

You Will Be My Witnesses

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[0:00] Yeah, it's good to see everyone after Easter. And just to reiterate what Alex said, Yeah, we realize we are quite crowded. And we do care about safety. So we've got the fans.

We're also getting new chairs in, so we'll have a few more chairs for people. We also need some help after lunch to move chairs back to the main church. So if you're sticking around after lunch, please help us with that. And yeah, another thing, there's Bibles in that white bookshelf by the entrance.

So on your way in, you can feel free to grab a Bible and then return it there afterwards because we're going to be looking at the Word today. So yeah, for the next few months, we're starting a new series, Going Through the Book of Acts.

And last week we had Easter, but before that, we went through a journey through the Psalms looking at various spiritual disciplines. And one thing that I really loved about that series that I want to highlight is that I think many of us really took what we heard to heart.

And I want to celebrate that. A lot of us tried fasting. I heard from Aiden yesterday that his whole life group together was fasting. That's something to celebrate.

[1:09] Shout out to Paul, who started a scripture memory group. I think we have 24 people in it. Every week, Paul is encouraging us. He'll chase you down to memorize scripture. So if you want, you can talk to him.

Love that. We've had life groups lamenting together. How do you get these big, rough guys talking about their feelings and expressing their emotions together? Bringing that to the Lord. We managed to get that in lament.

Solitude. Some people started a regular practice of solitude. I know Trevor went off for a day to the peak on retreat and he said he needed that. He heard from the Lord. We also got people saying, I want to worship.

We got Calvin Godfrey stepping up to help on slides. I want to serve this community together.

There's newcomers sticking around for lunch for the discipline of peopling because we don't just gather to listen to a sermon, but we want to participate in this community.

Confession. One life group stayed here in the 14th floor on Thursday until midnight confessing their sins to one another. I think they well deserve the name Crybabies.

[2:15] But yeah, that's something to celebrate. So praise God. I'm really glad to see that. We didn't just listen to the spiritual disciplines, hear about it, but we took it to heart and took action. I'm hoping that's something we can do, not just in Lent, but continuing on for the weeks, months to come.

And also as we listen to Acts, we can take that to heart too. So recently we've been looking inwards at our disciplines and our practices, the spiritual disciplines.

Most of them are individual things, things that we can do individually. So now we're thinking it's time to look outwards, not just inwards at ourselves, but to look outwards.

As we become disciplined disciples, we also follow Christ's commands. Go and make disciples of all nations. As we desire and delight in the Lord, that should move us to share in that joy, share in that delight with others.

When there's good news, we want to share it with others. For example, did you see McDonald's downstairs? I reopened. Yeah. James is really happy about that. Yeah, it's huge, right?

[3:23] Ronald is risen indeed. That's good news. That's something to share with others. That's good news. Good news deserves to be shared. And we talk here about gathering and scattering.

That's what we just read in the mission statements. We gather in order to scatter also and reach the fringe, reach people who don't know about Jesus. And Acts is all about scattering.

In Acts, we focus on scattering. Acts is a record of the early church scattering. The church, what is the church? It started with this small group of, this small band of Jewish men that followed Jesus around.

Right? And then something happened. Then three months, then within two months, this movement grew to over 3,000 people, 3,000 followers. Then within just a few decades, it spread throughout the whole Roman Empire.

And now, 2,000 years later, we're sitting here, as most of us as Christians, as part of the largest religion in the world. So how is it that this small group of Jewish men scattered throughout the whole world?

[4:28] Right? What caused the church to grow and scatter? And as we look through Acts, I hope we're not just looking on as bystanders, looking on at what the apostles did, what the early church did, but that we would also ask ourselves, how can we also take part in the scattering?

How can we take part in God's work and go and scatter and make disciples of all nations? That's what we're looking at in the book of Acts. And so today, as we read, we're going to read from verses 1 to 11, the first chapter.

We'll see some key themes there as we read this introduction today. The Acts is about the ascended Jesus, the ascended and risen Jesus. He's commissioning his church by the Spirit to go and proclaim his victory in all the earth.

