

God on the Move

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[0:00] These last three months we've been going through the book of Luke and I realise today that it's taken us three months to go through five chapters. And we're actually going to take a bit of a pause after this week.

And the journey that we went on was, can we see what the Holy Spirit is doing through the book of Luke? And if you remember, we started in the first week of December and we looked at the Christmas story. And that's where we saw glimpses, fingerprints of what the Holy Spirit is doing. I mean, I'm going to test a few people now just to see if we remember. Let me give you a re-job from Luke chapter one to chapter five. You had Zechariah. You remember him? You had Elizabeth, Mary. You had them.

You had the moment where Jesus is baptised. You had the wilderness. You had him going to the synagogue and dropping the mic. And you had then him healing people.

And so these are all the different things. And we've been looking actually, what does, what has the Holy Spirit been doing in us? And even as I mentioned those names to you, what can you remember? What can you remember? What does the Holy Spirit do? If I asked you, who is the Holy Spirit and what is he doing?

[1:00] Judging from just the story we've been on these last five chapters, what would you say? What would you say? What does the Holy Spirit do? What did the Holy Spirit do for Zechariah?

Cuban, what did the Holy Spirit do? I don't know if it's Zechariah, but he gave somebody a voice. He gave somebody a voice. Yep, that is definitely something there.

He gives. Actually, he gives Mary baby Jesus. And he gives these different gifts as well. What else have we got going on? Jojo, Simo. Actually, no. Anyway, Simo.

What else has the Holy Spirit done in these first five chapters? Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and filled of joy. Yeah.

Right? The Holy Spirit gives joy. In his presence, there is fullness of joy. And so you see Elizabeth that is filled with joy. You've got John the Baptist, baby John the Baptist, who jumps in the womb, filled with joy.

[1:57] Zechariah is revealed the truth. Okay? That, hey, you've been wanting to have a baby for a long time, but here is the moment where it's actually happening. And then let's carry on. Let's carry on into the baptism.

What is the Holy Spirit doing there when Jesus goes and gets baptized? What have we got? Mr. Shum. Revealed. What do you think he's revealing at that moment?

Let's say even in the scene of the baptism. Who Christ is. His identity. That's just huge. And of course, after he's revealed there, he's then led.

So the Holy Spirit does something else, which is he's led into the wilderness to be what? Tested.

And so you see the Holy Spirit leads. He tests. He guides. He reveals.

He anoints. And then in chapter four, Jesus goes to the synagogue, lifts up the scroll, reads from it. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me to proclaim good news to the poor, to the captive, to the broken, to the oppressed.

[2:55] And then he drops the mic and he says, today it is being fulfilled. Today I am him. And then he carries on. And he carries on in chapter five. Oh, Trevor's got it at the moment. And he starts doing some of the miracles.

And he starts healing. And actually, this journey that we've been on, I realized once I was doing my research for this week, I was like, actually, you see the Holy Spirit constantly in every chapter.

Basically, in every story, you see the fingerprints of the Holy Spirit happening. But what happens after this is he starts healing and he starts actually bringing some of these miracles, invading the

natural world into and bringing the supernatural in.

And what happens is actually after this, after the healings, you see him actually really not really mentioning the Holy Spirit much at all. It's almost as if the Apostle Luke is like, hey, guys, you get the point.

Luke chapter five, verse 17, he says, and the power of the Lord is with him. And that's when the healing comes. And last week we talked about the paralyzed man who was lifted up onto the roof and then lowered down by his friends.

[3:55] And you see him, there's just this beautiful moment where this paralyzed man, he got more than what he came for. He wanted to start walking, but he had his whole being was forgiven. Salvation was this holistic thing.

It's Jesus, as Keller said, that actually your sickness is not your fundamental problem. That is not the most fatal thing about you. You're the most fundamental problem that you have is your sin.

It's not your cancer. It is not your paralysis. It is your whole being. And I have come to save you, your whole you. And so then he kind of goes off and we hear lots more of the miracles.

And as I was tracing through, I realized actually the Holy Spirit, which is the kind of our mission, isn't really mentioned explicitly that much anymore. In Luke chapter 10, Jesus is praying in the Holy Spirit and he's filled with joy again.

And Luke chapter 11, it's the Lord's Prayer. And then it's saying, hey, actually, God will give those who ask good things and he will give you the Holy Spirit. And so if I have a look at this, Luke is kind of where we're going to have a little bit of a pause, because later in the book of Acts, when Luke writes his sequel, you see the Holy Spirit coming again.

[5:03] And he's just constantly everywhere. But if you were to ask me, actually, well, what is the Holy Spirit? And maybe one term that I've found is most helpful for me is that the Holy Spirit is God on the move.

