

Witnesses - Acts 1:6-11
Notes, Family Worship, Bible Reading

Notes from the Sermon

Have you ever been a witness to a crazy event that ended up on the news or something that happened in history? A witness is someone who has received first hand information on something and is therefore able to shed light, share information, or confirm the facts and ideas surrounding that event or issue. Our courts rely on the reliability of true witnesses, but often fail because of false witnesses.

As the story of Acts begins, Jesus parting words to this small band of his first followers prepares them for their task ahead. They will be Holy Spirit empowered witnesses who will take the message of Jesus to the nations. The word "witnesses" here is interesting for two reasons. First, it reminds them and us of our central message. A witness is so much more than a disseminator of information, a witness has personally experienced that of which they testify. We are called to proclaim Christ, to preach Him from our stage on Sunday and to share the message of His death, burial, and resurrection to our neighbors and the nations. But this should never be the dispassionate message of a courier, it should be a message from people who themselves have deeply experienced the reality of the resurrection and can't keep good news to themselves. Second, the Greek word is the word *martyr*. As time went on this word becomes associated with those whose witness led to their suffering and death on behalf of Jesus. In other words, the early church understood faithful witnessed as those who loved Jesus and were passionate about his message, even if it meant laying down their lives. It is this Spirit-filled passionate witness that makes the Gospel so compelling to the world.

Jesus final words then are a promise and a commission. These disciples are told to wait in Jerusalem until the promised Holy Spirit baptizes and fills them. But they are promised that this will happen soon and when it does they will be empowered Kingdom people with Kingdom power, sent with a Kingdom message on a Kingdom mission. They will be witnesses and their reach will begin in Jerusalem, reach Judea and Samaria, and ultimately end with the Gospel going to the ends of the earth where people from every tribe, people group, language, and culture will be reached with the Gospel and join the throng of witnesses, both here on earth and eventually with their praise before King Jesus in heaven (Revelation 7:9).

But in our story, right after saying these words, something unexpected happens. Jesus jets up into the clouds and disappears. This event, which we call the Ascension is both the most cryptic and mysterious aspect of Jesus earthly ministry and maybe the most misunderstood and ignored. But it is important and drenched in meaning. In a real way, what is happening is a coronation of the King. Jesus came as the King of God's Kingdom in birth, but that was obscure. He was rejected as King by Israel and Rome resulting in Jesus' crucifixion. Yet, in a very real way the cross became a throne through which and by which Christ rules the world, turning evil on its head, and destroying the power of death, hell, grave, and the world. He then hangs with this band of followers for 40 days teaching on the Kingdom, which in this text they still show they don't quite get. But then He is taken. Seems odd. Yet, this event is so full of imagery and meaning. First, while the report on the cloud is a true report, we also have to know the stories in the Bible are laden with imagery that connects events. Throughout Scripture the appearances of clouds close to humans is a picture of the glory of God descending on people. In Exodus a cloud leads the people by day, and then a cloud descends on Mount Sinai when the people arrive there. Moses goes up into the cloud on the mountain. Later, Elijah is caught up in a cloud. In these and several other places these clouds are the glory of God coming close to people. But this text is also very closely tied the Daniel's vision of the Son of Man coming to the throne in His coronation to rule. We are to see this event as tied to that Old Testament text. Therefore the coronation is public (notice the number of times it is referenced that the disciples saw this, were watching it, fixed their

eyes). And It is glorious. Some might say this ended the earthly ministry of Jesus. Yet, that is not Luke's take. The ascension to the right hand of the Father and the throne for the King does mean that Jesus in His humanity is not with us. Yet, it is from here that He sends the Holy Spirit to the church who becomes the presence of Jesus in us. Fourth century believer Augustine said it this way, "You ascended before our eyes and we turned back grieving, only to find you in our hearts." From His throne in heaven Jesus rules the nations, advocates and intercedes for His people, and guarantees the success of our mission. He rules as King. His Kingdom is nowhere near a regional political Kingdom, and right now the mission of the Kingdom is the calling out of His people through our faithful witness. So the call is for every follower of Jesus as Spirit filled witnesses forming empowered churches on a Kingdom mission to their neighborhood and region and to the ends of the earth. We are witnesses for Christ, to our neighbors and for the nations.

Bible Reading for the Week

Daily Bible Readings

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Acts 23	Acts 24	Acts 25	Acts 26	Acts 27	Acts 28	1 Samuel 1

Reading from this past week: Acts 1:6-11

Reading in preparation for this coming Sunday: Acts 1:12-26

Family Worship

Song - *I'll Not be Shaken*

<https://youtu.be/Vsg-pLr3iyE>

Gospel Project

Unit: Away from the land

Story: No one is like God.

Big Picture Question: What is God like?

Answer: God is holy, good, and loving.

Scripture: 1 Peter 1

New City Catechism

Question #9: What does God require in the first, second, and third commandments?

Answer: First, that we know God as the only true God. Second, that we avoid all idolatry. Third, that we treat God's name with fear and reverence.

Verse: Deuteronomy 6:13-14

Scripture

Acts 1:6-11

- What is wrong with the disciples understanding of the Kingdom? How does Acts 1:8 reshape the way they are to see the Kingdom of Jesus and their mission?
- What does it mean to be a witness? How can we do this in our city?
- What were the four places or regions mentioned by Jesus? What are our Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and ends of the earth?
- How is Jesus' ascension connected to the promise for their mission?

Prayer

*Pray for that the Holy Spirit would empower us, the church, to be Jesus' witnesses here in Eureka, our region, and all over the world.

*Pray for the final week of the commitment phase of our Rise Up & Build campaign, that God would provide and help us reach our goals.