That's what we're looking at today. So I'll invite Dr. Sigmund to come up here and read Acts for us. Dr. Sigmund, he just finished his med school.

So congrats to him. So as usual, let's please stand out of reverence for the Word of God as we read the Word of God. Acts 1, verses 1 to 11.

[5:36] In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach. Until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen.

He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during 40 days and speaking about the kingdom of God. And while staying with them, he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which he said, You heard from me, for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now. So when they had come together, they asked him, Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? He said to them, It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth. And when he had said these things, they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.

And while they were gazing into the heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes and said, Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven?

[6:50] This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven. This is the word of the Lord. Thank you. Please take a seat.

Okay, so I want to set the scene for Acts. We're reading from chapter one, the beginning of Acts, but this isn't the start of the whole story.

We're not starting from the beginning. We're smack in the middle of something. Right at a cusp, a turning point in the story, actually. We're reading from the beginning of a sequel.

We see that in verse one. It says, in verse one, it says, In the first book, the first book of Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach. That was the first book.

Now we're reading the second book. There's a book that came before Acts, and that first book is the Gospel of Luke. Both books, Acts and Luke, were written by, you guessed it, a guy named Luke, to Theophilus.

[7:51] So Luke was a doctor, which is why I asked Dr. Sigmund to read for us today. I thought that'd be fun. But Luke traveled with Paul as they preached the gospel together. Luke, he didn't see Jesus personally, but he traveled with eyewitnesses and heard them talk about everything they saw Jesus do personally.

And Luke wrote two books. The first book, this Gospel of Luke, that's the compilation of the eyewitness accounts that Luke compiled as he was traveling with apostles and eyewitnesses of Jesus.

That's Luke. And now we get to the sequel, Acts. That's where we are now. Now I'd like us to pay attention to one word in verse one, and that's began.

In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach. Everything in Luke, which we went through previously before our spiritual discipline, that was just the beginning of all that Jesus began to do.

Jesus born in man, that was the beginning. Jesus teaching and performing miracles, that was still the beginning. He was only getting started there. Even Jesus dying on the cross for us and rising from the dead, even that is still the beginning.

[9:11] Jesus said, it is finished, but it's still only getting started. Last week on Easter, we celebrated the resurrection of Christ. The cross, it should have been a victory of Satan, for Satan, that God is dead.

His body is in the grave. But that's not how the story ends, right? Because no, the ground began to shake. That stone was rolled away. Why do you look for the living among the dead?

He's not here. He is risen. We who were once full of sin, shame, guilt, our record of debt is now as empty of the grave, as the grave that Christ was in.

He is risen indeed. That's what we celebrated last week at Easter, that Jesus is alive, and that changes everything. But if that was amazing, Luke here says, Easter, all that, that was just the beginning.

Yes, Jesus defeated death once for all. It is finished, but it's only getting started. Acts is the continuation of Christ's victory on the cross. The victory that Christ won, that's kind of like an atomic bomb going off.

[10:18] If you guys watch Oppenheimer, there's this big flash. The bomb goes off, there's a big flash. In an instant, it's filled with light. But looking from afar, it's silent.

You don't feel the light until, bang, the shockwave hits you in the depths of your soul. And that's what Acts is about. The ripple of Christ's victory going out into all the earth.

That event, him on the cross, that shockwave is spreading out to all the earth, bringing not death, but life. Lighting up every corner, every pocket, every inch of this, world, until every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

That's what Acts is about. It's about what Jesus, the victory that Jesus won on the cross, and that, the continuation of that, that what, the work that Jesus is still doing, even today.

Acts is about the work of the risen Christ. Now, how is Jesus still working? Again, in the first book, Luke is all about that, all that Jesus began to do and teach.

[11:21] And in verse two, we read that. It's what he began to do and teach until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen.

So, we'll read later in verse nine that Jesus was taken up. He ascended. He's not on earth anymore. He ascended into heaven. He was taken up in a cloud into glory.

