All hail the power of Jesu’s name;
let angels prostrate fall;
bring forth the royal diadem
to crown him Lord of all.

We will sing this in a few minutes: it’s the first verse of our Offertory hymn. And like much Ascension hymnody, readings and liturgy – like the shout of exultation with which we began the service, like the incense clouds that surround us - it’s joyous. Rejoicing in the kingship of Christ. Ascension – like the feast of Christ the King, its pair at the opposite pole of the liturgical year – resounds with the shout of praise. Christ is exalted – let the whole earth tremble before him! Christ is God, returned to reign at the Father’s side; before him we must fall on our knees in worship, bringing the best worship we can offer – words, and music, and incense.

Just as the disciples returned to Jerusalem with great joy and worshipped constantly in the Temple. Their friend, their Lord, their King has returned to where he had always belonged – to reign with God the Father – what is there to do but to celebrate?

But they don’t stay in the Temple, celebrating. They know, as we know, that the Spirit is coming. And as we celebrate Ascension, we don’t pretend that we don’t know the rest of the story. We stay in the Temple this evening, rejoicing – but tomorrow we pray for the gift of the Spirit.

Because when Jesus ascends to heaven, he leaves the disciples called and commissioned to proclaim repentance and forgiveness; to go out and make disciples; to do God’s work in the world.

And they do. Throughout Easter season, the stories we’ve heard from Acts have reminded us that this is what disciples do: teach and heal, tell God’s good news, make new disciples.
Good news: that Jesus, who is God, was a human being with us. Died for us. Rose for us. Ascended – for us! – into heaven.

Good news that God has already begun to make all things new.

And good news – that we too are called and commissioned and empowered to be Jesus in the world.

We worship and rejoice – but we don’t stay in the Temple forever.

We pray for the gift of the Spirit – knowing that when the Spirit comes, we will be sent out.

We pray, not only that God will make all new – but that, in the strength of the Spirit, we may be part of God’s plan. That we may say our yes to God, and do God’s will, and build God’s kingdom. That what God began in Christ may come at last to fruition; that Christ, our risen and ascended King, may be worshipped everywhere.

So we pray now as we will pray in a moment in the words of our offertory hymn:

Let every tribe and every tongue
to him their hearts enthral,
lift high the universal song
and crown him Lord of all.