

You Will Be My Witnesses

Իմ Վկաներս Պիտի Ըլլաք

Acts 1:1-8

Our main topic of the year is: **Lord, Make us One in Christ.**

In previous sermon series we discussed what does it means to be one body in Christ. I used the book Rediscover Church by Collin Hansen and Jonathan Leeman

In this new year, I would like to cover the same topic but from the book of the **Acts of the Apostles Գործք Առաքելոց** when it all started 20 centuries ago.

The author is Luke. Luke the physician wrote two books in the Bible. The first one is the **Gospel According to Luke**, and the second is the **Acts of the Apostles** which is continuation of the first.

- “If Luke’s first volume describes ‘all that Jesus *began* to do and to teach *until* the day he was taken up to heaven,’ we can assume that this second volume describes what he *continued* to do and to teach (through his Spirit) *after* he was taken up.”¹

- Addressed both books to **Theophilus**, a noble Christian man, his name means: “friend or lover of God”; it can also mean “one who is loved by God”.²

- It is an energetic book (there is action in this book). On one hand God’s Spirit is at work spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ; God is doing new things over new places and establishing new churches.

- On the other hand, the book is full of puzzles and problems that churches faced: “crisis over leadership, money, ethnic divisions, theology and ethics, not to mention serious clashes with political and religious authorities.”³

It is the story of how the early church struggled, and in its struggle, God worked in the lives of the disciples and the new converts.

- Luke, the author of this book, presents us a **new world**, life after the resurrection of Jesus, the story of the church. Sometimes we think about resurrection as an event that happened and only few people saw it and experienced it. With the book of the Acts, we see that Jesus Christ is alive. “His transformed body is the beginning of **God's new creation** in which heaven and earth will come together in a new way (Rev. 21 and Eph. 1).”⁴

That is reality of our lives until today. We live in the end times; we live post-resurrection; we are experiencing the risen Lord in our lives.

-Luke also presents of the **work of the Holy Spirit** which was promised by Jesus. **Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper (*Holy Spirit*) will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.** (John 16:7 ESV)

From the beginning we will see how the Holy Spirit will equip the disciples to preach, teach, heal, care, and spread the Gospel around the world, starting from Jerusalem.

Let us study the chapter:

1. It is All About Jesus

In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach,² until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen.
(Acts 1:1-2 ESV)

In the prologue, Luke explains to his friend Theophilus the contents of the first book. In the first book (Gospel according to Luke), Luke described who Jesus was and what his mission was until the day he ascended.

The second book is not different topic. The main character is Jesus, and how the Holy Spirit will continue the work of Jesus.

John Stott in his commentary on Acts says an appropriate title for this book:

“All that Jesus continued to do and teach by his Spirit through the Apostles.”

The story just started my friends... After Jesus' resurrection and ascension to the Father, the Holy Spirit continued the same mission that Jesus started through the apostles and disciples, and through us today.

-Stott remarks that it is no exaggeration to say that this is what “set Christianity apart from all other religions. These regard their founder as having completed his ministry during his lifetime; Luke says Jesus only began his.”⁵

2. Waiting for the Promise

³ **He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.**

⁴ **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; ⁵ for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” (Acts 1:3-5 ESV)

We see here parallels between Jesus’ ministry and that of the apostles.

After Good Friday and Resurrection Sunday, Jesus remained 40 days with his disciples and continued to teach and care for them. It was a new era of the Kingdom of God.

The apostles were instructed **to wait**, forty more days...**wait...**

Can you imagine what happened in the lives of the apostles?

They witnessed the death of their Messiah, they witnessed the resurrection of the Messiah, now they need to wait for the promised Holy Spirit.

This is new messianic age which was prophesied: **God will pour out His Spirit...**

(Joel 2:28–32; Isa 32:15–18; Ezek. 36:27–30).

As the church, as one body of Christ, ask God’s Spirit to pour out on us EVERY DAY.

3. Be my Witnesses

So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” ⁷ He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (Acts 1:6-8 ESV)

Here we go again, the apostles did not get it.

“When are you going to restore the kingdom of Israel?”

They need new eyes to see things differently...

Stott says:

“they misunderstand both the nature of the kingdom and the relation between the kingdom and the Spirit.”⁶

They use the word *restore* which means they are excepting a political and territorial kingdom to be restored.