And right now, he is sitting at the right hand of God in power. So, if Jesus is in heaven, how is he at work here right now? Number one, he uses his people, the church.

That's what verse two said. Jesus gave commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. We'll talk a bit more about who the apostles are next week.

But for now, it's enough to say that the apostles were disciples of Jesus who were with him for three years. They saw him not only die, but in verse three, they saw him alive again, after his suffering, after his death, Jesus appeared to them during 40 days, speaking to them about the kingdom of God.

[12:28] They saw Jesus die, but also rise again, and they saw him for 40 days. And we heard last week in 1 Corinthians 15, there are over 500 eyewitnesses also aside from these apostles. And Jesus chose apostles to lay the foundation for the church.

The apostles passed on Christ's teachings and his command to us through the New Testament, through Acts and other books in the New Testament. And we ourselves haven't seen Jesus personally.

The apostles were eyewitnesses, but we can still get to know him. We can be sure of what Jesus did through the apostles' teaching. And when we get to know Jesus, when we get to know his word, we also get to know his command to go and make disciples of all nations, to go and tell people about him.

That is how Jesus, for one, is still at work through the church today. And secondly, how's Jesus at work? He gives us the Holy Spirit. Jesus didn't just commission his apostles and send them off on his own and say, you gotta do this work on your own.

You gotta start this global movement. That's not what Jesus did. He commissioned them by his Holy Spirit. He gave them his Holy Spirit. Which brings us to our second point.

[13:42] Acts is about the work of the risen Christ, and secondly, Acts is about the promise of the Holy Spirit. The promise and power of the Holy Spirit. Again, verse two says that Jesus gave commands through the Holy Spirit to his apostles.

Now, what command do you think Jesus would give his apostles? Remember that Jesus just rose from the dead. He conquered sin and death. What do you think he commanded them?

Maybe, go, go now, go tell everyone. Go tell everyone of what you've seen. There's salvation in my name. Go. And yes, he says that, but no, not quite yet.

Before he tells them to go, he first tells them, wait. Wait. Don't go anywhere. Sit still and simply wait. Is that surprising to you?

That's not what I would have expected. There's victory now, but stay in Jerusalem and wait. But that's what Jesus says in verse four. And while staying with them, he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait.

[14:48] See, Jesus, he won the victory and he gave his disciples a mission to accomplish. There is work to do. There is much work to do. But Jesus says, wait. Wait, because you cannot do this on your own.

This work is much too large for you. You do not have the power to do it on your own. You can't do it. You can't go unless I send you a helper.

Verse four is easier to understand in NIV. In there, Jesus says, do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my father promised, which you heard me speak about.

What is this gift? I think of what Jesus promised in John chapter 16, verse seven. He says, nevertheless, this is before he's, he's about to go and be crucified.

He tells him, nevertheless, I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away. For if I do not go away, the helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.

[15:48] Jesus says, it is to your advantage that I go away. Think about that. The disciples, they were with him for three years. They were friends. They traveled together. They were, they, they did everything together for three years.

They heard Jesus preach, preach much better sermons than you've heard anyone preach. They saw him give sight to the blind. They saw him make the deaf hear.

They saw him raise Lazarus to life. And they even saw him hanging on the cross, but then rise again, cooking breakfast for them. They put, some of them put their fingers through his hands.

They saw him die and rise again. Right? They spent three years with Jesus. And yet Jesus says to them, it is better that I go away. Those three years were great.

But if you thought that was good, just you wait. When I go away, I promise you, I will send you somebody even better. And that person is the Holy Spirit. And that's why Jesus told them, wait, do you ever wish you were, you ever thought to yourself, I wish I was alive 2000 years ago to witness Jesus.

[17:02] Right? That'd be so cool. If I saw him feed 5,000 people with five loads, two fish. Or if, if I saw him rise from the dead, then, then I would definitely believe that it'd be so much easier.

If I saw him myself face to face, we don't need to fear missing out because Jesus says that what we have now, who we have now is even better.

