two or three thousand...
Have you been to Baptist Assembly? He's hardly ever there!

Why do you stand, staring at the sky?

Look down at your hands.
Look at the way your hands bring peace.
Look at the way your hands give love.
Look at the way your hands soothe and heal.
Look at the way your hands share and give.

Look at the way your hands break bread.
And remember.

Remember that Jesus' hands broke bread.
Remember that Jesus' hands were pierced.

Broken bread.
Broken body.

[Share bread]

Look at the way your hands hold a cup.
And remember.

Remember that Jesus hands held a cup.
Remember that Jesus held out a promise.

Shared wine.
Shared blood.

[Share wine]

Why do you stand staring into the sky?
Jesus is wherever disciples remember
his broken body
his shared blood
his sacrifice
his promise.
Why do you stand staring into the sky?
Jesus is here.

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