

Ascension to Pentecost 5



“Stay in Jerusalem and wait” Acts 1.5

The crabs may be nipping their feet, but they do not move a muscle. The wind may howl off the sea into their faces but their gaze horizon-wards does not flinch. At high tide as at low tide, they stand resolutely upright, unwavering whatever the waves.

The figures we see here are just some of the 100 cast-iron men who form Antony Gormley’s famous installation on the beach at Crosby. He called the work “Another Place” and uppermost in his mind were the millions in our world forced by hunger, war or abuse to leave home and face whatever new future comes.

In these days between Ascension and Pentecost, we remember the disciples obeying Jesus’ directive to stay in Jerusalem and wait for the Holy Spirit. It must have been easy to waver, to long for the easy familiarity of a fishing boat and go home to Galilee, to let fear and uncertainty win the day. But in the gritty steadfastness of the Crosby statues, we can perhaps glimpse some of the qualities

of the disciples’ own focussed waiting, their courage in facing whatever the Spirit’s arrival would bring.

What do we see as we gaze at these figures in the context of coronavirus?

We may ruefully note their effortless social distancing! And perhaps the installation’s title makes us wonder to what ‘other place’ our own lives are heading. What will our ‘new normal’ look like?

Perhaps too, in this photo, we see humanity at large waiting longingly for the hints of hopeful rose in the sky to dawn into a new day for our world.

Perhaps the constancy of the figures inspires more constancy in us as we gather with the disciples in that upper room and wait. Our need is as great as theirs but will our anticipation of the Spirit’s arrival be as keen – not just in these days pre-Pentecost but throughout the post-pandemic future ahead?

“The Holy Spirit is that power which opens eyes that are closed, hearts that are unaware and minds that shrink from too much reality.”

John V Taylor

Prayer

**Spirit of God,
we need you
and wait for you:
come afresh
into our lives. Amen**