The presence of the Holy Spirit is more powerful, more convincing, more effective, more personal. He is warmer, nearer, and dearer, even better than seeing Jesus in the flesh.

Isn't that incredible? Many people saw Jesus, but did they make them, did that make them believe? No. A lot of people saw Jesus and yet they yelled, crucify him.

But the Spirit's presence is even better. He shines light into our heart. That's what the Spirit does. The Spirit turns heart of stone into hearts of flesh.

[18:07] The Spirit is our guarantee, the seal of our salvation until he brings it to completion. And I would have loved to see Jesus here on earth, walking. I would love to see him face to face.

And I will one day. But until then, I have something even better than that. We have the Holy Spirit in us. God dwelling with us. His personal presence, as personal or even better than Jesus walking on

earth with us 2,000 years ago.

Now, do we live if that is true? Maybe you don't believe in Jesus and you want to. You wish you had faith. And it would be so much easier if I saw Jesus in the flesh.

But he says you can have that same confidence by the Spirit today. His Spirit can show you convincingly that Jesus is Lord. So ask him. Pray.

You can ask him that he would give you this faith by his Spirit. And for the rest of us, are we living by the power of the Spirit? Because verse 8 says, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.

[19 : 14] You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. Day by day, how aware are we that God is with us? James asked last week, what would it matter if Jesus, if you knew that Jesus were here with you?

If you saw Jesus standing beside you? Well, we have that by the Holy Spirit in us today. How does it matter that the Spirit is with us? Are we striving to please God on our own?

To read Scripture? To pray? To work hard in our jobs, in our studies? Or fighting sin late at night? Are we doing that on our own? By our own strength?

Or do we know that Jesus is with us? His Spirit is with us and empowers us today? The Spirit is a great gift.

But I'd like to see us, there's also something else special about this promise of the Spirit. You see, verse 4 doesn't say wait for the promise of the Spirit. It says wait for the promise of the Father.

[20 : 16] Wait for the Father's promise. And in verse 5 it says, For John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now. This points back to Luke chapter 3, where John the baptizer, he was baptizing people in the Jordan.

And people were asking him, Are you, are you John the Messiah? Are you the Messiah we've been waiting for to save, to take away the sins of the world? Are you the Savior? And John says to them, No, I baptize with water, but someone much greater is coming.

When the Messiah comes, he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit. The point is that the Spirit, the outpouring of the Spirit is a mark.

It's an event that is era-changing and epoch-defining. It's a mark. The outpouring of the Spirit is a sign that the Messiah has come and he lives and he reigns.

The Spirit is the Father's confirmation of who Jesus is. The Spirit shows us that Jesus has come and that he brought for us a new way for God to relate with us.

[21 : 22] And that's the point of Joel's prophecy in Joel 2, 28, which we see later in Acts. It says, And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh. Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy.

Your old men shall dream dreams and your young men shall see visions. So more on that in the coming weeks. But for now, it's enough to say that the Spirit of God, one point of Acts is the Spirit of God is poured out on us.

God on the move is with us now. That the Spirit is part of God's plan, the Father's plan for salvation. And the Spirit's arrival marks a whole shift in how God relates with us.

Because Christ made a new way for God to be with us and relate to us. God now dwells in us rather than in this temple that we have to go and do all these things.

We have to offer sacrifices to enter. Now, God's Spirit, his presence is in us as a guarantee of our salvation. And that's all because Christ has come.

[22 : 28] Right? So Acts is about the work of the risen Christ. About the promise of the Holy Spirit. And lastly, Acts is about the proclamation of Christ in all the earth.

Proclamation of Christ in all the earth. The Holy Spirit empowers us for a purpose. The Holy Spirit empowers us to proclaim Christ in all the earth.

So let's look at verse 6. So when they had come together, they asked him, Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom of God to Israel?

This points back to verse 3, where Jesus in the 40 days that he was on earth after his resurrection, he spoke to them about the kingdom of God. And now, verse 6, the disciples ask him, Hey, are you going to bring about this kingdom now?

