

Jesus's final prayer for the disciples in John's account begins in John 17:1-11. Jesus prays that he might be glorified so that all people will know that God is the true God and he, Jesus, is the one whom God has sent. Jesus has finished the work God gave him to do, and now Jesus prays on behalf of the disciples, because they believed. They were sent by God to Jesus, and now Jesus prays that they will be protected by God as Jesus returns to God, and that the disciples may be one, as he and God are one.

The Narrative Lectionary looks to the Hope of Resurrection in Romans 6:1-14. Paul uses rhetoric to show that even though Jesus has saved all from sin, believers are not to continue in sin. All who are baptized are baptized into Jesus's death and have new life now because Jesus was raised. The old self has been crucified, and believers live into a new life. Death frees us from sin at the end of our life, but Jesus's death frees us from sin now. We are alive in Christ. Sin has no hold on us anymore.

The supplementary verse of Matthew 6:24 is Jesus's teaching that we cannot serve two masters. Jesus declares we cannot serve God and wealth. Paul would say we cannot live into the ways of this world if we live into Christ. Our old lives are put to death.

The Ascension is a mystery to us—we know Jesus didn't just fly up above because heaven is not above us, though that was the understanding of the heavens and the earth at the time. Rather, Jesus came to earth in an unexpected way—as vulnerable as a helpless baby—and will return to us in a similar way. Somehow, Jesus attained oneness with God, and we, too, will one day be at one with God and one another.

Call to Worship

Praise God, who reigns over all.

Praise the One who made heaven and earth, the whole universe.

Praise God, whose reign is not of this world.

Praise the One who commanded us to love one another and laid down his life for us.

Praise God, who will never fail us as worldly politicians do.

Praise the One who became last of all and servant of all.

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow.

Praise the One who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Architect of the Universe, You created the expanse beyond our wildest imagination. There are stars so massive and particles so small that we can never comprehend it. We struggle with day to day living when You have made so much that we will never know. The world's challenges seem unsurmountable and yet You made planets so distant that none of us will live to see even half of Neptune's orbit around the sun, though we witness Mercury in retrograde a few times a year. Great Designer, may we remember with humility how small we really are, and yet Your love for us is as vast as the galaxy. May we recall in our moments of loneliness that You know the number of stars and the number of hairs on our heads. May we hold on to the knowledge in our most despairing times that You sent Your Only Son for us, to show us Your Way, Your Truth, and Your Life. All in all, if there is nothing we can truly know except one thing, may it be Your love for us in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance

God fashioned us all out of stardust, the same molecules that are the building blocks of the universe are in our bones and tissue. We were made out of love. You are made in God's image. When you look in a mirror, God is winking back at you. You are precious in God's sight. May we hold one another tenderly, forgiving each other as we are forgiven, working to repair what has been broken, and to live into the reign of God on earth as it is in heaven. You are fearfully and wonderfully made. God loves you so. Amen.

Prayer

The Ascension is a mystery to us, O God. We know that Christ is not above us physically, but the oneness You have known from the beginning is the oneness Christ experienced at the Ascension, a oneness we live into as the body of Christ on earth. It is a mystery how all of us, with all our differences, with all our struggles and challenges, can be one in You, but You have ordained it so. Help us to live into the Body of Christ with our diversity of gifts and strengths, to remember we need one another, and to build each other up. Christ is our head, we are the body, and we are joined at the heart by our love for one another. May we seek to share that love and oneness with the world. Amen.