The Holy Spirit is God on the move, carrying out miracles, but actually with a very specific mission himself. You see in the book of John, chapter 14 to chapter 16, actually, chapter 14 to chapter 17 in John is basically Jesus's final words.

And if you're looking at you, I need to know more about Jesus, then go there. Go there and have a look. And he talks about this a lot in those few chapters. He says, hey, it's better for you that I go because someone's going to come. A helper is going to come and he's going to be revealing truth. You know, he says, I'm the way, the truth and the life and where I'm going, you can't come. But don't worry, I'm sending someone to help you. And in chapter 15, it says, the Spirit will bear witness. What does the Holy Spirit do?

The Holy Spirit points people to Jesus. The Holy Spirit is God on the move, pointing people to Jesus. And we will be the witnesses. And you see this carrying on in the book of Acts.

[6:09] What does he say just before he flies off? In Acts chapter 1, before he flies off, he says, the Holy Spirit will come upon you and you will be my witnesses. In Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

And in Acts chapter 2, you see Peter filled with the Holy Spirit and give the kerygma, which is proclaiming the gospel. And then people are cut to the heart. And then thousands are added. And you see Pentecost really pushing the gospel.

The movement of God. God on the move. We, then, are all witnesses. I think I was talking maybe to Charlotte, and you found out about this last week. Like, actually, it doesn't really matter what job you're in.

It doesn't really matter what role you play in society. Technically, you, we, as soon as we become Christians, are people who are witnesses. Who's in full-time ministry here?

Just out of interest. Who's in full-time ministry and would class themselves as a missionary? Can I just see a... Actually, can I invite you to stand up? I promise this ties in with the message today.

[7:14] Just stand up. If you are a full-time missionary... Thank you. Thank you. Please take a seat. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Please take a seat.

These are people who have said, I'm going to commit my whole life, all my time, into following God and proclaiming the good news.

But if you think about the word missionary, you think about this really holy person. You think about Hudson Taylor, the guy in the 1800s who came to China from England, from Barnsley in England, and then he'd come and he'd start China Inland Mission.

That is now called OMF. And you think about these people who go all these really far lands to spread the gospel, these brave, courageous men and women. And often you don't think about yourself.

But let me pose something to us here today. What if the moment you accepted Christ, you became a witness?

[8:16] You are essentially a missionary. Instead of the handful of people that just stood up, imagine if I can convince you today and remind you today that actually all of us are missionaries.

Because the truth is this. If you've been a recipient of the good news, it is impossible for you to hold that good news to yourself. Because what's the very nature of news?

Is that you have to pass it on. The moment you don't pass on news, what does it become? It becomes old news. The point of the good news is it just keeps going. You keep passing it on. What if the moment you accepted Christ, when you were filled with the Holy Spirit and you declared that he is Lord, that is the moment you are filled with the Spirit to go and take this message to the next place?

I ask you the other question that comes to mind then is, are you doing that? Are you being a witness to him? Are you fulfilling? That word missionary, all it really means is that there were people with a mission.

If you put it like that, you're like, well, I guess I haven't been following my mission. And you're like, oh, well, I didn't receive a mission.

[9:23] Well, you did. Matthew 28, we've all received the mission, the co-mission. Can you go and make disciples of all nations? And so for us, do we hold that good news and do we sit and do we not move with it and do we keep it inside and ask, just ask God, hey, how can you make my life better?

Or actually, the moment you receive that good news, does it transform you and take you on a different trajectory that pushes you? Because when the Holy Spirit is inside you, when God is on the move, you move.

And so this brings me to actually the final passage that on this series that we're going to do, because as I was scanning through the book of Luke, where is the Holy Spirit mentioned? There's actually one more place that I haven't mentioned, and that is in Luke chapter 12.

And it so happens to be about witnessing and about being missionaries, carrying the good news of Jesus. And I'll be honest with you. There was a moment, there was a temptation in me that was like, you know what? Maybe I won't preach on this bit because it's hard.

It's about the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. And I was like, this kind of. And actually, if you look, preachers often try to avoid this passage because it's one of those confusing ones that maybe a lot of people struggle to understand.

[10:33] And I was like, well, our mission since the beginning of December was to go through the book of Luke and to trace and be investigators to see what the Holy Spirit is doing. Then we can't really leave this final one out. And so here we are.

And we're going to go through Luke chapter 12. If you open up your Bibles, Luke chapter 12, verse 8 to 12. And I'm going to ask Dr. Trevor to come up and read us the word of God.

So Luke chapter 12. Have we got it? Luke chapter 12, verse 8 to 12. Can I invite you to stand for the word of God? And I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before men, the son of man also will acknowledge before the angels of God.

But the one who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God. And everyone who speaks a word against the son of man will be forgiven. But the one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.

And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious about how you should defend yourself or what you should say. For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.

