







that those who care for Hannah will be given the strength and the wisdom to make her life as happy as it can be.

But we have also placed her under the ultimate authority of Jesus Christ. We have promised that she will be brought up by his standards and taught his truth. We have claimed for her the gift of God's Holy Spirit so that she will find it in herself to recognise right from wrong, truth from lies, love from hate, and that she will be given the strength to make the right choices for herself.

Hannah has been born into a home full of love and faith. But she has also been born into a world of evil and hatred and into a society which is becoming increasingly hostile to Christian faith and values. We cannot protect her indefinitely from all that is bad in the world. She will inevitably be hurt, she will inevitably make some big mistakes, she will inevitably have serious doubts about her faith. But while she remains under the authority of Jesus Christ, the Son of God nothing good or true or lovely or loving about her can ever be destroyed. That is worth holding onto.

It is Ascension Sunday. The story in the Bible is quite undramatic. We are just told that Jesus was "taken" and a cloud hid him from sight. It was later Christian traditions that made the whole thing far more "gung-ho" with pictures of Jesus soaring through the skies, golden clouds parting to show the gates of heaven flung wide, hundreds of trumpets sounding a triumphal fanfare, crowds of angels singing, crown and throne waiting ready. We do like a bit of pomp don't we? And why not? It is harmless enough, so long as you remember that these things are only frills.

Jesus did not need crowns and thrones and songs and trumpets to give him authority over heaven and earth. He did not need to play the great dictator. As the Son of God he was essential goodness, truth, love, light and life that could never be destroyed. And those who made the choice to recognise this authority would be given this same indestructible force in them. He would never be gone for good but with us always.

*Don't look back*, said the angels to the disciples, *look forward. He'll return.*

And so he has, hasn't he? In your life and in mine.

Amen.