

Hi everyone,



Below is the reading for today. When reading it, I was left wondering, "**Can it get any stranger?**" As you read, notice what stands out to you and what leaves you wondering.

Acts 1:6-11

⁶ So when the apostles were with Jesus, they kept asking him, "Lord, has the time come for you to free Israel and restore our kingdom?"

⁷ He replied, "The Father alone has the authority to set those dates and times, and they are not for you to know. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

⁹ After saying this, he was taken up into a cloud while they were watching, and they could no longer see him. ¹⁰ As they strained to see him rising into heaven, two white-robed men suddenly stood among them. ¹¹ "Men of Galilee," they said, "why are you standing here staring into heaven? Jesus has been taken from you into heaven, but someday he will return from heaven in the same way you saw him go!"

Please be perfectly honest. What comes to your mind when you read in verse 9 that Jesus "was taken up into a cloud while they were watching, and they could no longer see him."

Jesus' friends had been through a lot! They were just living their lives until one day Jesus came around and asked them to follow him. They did and so learned and saw a lot! Jesus touched on some of their hopes and fears convincing them that there is something new, special, worthwhile, and meaningful. But then their hopes were crushed. Jesus was executed by the ruling government officials. They knew about the grave where they put Jesus' dead body. But then they saw and interacted with the living Jesus only three days after he had died.

It is only reasonable if you find this hard to believe! In fact, notice what Matthew records about Jesus' encounters with his friends after his death and resurrection: "Then the eleven disciples left for Galilee, going to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him—**but some of them doubted!**" (Mat. 28:16-17)

Doubts and questions are a perfectly normal part of faith. It is philosophical commitments and underpinnings that demand certainty. The modern quest and desire for certainty has little to do with faith or Jesus' invitation to follow him.

There is no such thing as faith without questions or doubts. God, Jesus, or Scripture never ask us to "just believe." Faith is not merely about right facts but about this Jesus-way-of-life. Faith is about joining the revolution started by Jesus. It is risky. It is an adventure. It is meaningful, rewarding, even fun—but also challenging. It is more like self-care than self-comfort. It is more like exercising than reading a book. It is more like a muscle than a possession. It is about partnering with God and working towards the flourishing of everyone. It involves all of who you are; your heart, emotions, actions, and thoughts. This spiritual life is about claiming God's unconditional love for ourselves and learning to live as the beloved, like Jesus. It's about becoming one with God, as we will explore more next week...

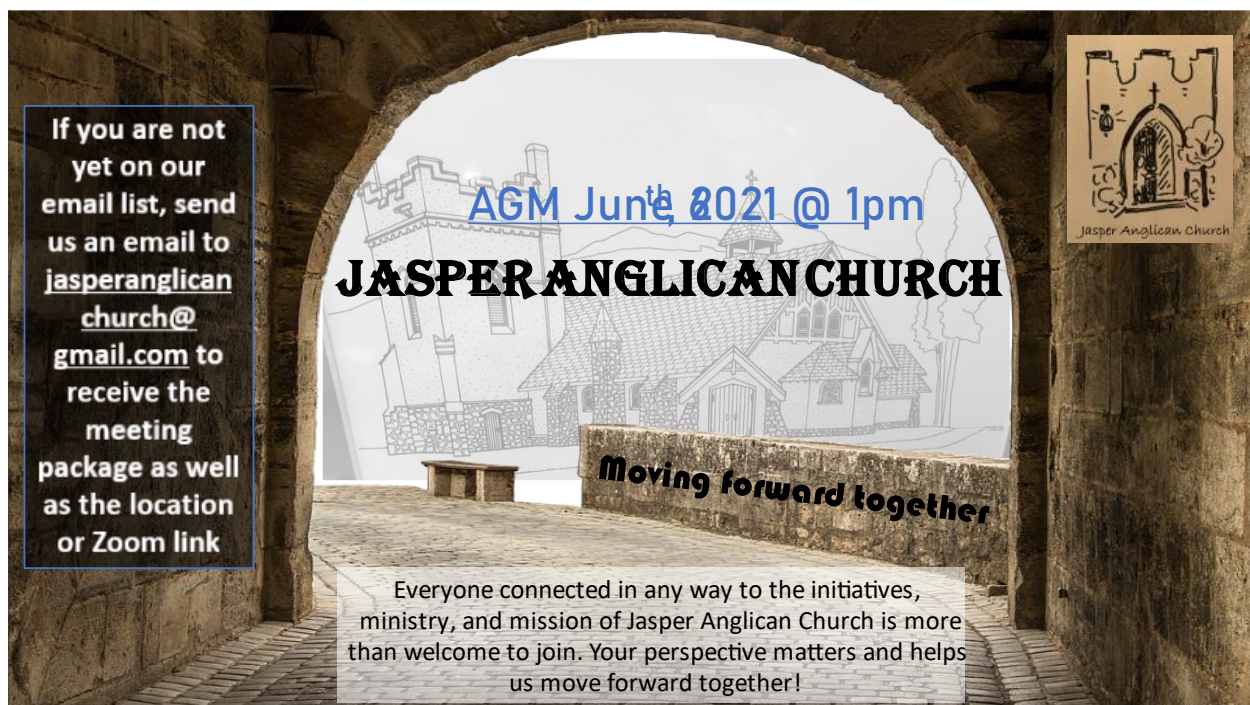
Notice what the disciples keep asking Jesus about in verse 6. They are not asking about when they can finally go to heaven to be with God. Instead, what Jesus did was significant for where they were at, their context. Jesus is not about escaping this world and going to heaven but about the new creation becoming a visible reality around us. Jesus started a revolution and we are invited to participate.

In the original context, that there is some kind of life after death was assumed by pretty much everyone. The beauty, hope, and attraction of the Jewish faith and the emerging Jesus movement was the promise and expectation that this world will be restored, that there will be peace, that heaven and earth will come together, as they already had in Jesus. Jesus is the starting point of the new creation. Following Jesus is about living lives aimed at the new creation, already making the new a visible reality within the old by working towards the flourishing of all creation.

And you are invited to participate!

Please let me know if you would like to chat! I love having conversations about spiritual things or anything that is important to you. With the nice weather, we can meet outside. We can even sit in our backyard and I can make you a Cappuccino...

Andreas



If you are not yet on our email list, send us an email to jasperanglicanchurch@gmail.com to receive the meeting package as well as the location or Zoom link

AGM June 2021 @ 1pm

JASPER ANGLICAN CHURCH

Moving forward together

Everyone connected in any way to the initiatives, ministry, and mission of Jasper Anglican Church is more than welcome to join. Your perspective matters and helps us move forward together!

Jasper Anglican Church