

Ascension C

A man by the name of Arnold Toynbee worked for many years on his monumental history of the world. Near the end of this epic work, he wrote one highly significant paragraph. 'When I began this work, I found myself looking at a great parade of marchers through history. But as the work progressed, the marchers all fell, one by one, by the wayside. And now, only one marcher remains, growing larger and larger with each step.' That marcher is Jesus Christ. His ascension means no one will ever usurp his place as Lord of all creation and history.

'Lord' is one of the titles which Jesus earned for Himself after His Ascension. Now if Jesus is truly my Lord and master in every sense of the word then I'll follow Him through thick and thin and not just be a fair-weather friend. He will have my undivided loyalty.

Today's second reading, says that God has made Jesus Lord of all Creation after he ascended into Heaven. The early Christians called Jesus Lord in place of Caesar – quite a risky thing to do. When one Roman met another on the road he would greet him by saying: 'Caesar is Lord' and the other would respond: 'and the Lord is Caesar'. But the early Christians vowed to disagree. They would say: 'Jesus is Lord' and the other would respond: 'and the Lord is Jesus'. As a result of this they were 'thrown to the lions'.

I remember there was a programme on television way back in the 70th's called 'the way' and the participants were talking about the possible discovery of fifth gospel. I'm told it is still an open question among scripture scholars today.

That being said, I think that each of us has a tendency to write his or her own fifth gospel where the difficult things Jesus asks of us are passed over and the easy things are underscored. You would never desert your favourite football team just

because they had a spell of losing. They could count on your loyalty. Have you even noticed when small children are given bread and jam, they usually lick the jam off the bread and throw the less tasty, but more nourishing bread on the floor. We're sometimes like that with Our Lord. Not long ago Archbishop Nichols said that we must take on board the 'full sweep' of the faith and not just pick and choose. In addressing teachers of religion, he stressed that they may be tempted to teach only the more attractive aspects of the faith and leave out the more challenging bits.

Acknowledging Jesus as my lord and living as he taught can be an uphill struggle and sometimes make us seem out of step with modern society but the person who remains faithful to their lord and firm to the end will be saved.

After Jesus had ascended, the apostles were gazing into the sky. Let our gaze be fixed on Him whatever difficulties we encounter along the road of life. Only in this way can we be sure of sharing in His glory.