[11:46] This is the word of God. Please take a seat. Thank you, Trevor. So we're all witnesses.

And you see from here, and we're going to talk a little bit about what it means to be a witness. A witness of Jesus. And it starts off with saying this, verse 8. And I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before men, the son of man will also acknowledge before the angels of God. And so the first point here is this act of witnessing. This intentionality that's required for us to be witnesses. We can actually, we only have two choices. We either acknowledge or we deny.

Last week we talked about the paralyzed man who was lowered down into the house. And then, of course, Jesus causes chaos and confusion because instead of healing the man, he says, you're forgiven.

And then everyone's just bewildered, flabbergasted by this. The Pharisees, the teachers of the law, who we have a lot of sympathy and empathy for because these people were trying to help the Israelites not violate the law, right?

[12:51] So they were trying to build things around the law for 400 years as they were holding the fort down before the Messiah came. They were like, guys, hold fort. Don't break. Don't hold the formation.

Don't follow the way of this world. And so I love their heart. But what happened was they took the people, the connection out, and they focused on the program and the compliance.

And when you have the program over the people, that's when you lose the connection and you end up with just compliance and you saw their hearts were getting hard. And so I don't blame them sometimes for what they tried to do, but they just lost focus at the very end.

And so then what we see here is Jesus completely just shocks them and says, I am the son of man, essentially. And I have the power to forgive and I have the power to heal.

And in that moment, that man, that paralyzed man gets up. And as I asked you last week, that moment that man got up, you would have actually had to make a decision. In that moment, as that man started to walk home, you would have had to decide if you were in the crowd that day, do I walk with this man and believe in Jesus or do I stay here and deny him?

[13:57] Because the evidence is clear. You don't really have a choice. And this is the thing about Jesus. This is the thing about following Jesus. You can't just head your bed and stay in the middle. You have to decide, am I going to acknowledge him or am I going to deny him?

And you see this happening here. And Jesus is saying, hey, there's only two options. Will you choose to acknowledge me? Here's the problem, though. This was during a time where there was heavy persecution.

If you chose to follow Jesus, it would mean so many things. It would mean your family will turn against you. It will mean that you will lose your business. It could mean that you will be put into prison.

It could mean that you would lose your life. So the consequences were very clear for people in this book at that time that if you choose Jesus, this is what will happen.

If you don't, this is what will happen. Now, the truth is this still happens today in this world. It just doesn't happen in Hong Kong. There are people around the world who are forced to either acknowledge or deny him.

[14:59] But in Hong Kong, we don't have to. The danger, though, is that when you don't have to pick or when there are no consequences to your choice, you end up not picking at all.

So the question that I have for us is, what does actually acknowledging him mean for us here?

Actually, for us in this society where actually you can just acknowledge that you're a Christian and you go to church and you won't really suffer any consequences.

But what does that actually mean? And so what does it mean for you? I can remember when I was a maybe 13-year-old, as I told you before, I grew up in the late 1900s where there was something that was really popular, which was these wristbands that had WWJD on.

What does WWJD stand for? What would Jesus do? What would Jesus do? And I had a rainbow one. That was just the coolest. And I remember wearing it to school. And then Philip, Philip, this friend that I had, well, he's not a friend.

This guy that I had sat next to me in science. He's like, what's that bracelet? Isn't that a Christian bracelet? And I was like, no. He's like, what does it stand for?

[16:04] I don't know. Someone gave it me. You know, 13-year-old James. Well, it turns out I felt stupid afterwards because he's like, well, I'm a Christian. I was like, dang. Dang, you acknowledge him and I just denied him.

But sometimes we have that. Maybe one way that we don't acknowledge him in our lives in this is actually we just don't want people to know where we spent Sunday morning. We just don't want people to know where we spent Thursday evening.

You know, it's just easy if they don't know that I'm a Christian. Maybe there's things in my life that I'm still doing and I'm still talking about and I'm still showing that, you know, it is for the best that

they don't know that I'm a Christian. And I remember I went on that journey as a 13-year-old. And when I got to university, I actually had a very different mindset. I was like, no, I have to. I have to find ways to be able to share with people that I go to church, that I'm a Christian. This was my maybe well-intentioned act to try and go, hey, how can I spread the gospel?

So the question I used to have for my friends a lot. Now, if you grew up in university in England, you know that actually every Monday what everyone will ask each other isn't really how are you is what did you do last night? Or what did you do that weekend?

[17:09] What did you do last weekend? Right. And I would love asking that question. What did you do? And they'd be like, oh, I don't remember. It was the best time of my life, but I don't remember it. I was like, isn't that just an oxymoron? That just doesn't make sense. How can you have the best night of your life and you not remember any of it?