Will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? Notice the difference though. Jesus is talking about the kingdom of God. The disciples, they ask him about the kingdom of Israel.

[23:30] They're not quite yet on the same wavelength. The disciples were thinking about the kingdom of God in terms of this earthly ethnic kingdom of Israel. And that's what the Jews at the time would have expected from the coming of the Messiah.

They expected this descendant of David, the descendant of this king, to perhaps overthrow the Romans. They were under Roman rule at that time. To overthrow them and take over and establish and be king of this nation Israel.

That's one thing Jews at the time expected. But Acts has a different focus. Yes, God has a plan for Israel. But his plan is much bigger than just one country on earth.

And so Jesus replies in verse 7. Essentially, Jesus is telling them, The kingdom of God will come. You're asking about the kingdom of God? The kingdom of God will come. But don't worry about when this will happen. Your job is to go and make it happen. Don't worry about when this will happen.

[24:48] It's not for us to know times or seasons that the Father has set. And people have made this mistake over the years, trying to predict when Jesus will return. Saying they know when the world's going to end. 2012 maybe.

But now we're in 2025. That's not our concern. When the world will end. The exact date shouldn't be our focus. We know Jesus will return one day. The Father has a plan.

The Father has fixed times and seasons by his own authority. The end will come. We'll leave the timing up to him. Instead of worrying when the kingdom will come.

Instead, our job in the meantime is to bring God's kingdom here on earth. To make it happen. The disciples asked Jesus, Will you restore the kingdom of Israel? And Jesus says, essentially, You want the kingdom to come?

Great. Because you are going to help me do it. You guys are going to help me do it. You are part of my plan to spread the kingdom of God. I'm going to go away soon. But you will be my witnesses.

[25:51] You will be the ones to bring my victory to all the earth. And we won't do this by the sword. Through physical violence. But my spirit will empower you.

And the way we bring about this kingdom of God is you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem. And in all Judea and Samaria. And to the ends of the earth. How do we bring about the kingdom of God? How is it coming? It will come as you preach the gospel in all the earth. Right? You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem. In all Judea and Samaria.

And to the ends of the earth. And we see this. We see this. That the promise that you will be my witnesses in all these places. This is fulfilled in part in the book of Acts.

We'll see in the book of Acts that the gospel scatters. It scatters. The gospel takes a journey in Acts. It starts here in Jerusalem as we see in this chapter. They're in Jerusalem.

[26:46] That's the city they were in. And then it will go and spread. It spreads through the surrounding areas of Judea and Samaria. And then in the second half of Acts. New character Paul.

He will go and take the gospel to Rome. The capital of the Roman Empire there. From where it will go off and spread to the ends of the earth. So we'll see a scattering of the gospel in Acts.

But as we see the gospel scatter in Acts. And spread. Keep in mind that we don't want to just look on as bystanders. This is something that just happened 2,000 years ago.

But we are part of this mission also. This is our mission also. To spread the gospel. We were given the great commission in Matthew 28. All authority in heaven and earth is given to me.

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations. Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold I Jesus am with you to the end of the age.

[27:45] That's what Jesus commands us. Go and make disciples of all nations. And we're to scatter both throughout Jerusalem. The city that they were in. And to the ends of the earth.

Near and far. We're to be Christ's witnesses in Hong Kong. Our Jerusalem. Maybe the greater Bay Area. And also to the ends of the earth. When we think about scattering.

We need to consider both Jerusalem and the ends of the earth. There's a balance between the two. Some people think about missions as just going to unreached peoples.

Just going to the ends of the earth. To places where Christ has not been preached. And that preaching the gospel is just for missionaries. Crazy people who have the will and resolve to go leave their homes. Go to different people.

Live in a tribe. Go off to a far remote place. And that's just something missionaries do. That's not for them. Well, we all have work to do in Jerusalem.

[28:42] We live here in Hong Kong. And God has put people around us that we need to witness to. Right? In half an hour at 2.30 when we're done here. We're going to go and scatter.

