

Sermon for May 24, 2009

Text: Acts 1:1-11

8:30am, 9:16am, & 11am Worship

Title: Question, Learn, Serve, Multiply

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The Text: Acts 1:1-11 The Message

¹⁻⁵Dear Theophilus, in the first volume of this book I wrote on everything that Jesus began to do and teach until the day he said good-bye to the apostles, the ones he had chosen through the Holy Spirit, and was taken up to heaven. After his death, he presented himself alive to them in many different settings over a period of forty days. In face-to-face meetings, he talked to them about things concerning the kingdom of God. As they met and ate meals together, he told them that they were on no account to leave Jerusalem but "must wait for what the Father promised: the promise you heard from me. John baptized in water; you will be baptized in the Holy Spirit. And soon."

⁶When they were together for the last time they asked, "Master, are you going to restore the kingdom to Israel now? Is this the time?" ⁷⁻⁸He told them, "You don't get to know the time. Timing is the Father's business. What you'll get is the Holy Spirit. And when the Holy Spirit comes on you, you will be able to be my witnesses in Jerusalem, all over Judea and Samaria, even to the ends of the world."

⁹⁻¹¹These were his last words. As they watched, he was taken up and disappeared in a cloud. They stood there, staring into the empty sky. Suddenly two men appeared—in white robes! They said, "You Galileans!—why do you just stand here looking up at an empty sky? This very Jesus who was taken up from among you to heaven will come as certainly—and mysteriously—as he left."

Main Point: Encounters with Jesus happen when we question, learn, serve, and multiply in Christ.

Background

We are continuing to look at the post-Resurrection words of Jesus. These are words that Jesus spoke after he died and was raised again from the dead. He spoke these instructions to his disciples before he ascended into Heaven. Today we are looking at some of the few words of Jesus recorded outside the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The book of Acts, known as the Acts of the Apostles, is really the story of the actions of the Holy Spirit through the apostles and other followers of Jesus. This book is understood to be written by the disciple and physician, Luke. Acts is part two of Luke and serves as a bridge from the story of Jesus to the story of His People.

At the end of Luke, we find the disciples walking back to Jerusalem with instructions to wait for “power from on high.” In the beginning of Acts, Luke summarizes his first book. “Dear Theophilus, [which means “lover of God” and is addressed to all us!] in the first volume of this book I wrote on everything that Jesus began to do and teach until the day he said good-bye to the apostles, the ones he had chosen through the Holy Spirit, and was taken up to heaven.”

1. Encounters with Jesus

Luke then highlights that the resurrection of Jesus was not just a nice idea or wish, but a verifiable reality. “After his death, he presented himself alive to them in many different settings over a period of forty days. In face-to-face meetings, he talked to them about things concerning the kingdom of God. As they met and ate meals together, he told them that they were on no account to leave Jerusalem but “must wait for what the Father promised: the promise you heard from me. John baptized in water; you will be baptized in the Holy Spirit. And soon.”

Here is the evidence: Face-to-face encounters, meals together, various meetings over a forty day period, and eyewitnesses are always present. Jesus was alive in a way no other human in world history had experienced. He was in a new and resurrected body. You could touch it and at the same time he could walk through closed doors! Jesus was who he claimed to be! Jesus was Messiah, the Son of God, and holds all the power of Heaven and Earth in his hands. **We can trust Jesus...**what he says, what he promises, and his ability to do what he said he would do. And here is the promise he had for his disciples: wait and you will be baptized in the Holy Spirit, and soon!

You and I can encounter this same Resurrected Jesus! Jesus is right here. He is wherever you and I go. We connect with him through the practice of prayer, talking to him, hanging out with him, and inviting him to go with us wherever we go. Encounters with Jesus occur when you and I step out and trust him to work in our lives and world. In the last few weeks I have seen the presence of Jesus be evident in hospital rooms, in email prayer requests, in the playing of our new Children’s Music and Mission CD. Where have you seen God at work in and around your life this last week? How have you experienced God recently?

2. Question.

The disciples had questions, lots of questions! So would you and I.

- What did all this mean?
- Jesus was back, but now is he talking about leaving again?
- Are we going to be baptized again? The first showed our commitment to follow God and receive His forgiveness. What will this baptism do?