And then, but I would say, well, what did you do? And I'd be like, well, I went to church. I used to love saying it. And I, again, maybe you can track where, what age I am. When I was at university, maybe second or third year, the Da Vinci Code came out.

Whose was the Da Vinci Code? Loved that movie. I loved the books. And I remember using that as a platform. Yeah, this is a perfect opportunity. Have you watched the Da Vinci Code? And some will say yes.

And the ones who said yes, I'm like, well, what do you think about it? Do you think it's true? Do you think Jesus is real? Jesus is real. Here's my Bible. Take it. Read it. Pray. Say the Lord's Prayer. Oh, but the sinner's prayer must be first.

Say that one first. So I started to find opportunities to be able to share the gospel. But I wonder whether for us, actually, we spend most of our time just being silent about our relationship with God.

[18:08] I wonder whether there are moments when we are actually living and going about our day away from a Sunday where actually we don't really look that different. I also grew up in a time where there was a movement in the church called the Seeker Sensitive Movement, which is where, hey, let's make the church as just comfortable and as relatable as possible to the people outside.

The whole point is the reputation of the church for the longest time has been church people are conservative, are strict, are obnoxious and arrogant and just weird.

So there was a season in my life where you started seeing these church movements happen where it's like, hey, guys, we are so normal. We listen to the same music you do.

There was a church that I went to that actually sang Fix You by Coldplay. It's just, I mean, great song, by the way. It's like, look how normal we are. We're just like you.

Isn't that cool? We're not freaks. And I remember thinking that. And I used to love, because being around sports guys and playing sports, it would always be like, oh. I used to love it when people say, oh, you're a Christian.

[19:17] I couldn't tell. But you're just like the rest of us. And I was like, yeah, exactly. Me and you, we're just cool. It was only afterwards I realized, oh, wait. I'm supposed to be different.

In my attempts to make you feel more comfortable, I've become just like you. In my attempts to prove to you that Jesus is relevant and relatable, I've come down to how you live your life.

And I'm not saying we are superior and they are inferior. I'm saying that the values that we seek to hold, we have let go, we've loosened or we've lowered in order to help people feel comfortable.

When Jesus says, if you acknowledge me, if you don't blend into society, if you actually live differently, that's what it means to be like me.

It doesn't make sense, because we've tricked ourselves into thinking, if we are good Christians, then we are good people, then we'll be well-liked, and then we'll have these wonderful lives. And then Jesus says, wait, but they hated me first, and they will hate you if you followed my path.

[20:27] Do we acknowledge him or do we deny him? Do we stay silent when there are things happening around us? We're like, you know what, it's better just not to speak. When you know it's wrong.

When you know there's bullying that's happening in your workplace or in your school. You know you shouldn't be doing that. They shouldn't be doing that. And yet somehow you just stay silent. Do we acknowledge him and just his very presence with us?

And I was sharing this with one of my Young Life staff this week who just went into ministry. And he was like, actually, it was much easier being a Christian when I was in the corporate place. Because in some ways, you kind of, and this is his words, he was like, in some ways, you would go to work,

and you'd be like, God, you have placed me in this God-forsaken land, doing this work with these people who don't know you.

And this is the battle of light and darkness. And so he felt as though before he would go into work knowing that that was his mission. And then he sits in Young Life, and he's like, but this is so weird. The lines blur. Suddenly it becomes hard to know what you're really living for and really striving for, because everything is just a bit of a mix. And I said this to him.

[21:41] I said, gosh, that is so true. Actually, you could be a pastor and completely ignore the presence of God in your life for that whole week and just do things for God without actually talking to him and spending any time with him.

You get so busy doing things for God that you're actually completely ignoring him. Chinese kids will know that feeling, because that's often how Chinese people care for one another.

Parents who think that they're loving you and doing everything that they can, but not really having the connection. And I'll tell you, as ministers, as pastors, that's just as dangerous for us.

We can completely deny the presence of Jesus in our lives, even when we mean the best. And what about his identity? I talk about Hudson Taylor, one of the famous missionaries coming from England to China.

He said this, either Jesus is Lord of all or not at all. Either Jesus is Lord of all or not at all. And so often we say that he's Lord, but then we don't live.

[22:46] I mean, Jesus says this, he says, you call me Lord and yet you didn't do anything that I say. What does the word Lord mean? He's either Lord of all or not at all.

He's either acknowledge or deny. And maybe sometimes we deny his teaching. We deny his teaching on marriage. We deny his teaching on money. We deny his teaching on all these other things. And you're like, oh, but that's a little bit too hardcore for this society.

Well, here's the thing. When we deny his teaching, what we're actually saying is that Jesus, we know better than you. When we say, oh, well, let's just wash that bit down so it's not as hard to understand and comprehend and follow.