We're going to go and scatter. Well, maybe we'll load around for a bit. Eat lunch. But then a few hours later, we're going to go off to our homes and scatter. Right? Or when Monday comes around, we're scattering to our jobs.

We're scattering to our families. We're scattering to our friends. We're scattering to our classmates. The question isn't whether we scatter. But the question is whether we will scatter with a purpose. Whether we will go out there with a purpose. Will we scatter knowing that we are God's plan to spread his victory in this world? Will we scatter with the conviction that we have good news that needs to be shared?

Right? Who has God put around you? As you naturally go off to your homes, to your work, to your school. Who has God put around you that you can tell about Christ? For me, I was reflecting this week because I'm now pastoring here full time.

[29:47] And I actually, I don't see the coworkers. I think I might interact less with people that know Christ now. But for me, I was reflecting that my wife and I, we should probably make more of an effort to go reach her relatives, our relatives.

Most of them who don't know Jesus. So think, pray about it. Who can I share the gospel with? And if you're in life groups, ask one another. Who has God put around you? Here in Jerusalem, in Hong Kong.

How can you be faithful witnesses of Christ wherever God has put you? In Jerusalem. On the other hand, let's not only think locally and neglect what God is doing around the world to the ends of the earth.

Right? Maybe you, some people think. There's so many people in Hong Kong who don't know Jesus. That's true, right? There's so many people around me that don't know Jesus.

We have so much work to do. More than enough work to do. We have our hands full here. Why should we spend time and money to go leave Hong Kong when we have our hands full here?

[30:55] Right? And I get that concern. Look around you at your, yeah, wherever you go on Monday. There are so many people around you who don't know Jesus. That's true.

But that was also true in Jerusalem 2,000 years ago. So we'll see later in Acts. After 20 years of ministering Jerusalem, after the church has been established in Jerusalem for 20 years, preaching the gospel, there's still many who don't believe in Jerusalem.

In Acts 21, people beg Paul, hey, don't go back to Jerusalem because there people will try to kill you. People try to kill you there for preaching the gospel. There was this resistance to the gospel in Jerusalem. The work there was not yet finished, but yet the church was called to scatter, not just in Jerusalem, but in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth, even if the work wasn't done yet in Jerusalem.

And think about this also. I'd like to see a show of hands. Who here is from Jerusalem? Who here grew up in the city of Jerusalem? Right?

Nobody. So everyone here, we should be thankful that people have obeyed God's command, this great commission.

[32:08] The reason that any of us are gathered here today is because someone thought it was worthwhile to leave their hometown, to leave Jerusalem, and preach the gospel in Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.

We're here because God's people thought it was worth the cost of leaving home in order to make disciples in Hong Kong. I think some of the first Protestant missionaries in Hong Kong came around 1840.

And now, because of the work, over 180 years. In part because of what people 180 years did ago, we're sitting here today because they obeyed that call. We're commanded to go to the ends of the earth.

And if you're wondering, is there still a need to go, right? We have the internet. This is a globalized world. Is there still a need to go? I think over 30 people, over 30% of people in the world don't have access to the internet.

So they're not, they're not being exposed. Even though we were connected, they're not connected. And some more numbers. An organization, SIL, estimates that around 20% of people in the world don't have a full Bible in their home, their own native heart language, the language that they're most comfortable with.

[33 : 22] 20% of people don't have a full Bible. 10% of people don't have the whole New Testament. And 2% of people don't have any portion of scripture in their native language, their heart language.

And according to Joshua Project, one quarter of the world's population, they're part of what's called frontier people groups. Meaning people groups that are less than 0.1% Christian.

Where less than 1 in 1,000 people are Christian. A quarter of the world lives among people groups like that. And on top of that, 15% of those people are in places where there are literally no known Christians.

Zero. Not even one. And there's no efforts yet to plant churches among those people. So those people, they'll be born into this world, live and die in their sins.

