How do you and I talk?... And how do you and I walk?... And does our walk... match our talk?... Does our walk match our talk?...

To be a follower of Jesus Christ – a disciple – means that we need to be prepared to speak about how much our faith means to us. “For we confess with our lips and so are saved,” writes St. Paul...

As we’re beginning this amazing journey called faith, we sometimes can be concerned about what other people might think of us: “Will they think I am a religious nut, because I believe I have been forgiven?” Do I dare to say, “I’m learning to love the Lord Jesus...?”

Some Anglicans lean on the quote attributed to St. Francis, “Preach the gospel; use words if necessary...” There are certainly times for quiet deeds, and for silence – for resting... But we can’t use that as an excuse for keeping silent when we need to speak out... And a question you and I need to ask ourselves is, “Am I being silent to let the Holy Spirit work? Or, is it because I don’t want to look like an idiot in front of my friends?...” The real issue (isn’t it?) is, Do we care more about what other people think of us? Or does honouring God take first priority (as it should)?...

But following Jesus Christ isn’t just about the life-giving words we say... It needs to include our behaviour, day by day – to have the gift of self-discipline, to turn away from sin, and to turn toward all that is beautiful and holy... To be prepared to carry our cross even during the tough times – to learn to surrender into the arms of the One who will never let us down – to live for Christ day by day...

There are countless examples we can use from scripture... Do we remember the woman at Simon’s house (Luke 7) – the woman who seemed to be deeply ashamed of her behaviour in the past. Perhaps she had been searching for love in all the wrong places... She didn’t say a word, but poured out precious ointment and wept at the feet of Jesus...

Remember the “Father” in Jesus’ parables generally represents “God.” Do we remember the disobedient son, who at first didn’t do his father’s bidding, but then went out and did the hard work in the vineyard, to contribute to the family (Matthew 21)?... Do we remember the Lord Jesus cautioning his friends, that we need to be prepared to pick up our cross daily, to follow him (Mark 8)?... Yes; there needs to be “talk” and “walk,” and with the help of God, we need to be consistent...
Our little sacrifices are like grains of sand in comparison to the ocean of love and forgiveness given by Jesus Christ, through his self-offering for you and for me... But there is a small cost to live fully and joy-fully for Christ – reflected by how we speak, and how we live... Thankfully, we receive the Spirit’s help, every step of the way...

When we gather for worship (as we are right now), we often say, “Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,” (or, “Holy Ghost”)... How many countless times have so many of us said these words?... But do we mean it? And, do we live it?... What does it mean for you and for me, to give “glory” to God? What does it mean to give “glory” to God?... It needs to include our talk and our walk...

About this time of year, Christians around the world are observing the Ascension. Luke explains that, 40 days after the resurrection of Jesus Christ (after he appeared to about 540 people on some 11 occasions), Jesus Christ ascended into heaven...

In the ancient Creeds, we confess that Jesus Christ sits at the right hand of the Father. In the ancient world, to be at the right hand of the host was the place of highest privilege. We believe that the glory and honour which is due to Jesus Christ is shown perfectly in this symbolic place of high honour. In the New Testament, we read all the glory, all the honour, all the praise, goes to Jesus Christ, the Son of God -- our humble, perfect, beautiful reigning King... The Letter to the Hebrews begins this way,

[Jesus] reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has obtained is more excellent than theirs... (1: 3-4)

We are all called to give glory to God – really to give the glory to him... Jesus Christ is our risen and ascended King...

The scriptures tell us even more about “glory...” We read that the glory of Jesus is reflected in his Body – the Church... On the night of his betrayal, Jesus prayed for you and me, saying to his heavenly Father, “All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them.” “I am glorified in them.”

We sometimes see the Church as a hodgepodge of folk with a few funny habits and more than a few foibles – but that’s not what God sees: By his grace, he sees us in what we will one day perfectly be – radiant; sinless; sharing fully in the kingship of Jesus Christ as adopted sons and daughters of our True King... The glory belongs to Christ – that’s a special focus of remembering his Ascension... Together – we are collectively his Body, and Christ is the Head – the Church reflects the glory of the risen, ascended Jesus...
So, how do we live this out? And how can we speak about God’s glory?... In the Old Testament, “glory” comes from a word which meant currency had weight, had value... If you were buying goods, your coins would often be weighed on a scale to be sure they had the enough weight, the right value for the purchase... It was sometimes used to refer to rich men (who had a lot of weighty currency)... But “glory” came to mean giving God the right honour that he is due – to give him all the praise, all the glory...

Giving glory, then, means recognizing how wonderful God is. Gratefully we can cherish it, each day... Our hearts receive peace when we dare to accept this stunning offer of love and mercy from the Creator of the universe. We may think we are unworthy – and that’s true. But God’s love for you and me is so strong, God’s desire to be reconciled with his wayward creatures is so powerful, the incarnate Son of God gave his life to smash the power of sin, and to overcome death, that you and I can be friends with him forever... It’s not about us – it’s about this amazing living God we serve...

We’re called to give glory with our lips – to give the Lord praise: We need to acknowledge the reality of God’s power and mercy in our lives. We are also called to show this in how we live – to live in a way which honours God, and loving our neighbours (even our enemies) as ourselves... If we say, “Glory to be the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,” not only do we need to mean it, and we need to live it out...

Thanks be to God for the glorious Ascension of Jesus Christ. To him belongs all honour and glory. May we reflect his glory as his Church. May we give him true praise; and may we live humbly and joyfully for him each day.

Amen.