Well, that's when we're saying, well, actually, this guy, this Lord says this, but hey, I know better. He'll actually give you a pass. It's okay. That's us saying, hey, actually, we know better. That's us not acknowledging who he truly is.

That's us not acknowledging his identity. Us not acknowledging his presence nor his teaching. So I turn the question back around to us. As you look at your life, as you take an order of your life from Sunday all the way to Sunday again, even the weekdays, when you sign up to be a Christian, it was for every day.

[23:53] Do you acknowledge him? Or do you deny him? Because Jesus says, but the one who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God. Dwight Moody was another famous evangelist.

And he has this quote that I love, and I'll read it out to you. It says this, out of 100 men, one will read the Bible. The other 99 will read the Christian. Out of 100 men, one of you will read the Bible.

The others will read the Christian. We're going to look at this person who's reading the Bible. This is your colleagues and your families and your friends, by the way. They're going to look at you or you read the Bible. Are you any different?

We're going to look at your life and see if it's any different. If it's not any different, then we don't need to read it either. Dwight Moody ended up inspiring a man called Billy Graham, another famous evangelist, who said this, We are the Bibles the world is reading.

We are the creeds the world is needing. We are the sermons the world is heeding. We are the Bibles that the world is reading. So here's another fun question. If we did a poll for your friends on you, what would they say about you?

[25:06] Would they say, oh, Kenneth's a great guy. He's just like us. Or would they say, oh, there's something different about Kenneth? Actually, maybe in the past he would have done this, but we're starting to see that he's doing this.

He's just different. And this is especially hard for those who are lawyers, who are bankers in this world, where the spirit of the fields that you're in runs so contradictory to the spirit of God.

That's why Romans 12 says don't conform to the patterns of this world. But be transformed by the renewing of your mind. And you'll discover the good and perfect will of God.

One that is different. The act of witnessing. Verse 10. Let's carry on. And everyone who speaks a word against the son of man will be forgiven. But the one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.

This is the verse that I was hoping to avoid. But here we are. Commentators have been debating what this has meant for years. Christians have been very scared about this passage for years.

[26 : 10] Because we hear the gospel, which is, hey, there is no sin too great that God won't forgive it. Right? You hear that. And then suddenly you see here in Luke chapter 12, you see in Matthew 12 and Mark 3, the same account where Jesus says, but actually there is one sin.

There is one sin that won't be forgiven. And that has scared people for a long, long time. But I'll tell you this. If you're scared by that passage, then that actually already says that you're going to be okay.

And let me explain to you what that really means here. Because the whole point is saying, actually, if we quickly scroll, maybe this will be helpful to all of us. If we quickly scroll to Matthew chapter 12, just so we get a little bit more of the context.

Because actually the account of Luke doesn't go into the detail, but Matthew and Mark do. So Matthew and Mark talk about this. So we're going to go to Matthew chapter 12. And you see him saying this line in verse 31.

Therefore, I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people. But the blasphemy against the spirit will not be forgiven. What's he talking about? What happens here is actually there's a demon oppressed man who was blind and mute, was brought to him and he healed him.

[27 : 24] And then the people were questioning, wait, how did this guy get healed? How did this blind and mute man get healed? And someone, some bright spark came up with the idea that maybe it's Beelzebub.

It is only by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons. This is what, as simply as I can put it, and as simply as I understand this, the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is when you attribute the work of God to the work of Satan.

When you outright look at something that God is doing and you deny with your whole existence that that is not God, but that is Satan. So this isn't just a casual, oh, I slipped the slip of the tongue.

Oh, I blaspheme the Holy Spirit. It doesn't work like that. When you blaspheme the Holy Spirit, it is a deliberate, hard-hearted, intentional word that you say or just belief that you hold.

As you look around at this world, as you look around at the works that are happening and going, that is not God. Jesus is not Lord. So it's a very existence as a very being, which is why I'm going to say, I'm going to question that maybe those of us out here, we won't be guilty of that because that's not how we feel.

[28 : 36] We, of course, we are sinners and we make mistakes, but we are not intentionally, deliberately attributing something that God is doing and saying, that's the devil.

That's the context that we see in Matthew. That's the context that we see in Mark. So as we look at Luke, I believe it's the same context where actually we won't have to be worried about this because it isn't just a casual word that we say that ends up being unforgiven.

This is a lot more than this. This is a wholehearted commitment to going against God. And you see, 1 Corinthians 12 says this, that if you have the Holy Spirit in you and you can say Jesus is Lord and that already proves that actually you are not going to be blaspheming against the Holy Spirit.

If you're wondering about the Holy Spirit, if you're wondering whether you have the Holy Spirit in you, the very fact that you can say Jesus is Lord, the fact that you can attribute the acts that he's doing to him is already a sign that the Holy Spirit is in you.