Maybe without ever even meeting a Christian. Seeing a Christian face to face. Let alone hearing the gospel. This power of God for salvation to all who believe.

[34 : 26] The Jew first and also the Greek. People in this world, still today, there is a need. Are not exposed to the gospel. Might not, never even meet a Christian face to face.

And here we have how many people, how many Christians here. Romans 10 says, how are they to call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they've never heard?

And how are they to hear without someone preaching? How are they to believe in God for salvation if no one goes to them and tells them the good news? So church, we have a responsibility.

We bear the good news. And we must go and share it out. The church is Christ's plan A to evangelize the world. And there is no plan B. We are, yeah, we are his means to go reach the world.

And everyday people are dying without hope, without God, without knowledge of Christ's victory. We must go and be his witnesses to the ends of the earth. And practically speaking, how can we do that?

[35 : 27] So for most people here, realistically, God isn't calling us to leave Hong Kong. I think that's just realistically the case. But we can be part of what God is doing around the world to the ends of the earth.

For one, we can pray. Ephesians 6 says, the apostle Paul, he asked the church, pray for me that I can boldly proclaim the gospel. Or Romans 15, pray that I can be kept safe from the people that are trying to kill me and suppress the gospel.

So are we, how often do we in our prayers, are we praying for the global church, for churches, for people, organizations going out to the ends of the earth?

And we can also support the work financially. In Philippians 4, Paul writes, I rejoice that you shared in my troubles, that you cared for my needs. And the gifts that you sent me, the help, that practical help for my needs, those were a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

And you are partners with me in this work to go where Christ has not been named. That is part of a worship to God. So we can support the ends of the earth here in Hong Kong.

[36 : 30] But there's one more obvious way we can take part. And that's to go. How can we bring Christ to these people who have never heard? We can go to them.

We can go. And I don't mean just go for a week. But you could actually move there, live there, and preach the gospel to them, to plant churches there. I know it sounds crazy and radical to many of us here.

And maybe it's never crossed your mind to go. But I'm not saying we all need to go. One thing is, if you've never even thought of it, if it's never even been an option, you never even considered it, ask yourself, why is that?

Why is it that this command to go to the ends of the earth is just for others? Why could it not be for me? And that's my challenge for you. I'm not saying it's God's calling for everyone, but at least consider it.

Ask him, God, where do you want me to go? Do you want me to go? Should I stay here? Who is it around me here in Hong Kong that I can preach to? Or am I called to go elsewhere?

[37:27] And for most of us, realistically, I think the answer is probably no. But I pray that as we talk about gathering and scattering in Acts, as we talk about the scattering of the gospel, the glory of God proclaimed in all the nations, that God would write on maybe one person, one person's heart here, that yes, I must go.

I need to go to the unreached. We're called to preach Christ's victory near and far. I want to have a balance. It's not just about the ends of the earth. It's not just about Hong Kong.

Let's think of both. Let's think of both. Let's think of consider how we can take part in God's work here and there. And this is not just something we do.

It's something the Holy Spirit empowers us to do, right? Because Acts is about the work of the risen Christ. It's about the promise of the Holy Spirit and about the proclamation of Christ into all the earth, in Hong Kong and to the ends of the world.

And now we'll close soon, looking briefly at Christ's ascension in verse nine there. So this is where Jesus leaves us and goes into heaven.

[38:35] And I actually quite love picturing the scene. It's a little bit amusing. There's a lot of things happening at once. So the disciples, they're asking Jesus some questions.

That's what we read earlier in verse six. And Jesus answers them. But just as he's answering them, as he's finishing off what he's saying, that you'll be my witnesses in Jerusalem, all Judah, and to the ends of the earth.

In verse nine, as they were looking on, he was lifted up and a cloud took him out of their sight. Just imagine that. He's talking to them. He gives them one last command. Go to the ends of the earth.

Go be my witnesses wherever you go.

And then all of a sudden, a cloud comes in and takes him away. Imagine I'm talking to you here.

And then a cloud comes in through this window. And then I'm just gone. Right?

