



**Fifth Sunday of Easter**  
**† Sunday 19th May 2019**

England & Wales Cycle of Prayer:  
New Members of the Church and Evangelisation  
Keynote: The New Jerusalem

**Acts of the Apostles 14: 21–27**

The Apostle Paul accompanied by Barnabas revisits the towns of Lystra and Iconium, the very places in which they had earlier encountered such opposition to their preaching of the Gospel. There, *'they put fresh heart into the disciples, encouraging them to persevere in the faith. "We all have to experience many hardships," they said, "before we enter the kingdom of God." In each of these churches they appointed elders, and with prayer and fasting they commended them to the Lord in whom they had come to believe'*. By the example of these first Christian disciples and elders we are encouraged to persevere in faith and to bear witness to Christ, *'they assembled the church and gave an account of all that God had done with them and how he had opened the door of faith to the pagans.'*

**Responsorial Psalm 144 (145)** – A song of praise to the eternal God. Alleluia!

**Book of Revelation 21: 1–5**

Another climactic vision from the Apostle John: This time of the new creation, *'I, John, saw a new heaven and a new earth... I saw the holy city, and the New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven'*. Remember by this time the city of Jerusalem – familiar to John in his youth – had been destroyed by the Roman legions, its walls levelled to the ground, and the ancient Temple had been torn down. For John, this marks in a prophetic way the final defeat of death and sin. The new city, the new earth will be different, as the loud voice proclaims, *'You see this city? Here God lives among men... they shall be his people, and he will be their God; his name God-with-them. He will wipe away the tears from their eyes; there will be no more death, no more mourning or sadness'*. So will the whole of creation be made anew and restored to God's favour at last. *'The world of the past has gone,'* says John. For each of us, Christian faith offers the hope of a new beginning. Make the most of the opportunity!

**Gospel according to John 13: 31–35**

The gospel text today is part of Jesus' long farewell discourse at the Last Supper. Set by John the evangelist as taking place after the betrayer Judas, has gone out into the darkness of night about his treacherous business. It is full of the traditional Johannine themes contrasting the darkness that represents evil, with the light of the glorified Christ within the supper room and at the Eucharist. But above this background, stands the figure of Christ: *'Now has the Son of Man been glorified, and in him God has been glorified...'* for Jesus says: *'I shall not be with you much longer. I give you a new commandment: love one another, just as I have loved you, you also must love one another. By this love you have for one another everyone will know that you are my disciples.'* Oh! How we fail him! But, wherever in the world there is Christian love, there the world encounters the risen Spirit of Jesus. Go for it!

© Peter J Harrison 2019