So we don't really have to be worried about that. But it does tell us something about the heart of witnessing, that our hearts need to be pure, that our hearts can't be hard when it comes to witnessing.

[29 : 42] Because we know that denial is not the final, final sin that won't be forgiven. You see Peter denying God three times. But that wasn't his final verdict.

In fact, you see the journey from Luke 22 where Peter denies Jesus to Acts 2 where he is just filled with the Spirit declaring who Jesus is. So if you're even worried about that at all, if this has been part of your mindset at all, that there is a sin that is unforgivable, that you might be guilty of it, let me just assure you right now.

The fact that you can say that Jesus is Lord, the fact that you attribute what he's doing to him already means that's all we need to know. And that's what you can feel assured by. The heart of witnessing is really just the heart and it isn't any casual slip of the tongue. And whether there are people who actually won't be forgiven, we won't know. It's only God who knows. Because we've seen the most staunch atheists, the most terrible murderers who deny God's existence, who worship even the devil. But you see by God's grace, they are turned around. [30 : 47] So we don't know what the final word is. And that's not any of our business. But for us, we don't have to worry is maybe the only thing I'll say about that. The act of witnessing, the heart of witnessing. And finally, the words that come from it.

And verse 11 says this. And when we're back in Luke now. And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious about how you should defend yourself or what you should say.

For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say. Let me say one thing about this first. When you choose to live differently for God, you will get attention.

You will. It is inevitable that you will get attention. He says when and when they bring you before the synagogues, the rulers and the authorities.

It is inevitable. And it's well, none of us are going to be brought in front of a synagogue here. But any of the rulers and the powers that be in your life. When you stand up for what you believe in, you will hit resistance.

[31 : 48] Jesus promises that. And so that's an interesting one itself. In Matthew chapter five, I'm going to quickly turn there to Jesus in his sermon on the mount talks a lot about this.

He talks about, oh, he's got the Beatitudes that Wes has been memorizing. How are we doing, Wes, with that? Not great. Oh, great. God's grace is with you.

Blessed are you. Chapter five, verse 11. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad for your reward is great in heaven for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you. How? That doesn't sound blessed to me.

But when we speak up, when we acknowledge the presence of God, when we acknowledge the identity of God, when we acknowledge the work and the power of God, others will utter all kinds of evil against us.

[32 : 54] He also says, of course, that we are light of the world. And when others see our good works, they will give glory to our father who is in heaven. Can you imagine the disciples who heard this saying, hey, if you acknowledge me, when you when not if when you come in front of the synagogues and the rulers and authorities, you'll be fine.

Just to maybe add a little bit more color to this. The people that he was talking to were fishermen were commoners, maybe even literate. And he's saying, when you go against the powers of the day who have the Torah memorized, you're going to be OK.

You, lowly fishermen, will be able to out debate the Pharisees of the day. Can you imagine?

Can you just feel how daunting that task would have been for these people? Women who weren't even trusted to be witnesses in court. Would now feel the power of the spirit as they speak and defend.

That's what he's saying. I mean, I don't think we have to even stretch that far. If I even asked one of you, hey, can you preach next week? Shigala, can you preach next week? Shigala just shot me in the eye and looked like a face like, what?

[34 : 13] No. How? How? And that's with, well, on the most part, friendly people. Apart from a couple of faces. Fellow Christians. What he's saying is, when you are stood in front of synagogue rulers and authorities, you're going to be just fine.

Can you imagine how encouraging that would have been? How assuring, but also how terrifying that would have been. It's the same thing. Are you going to acknowledge or are you going to deny? When will it happen? And at that moment, you'll be given the words to say. Often you're like, okay, well, if I stand up for Jesus, if I tell my friends I'm not going to go to that party, if I tell my friends that this isn't how I'm going to kind of operate on a work with the attitude that everyone else is holding, that I won't gossip behind my boss's back.

If I tell my friends that I'm not going to say, I don't know what to say.

But just a little pause on this question, because I've been there. When I walk into a situation and come to a conversation, I'm like, this guy is going to eat me up for lunch because he is so much smarter than I. And yet I sit and I go, Holy Spirit, what is it that you have to say?

[35:48] Because actually your foolishness is even better, stronger than his wisdom. And just a word on this. Billy Graham says this. For those who want to be successful evangelists, he says this.

Spend more time in study and prayer. That's the secret of successful evangelism. Spend more time in study and prayer. I've recognized this in my own life when I'm speaking to people and having hard conversations, that actually my knowledge of the word of God will help me with my sensitivity to the voice of God.

And then I will know what to say. So if you're sat there thinking, well, I don't know the words to say. Well, the words are right here. Read it. Study it. Pray it.