Like a cloud just takes me away. That'd be so bizarre. Right? That'd be so weird. So naturally, his disciples are staring. They're staring. Like, what did we just witness? What did we just see?

[39:33] What just happened? Right? And then if that wasn't enough for you, in verse 10, while they're watching Jesus go off, they're looking into the sky. And then suddenly, two men in white, two angels appear beside them.

Like, whoa, what are you doing here? Like, where do you guys come from? Jesus went off and you guys are here. What are you guys doing here? And then the angels say to them, men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven?

This Jesus who was taken up from you into heaven will come in the same way you saw him go into heaven. And I can empathize with what the disciples are doing, right? You don't see clouds taking people to heaven every day.

So that's something you might want to stare at. If I saw that, I would stare a bit too. But then the angels say, men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven?

In other words, the angels say, boys, what are you just, what are you doing staring into space, watching the clouds? Like, something like that, right?

[40:29] Stop spacing out and watching the clouds. There's work to do. There's work to do because that Jesus that you saw go off, he will come again in the same way, in glory and bodily.

He will come again. He's going off right now. He is going away. He is seated at the right hand of God in glory, in power, but he will come again. And so we can't just stand around looking at the clouds, right?

We can't be content just gathering here on Sunday, praising Jesus, worshiping him, talking about all that Jesus is, and then just stay here looking into the sky, just content gathering here, looking at the clouds, right?

But when we behold the glory of God, it should move us into action to go and scatter. It should move us into action knowing that Jesus, he will come again. He will come again in glory and finish everything that he started.

And we want to go, not just gather here, and worship him, but we should want to go out and bring as many people as possible to go to all the nations and tell them, look, look at this risen Lord.

[41:31] Look at this God who's seated at the right hand of the throne of glory. Look at the savior of this world. Look at the one who takes away the sins of the world.

Jesus, he didn't just go off, but he sent us his spirit. He sent us his spirit to empower us, to convict us, to go and tell everyone. He's given us a mission. Go and make disciples of all nations.

So as we gather here, we can't just be content, staring off into heaven, looking at the clouds, right? There's work to do. There's work to do. We have a mission. What are you doing? Just standing here, staring. There's work to do. So let's go and do it. All right. Let's pray. God, we praise you.

We praise you that you have overcome sin and death. We thank you that we are here today because your church was faithful to your call to make disciples of all nations.

[42:42] We're thankful that, as we celebrated last week, that you, yeah, you came to us. You didn't just stay in heaven, but you came to us.

You took the initiative. And while we were still sinners, you died for us. And you rose from the dead. yeah, even though we don't see the full effects of your victory now, we know you have conquered. And Lord, it's our will that we want to see you lifted up and glorified for every knee to bow to, every tongue to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. And God, we thank you that you've given us your spirit to empower us, to convict us of our sin, to change our hearts.

God, we pray that as we look through acts, we wouldn't be a church, just a church that gathers, but a church that scatters in Hong Kong and to all the earth. Because not out of obligation, but because we are just filled with joy at your good news, that we can't help but share it.

Give us this passion for your name. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Jesus, we rest in your holy presence.

[44:07] let the weight of your glory fall on us in a way that compels us to be your disciples, to be people who have a passion and a heart for our Jerusalem here in Hong Kong, for the nations, both here at our, at our doorstep, as well as a broad God.

Spend our heart to be more like yours. It's just full of grace. for every person, for every person, from every walk of life, God, you're a God of great compassion.

And we pray that as your church, you would fill us in the same way. So we love you and praise in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. So that's the end of our service today, but perhaps before you leave, maybe just take a minute or two.

I would encourage you to maybe just end in silent kind of meditative prayer. Just thinking about what Gabe just shared with us this morning. Would you just spring to mind and pray over the people in your life?

Maybe that, that came to mind as Gabe was sharing the convictions of what it means to, to love people in Hong Kong, to love people among the nations. And once you've had a time to kind of silently reflect, feel free to make your way out.

[45:22] Thanks.