Please understand that as you and I encounter the risen and living Lord Jesus, we may end up with more questions than answers. Notice in the text the disciples get to know some things, but not everything. They are told much about the Kingdom of God but not when it will be fully manifest. The text says, **“When they were together for the last time they asked, “Master, are you going to restore the kingdom to Israel now? Is this the time?”⁷⁻⁸ He told them, “You don't get to know the time. Timing is the Father's business. What you'll get is the Holy Spirit. And when the Holy Spirit comes on you, you will be able to be my witnesses in Jerusalem, all over Judea and Samaria, even to the ends of the world.”**”

We are told what will happen, but not when. The Kingdom of God will spread in the hearts of men, women, and children as they embrace the love and forgiveness offered in Jesus Christ. We are even told how this will happen. We will be the messengers of God's good news and God is even going to fill us with His Power, His Holy Spirit so we can do our job well. It will start from where we are right now and spread through the world. We still do not know when Jesus will come again with his Angel Armies. The angels in this text were clear: **As the disciples watched, Jesus was taken up and disappeared in a cloud. They stood there, staring into the empty sky. Suddenly two men appeared—in white robes! They said, “You Galileans!—why do you just stand here looking up at an empty sky? This very Jesus who was taken up from among you to heaven will come as certainly—and mysteriously—as he left.”**

How, but not when? We need to stop on this issue for a moment. We like to know when. When are you leaving? When are you coming home? When is this going to begin? When is this going to be over? We like to know when! We think we have more control if we know all the “whens” in life. Many things in life are out of our control. When will this recession stop? When will I be loved? When will I be married? When will the pain stop? When will I die? When will Jesus come and make everything as it should be? We do not know. Jesus said that is God's business not ours. You and I can trust God with this. God's timing is perfect.

3. Learn. Serve. Multiply.

Our business is to get about loving God and loving people. Our business is helping people discover the heart of Christ in the heart of this city. In this community of Christ we do that through: 1) Extravagant Hospitality, 2) Inspiring Worship, 3) Spiritual Growth, 4) Caring Community, 5) Commitment to this City, and 6) Global Outreach and Mission. **Where do we do this?** Our Jerusalem is here in the city of Lancaster, Pennsylvania. **We start here.** We love and serve Lancaster in the Name of Jesus. Our hospitality worship points people to God and helps them **experience** and honor God. Our **questions and learning** opportunities (classes, small groups, retreats, special events)

help deepen our understanding and love of God. Our **servicing** (tutoring, day care, after school programs, community involvements) helps people see God in action. It is love made visible. **We start here and go throughout the world.** Our mission trips in the US and our mission partners in Honduras and Kenya serve the world that Jesus loves. In all these areas, we seek to **multiply** our influence by developing new leaders and more opportunities to question, learn, serve, and multiply.

We may not know the when in our lives, but we can discern the where. Where are you? Where are you in your spiritual journey? Do you feel close to God or far away? Are you energized in loving and serving others or are you empty? Do your questions have you learning more or are you stuck and lost? The good news is that you and I are not alone. Jesus has promised to be with us always and help us no matter where we find ourselves this day.

I encourage you this Memorial Day weekend to stop and examine your life. As we honor those who have served and sacrificed for us, it is fitting for us to stop and reflect.

- Am I blessing the world in this season of my life?
- What am I doing now to make the world a more just, safe, and loving place?
- As I remember veterans and especially my Dad and Uncle Dick, I want to honor them by living my life well now. I want to keep looking how to question, learn, serve, and multiply my life in Christ so more can be blessed.
- How is God going use you and me next? We will discover this as we ask and listen.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, thank you for your love for each one of us here today and the whole globe. We thank you that you keep your promises...you will send your Holy Spirit to claim us as your children, fill us with your love and forgiveness, and give us the power to be your witnesses in Lancaster and around the world. We are waiting for you now. Do your holy work in and through us we pray. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

Charge: Jesus told them, "You don't get to know the time. Timing is the Father's business. What you'll get is the Holy Spirit. And when the Holy Spirit comes on you, you will be able to be my witnesses in Jerusalem, all over Judea and Samaria, even to the ends of the world."

Benediction: Let us go now in the Love of God, the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the awesome power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.