The Holy Spirit will speak to you, will spook through you. But really, you have to do something as well. You've got to give him some material to use. And I'm sorry, he won't always or really ever use all those Instagram reels that you watch.

That is not where your source of inspiration should come from. IG reels are not the word of God. Those bite-sized quotes that we see are not going to help you in your time of need.

[37:03] But the word of God will. So would you spend time in his word? Would you know his word? And I promise you this, because this happened in my own life, that when you spend time in getting to know his word, he will use his word and he will speak through you.

And he will give you the word to say, but only if you know his word. We were with Nicky Gumbel a couple of weeks ago, and he was quoting a pastor from England called J. John.

And just to paraphrase, I think he was paraphrasing J. John, so I'm just going to paraphrase him saying it. And he's saying, if you want to hear the voice of God, read the Bible. If you want to hear the voice of God aloud, read the Bible aloud.

And the point was, God has already spoken. We keep saying, I really want to hear you, God. I really want to hear you. Have you read the Bible? Well, the Bible is quite hard. I'm quite busy.

I can't understand it. Well, then you don't really want to hear from God because God's already spoken to you. And it is through his word that he will then speak through you. So when you are stood having those hard conversations, if you spent time in study and prayer, you better know that it will be him that will speak through you through those words.

[38:13] And you might also say, well, who am I? How am I going to convince these people? Well, that's the point because it's not you on the move. It's God on the move. You're not trying to spread. You're not trying to create good news.

You are just passing the good news along. I talked about Hudson Taylor. There's another famous missionary called Robert Morrison. He came actually in the early 1800s again to China.

And he was asked about this. He was asked, hey, what impact are you hoping to have? What spiritual impact are you hoping to have on the Chinese? And then he said this, and I love this line. He said, no, sir, I don't think I'll have any impact, but I expect God will.

That's it. When you stand before the rulers and authorities of the day, when you stand in front of the powers that are around your life, and that could be just in the form of that uncle who is terrifying at the family dinner, or it could be that boss who is not godly at all, you will have the words to say.

God will be the one that speaks through you. And it will be God who will have the effect and impact, not you. That should free you. Well, I don't have to convince this person.

[39:18] I don't need to engage in this apologetics debate because I know he will beat me, but the Holy Spirit will give me the words that I need to say. The act of witnessing, the heart of witnessing, and the words that come are all from God.

So just to conclude here, God is on the move. That's what we see as we look at these first five chapters. Luke stops talking too much about the Holy Spirit from here because it's kind of like, look, you get the point.

Even Christ himself relied on the Holy Spirit. Even Christ himself was filled with the power of the Lord to be able to heal. And so we see God is on the move, carrying out his will.

Would we be willing to be those witnesses? Empowered by the Holy Spirit, encouraged by the Holy Spirit, and assured that actually it's going to be okay. But one final thought just before I ask you all to stand up and declare that you are missionaries.

Be prepared. Be prepared that when you witness, it may not go the way that you expect it to.

[40:20] Jesus says, for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what to say. I think about him. As we're getting up to Easter, I started to think about him, and I look at the account of Luke later on in chapter 20.

He's put in front of the people who are accusing him again, who are challenging his authority. And look at chapter 22 when he's born in front of Pilate. And then Pilate sends him to Herod.

And then Herod doesn't know what to do, so sends him back to Pilate. And you see Jesus put his money in his mouth, and you see him standing in front of the authorities.

The Holy Spirit tells him what to say. But it doesn't necessarily end. Sorry. It doesn't necessarily end the way we thought it would.

When you are filled with the Holy Spirit, it doesn't mean that you will then get the successes of this world that you're expecting. God is on the move, and it isn't just to do what we think he should be doing.

[41:25] God is on the move and doing whatever he wants to do. And you see Jesus being filled with the Holy Spirit, being challenged by Pilate, being challenged by Herod. The Holy Spirit gives him the words to say.

But it doesn't end up saving Pilate. It doesn't end up saving Herod. In fact, it ends up killing himself. It reminds me that when we say God is on the move, we have to humble ourselves and go, God, you do whatever you want to do.

The KPIs, the amount of souls that enter into the kingdom of heaven, is not my business. All I am asked to do is entrust myself to you.

Holy Spirit, would you move in the way that you want to? And as Jesus followed the Holy Spirit, he got to the point where he was on the cross, where he said, Father, into your hands I commit your spirit.

I'm going to finish with one last passage that I can see from Romans 11. Maybe you can turn with me there just to finish here. The Apostle Paul talks about life in the Spirit.

[42:33] And he says this, Jesus, led by the Spirit himself, ended up being led into the wilderness, but ultimately being led onto the cross.

And yet we thought, well, that's a failure. Maybe I shouldn't follow the Holy Spirit then. But the truth is God is on the move, and that wasn't the final bit either. The very spirit that Jesus was following was the very spirit and the power that ended up raising him from the grave.

And then the Apostle Paul here says, that very spirit is the spirit that lives inside you. So as you stand in front of the people that scare you, as you stand in front of those who are haters, who are trying to pull you down, you can stand there knowing that your future is secure, that your identity is secure, your faith is secure.

Lean into him. Follow his spirit. Allow him to speak through you. Acknowledge that he is Lord of all in every aspect of your life.

Submit to him. Trust him. Rely on him. Know that he'll be the one that speaks through you and that you're supposed to be different. That yes, you are supposed to attract attention.

[44:07] And yes, some of it is negative attention. But never lose sight that God is on the move. We stand on the shoulders of the giants who come before us.

We sit here as English-speaking, majority English-speaking Chinese people, because men and women laid down their lives to take this good news to this land here.

And if you just trace the history of Christianity, it goes from Jerusalem and it goes towards the West and it just keeps traveling around the world. And you see it going to places where it's the hardest and you think that it won't survive there.

But then you don't take into account that it's because God is on the move. It will not only survive, it will thrive. So long, so long as there are people like you, an eye willing to stand up and acknowledge who he is and not deny or pretend he's not there or minimize him into this pocket genie that's only interested in our own well-being.

But this is God on the move and he is far bigger than we realize and he's far more powerful than we realize. Would we acknowledge him? Would we take up our cross and follow him?

[45:29] And would we heed his words and be those who carry this mission forward? So I ask you now, would you be willing to be a missionary?

I'll tell you something even better. You can be a missionary and keep your job. How about that? How about you be a missionary where God has placed you?

How about you stand up and acknowledge him in the presence of your enemies? How about you do that? And I'll tell you something that's encouraged me about being in Hong Kong.

I can look around now and I see there are a few of you here who have bosses who are followers of Christ. So you have nothing to worry about. If you stand up and acknowledge him, he's put people around you to back you up.

He's put people around you to keep you safe. But my final thought is, well, how about you stand up for him and not worry at all, even if it means you end up on the cross?

[46 : 35] Why? Because your eyes are set on Jesus. That's what Jesus had right in Hebrews 12. For the joy that was set before him, he willingly took on the cross.

I think the kingdom of heaven is moving. I think it requires people who are willing to open themselves up to the Holy Spirit and ask them, Holy Spirit, what do you want me to do? What do you want me to say? Who do you want me to stand in front of?

I just want to live radically for you. In my safe, secure job, wherever you take me, I will follow.

Can I ask us to stand? I'm going to invite Kelly. Before Kelly leads us in the song, I just want to give you a little bit of space.

Would you acknowledge him? Would you acknowledge him before men? Would you recognize what the Holy Spirit is doing?

[47 : 42] In you and through you. And would you accept the mission that he has called you to? Every Christian is a missionary.

Every Christian is a missionary because every follower of Christ has been commissioned to make disciples. To preach the good news of Jesus wherever they are taken.

What I'd love for us to do now is I want to give you an opportunity to respond. Actually, it may have been better if I asked your first daughter to sit, but maybe we're all standing outside.

It's fine. If you feel that the Lord is calling you to something, that you are supposed to be, you want to be the missionary that you're supposed to be, can I invite you just to open up your hand or to even raise your hand?

I'm not going to embarrass you. And honestly, this is just a little bit of a practice because if you can't do it here, you might not be able to do it in your office. If you can't acknowledge him here amongst brothers and sisters, then yes, you're going to find it very hard to acknowledge him in the face of resistance.

[49 : 06] But this signal that you use your hands to show may it be a start. May it be a start of you acknowledging him before men.

And you saying, yes, Lord. Here I am. Send me. I'm willing to carry this good news to wherever you, wherever you ask me to.

Holy Spirit, you are on the move.

Holy Spirit, you are on the move. Your kingdom is growing.

And we ask, would it grow in our hearts? Would you become Lord of all? And would you raise a generation of people who would worship you, who choose to ascend your hill, who you give clean hands and pure hearts to?

[50 : 49] Lord, for those of us who have raised their hands or opened their hands, we commit to being missionaries. In the field of finance.

In the field of education. In the field of law. And in all the other places that you've placed us in.

Holy Spirit, would you use us as you wish. Take us to the world that is paralyzed by fear.

That is numbed by all the distractions around. We believe there is more than this.

Than what we see. Holy Spirit, move. Move. Lord, have your way.

[52 : 21] Would you fill us up and send us out? Would we be people who are bearer of good news, of joy, of peace?

Holy Spirit, would we just be in tune with whatever that you are doing?

We follow your lead. We acknowledge you. We trust you. We worship you.

Thank you, Lord. In your name we pray. Amen.