The answer that Jesus gives very strong, and I hope we also listen carefully about this.

“It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority....”

Stop worrying about the political agenda. Stop worrying about times and signs....

You have something more important to do.

You will be my witnesses to the end of the EARTH...

Brothers and sisters, this statement that Jesus did is an important goal.

PACC? Who are we?

What are we doing?

Why do we exist?

YOU WILL BE MY WITNESS...

The word witness is mar'-toos (μάρτυς) in Armenian *Mardiros* մարտիրոս

Which means:

1. witness: a person who has seen an event take place, or who has knowledge of an event from personal experience

2. martyr “those who after his example have proved the strength and genuineness of their faith in Christ by undergoing a violent death.”⁷

Instead of warring about political kingdoms and searching signs and coming to bad conclusions, **be a witness of Jesus, be a martyr for Jesus.**

That is what Jesus is asking us to be...

You, and I, we have responsibility...

Question, did the church (in general) lose zeal to be a witness of Jesus Christ in the world?

Overall, yes...

Ajith Fernando, who came to Lebanon often to teach pastors of Lebanon, shared in his commentary on Acts saying:

“The postmodern existentialist mood has significantly influenced today’s church.⁸ I would go so far as to say that, in many segments of evangelicalism, experience is replacing the Bible as the supreme source of authority.

If we examine books and teaching on practical topics, we often find that statistics, research, and testimonies of what people have experienced are given as authoritative guidelines.The Bible is used only as a quote book or a book out of which illustrations are found, only to support truths that have been found elsewhere. It should be the reverse: We should get our truths from the Bible and go to the world in order to find ways to illustrate those truths.”⁹

Application:

1. Let us remember the Great Commission of Jesus: go preach, teach, go baptize in the name of Father, Son & Holy spirit, go make disciples... (Matthew 28)

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,²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Here in our chapter...go and **be my witness, my martyr...**

It is biblical command, let us take it seriously.....

2. How can you share the Good News?

Do you see your faith as a missionary faith?

Do you have desire to share the Good News?

Do you see urgency to share the Good News?

Has God sent you anywhere to be a witness? A social gathering, workplace, hospital, neighbor, vacation, golf course where the doors would open?

I cannot push you to be a missional church. You see we do have mission trips and mission committee. Those are wonderful. Those cannot replace your individual missional mind, daily missional mind.

Start with a cup of coffee, tea, something...

Don't bang the truth of Gospel on their head. Conversation about life, about pain, about children, about life.

I will urge you to be equipped. How?

My friend pastor Brian Morgan says:

“When we come to faith and are baptized by the Holy Spirit that divine mission is stamped into every believer's heart. The more we expose ourselves to the light of God's truth and open our eyes to what God is doing around the world, we can't help but be drawn into the joy of the kingdom. God is sending out the invitations and who would want to miss the party?”

1. Ajith Fernando, *The NIV Application Commentary*, Acts P 51

2. R.C. Sproul, *You Will be My Witness to the End of the Earth*, Acts. P 2

3. N.T. Wright, *For Everyone Bible Study Acts*. P 5

4. Ibid P 6

5. John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Acts, The Spirit, the Church & the World*, p 34.

6. Ibid P. 41,42

7. <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g3144/kjv/tr/0-1/>

8 See Charles Colson with Ellen Santilli Vaughan, *The Body: Being Light in Darkness* (Dallas: Word, 1992)

9. Ajith Fernando, *The NIV Application Commentary*, Acts P 62

1. Do you see your faith as a missionary faith? What motivates you in this area (2 Cor 5:10-15)?
2. What cultural barriers make it difficult to share your faith? How did Paul overcome those barriers (Acts 17:16-31; 2 Cor 4:1-12)?
3. How does Jesus' exaltation to God's right hand undergird our mandate to witness (Ps 2; Acts 8:3-4; 10:1-34)?
4. Have you ever sensed that God was inviting you to pray for an individual or group outside your comfort zone and then experienced a surprising encounter that opened the door to witness (Acts 8:26-40; Isa 56:3-8)?
5. Reflect on the places God has "sent" you over the past year (i.e. business trips, vacations, neighbors, social engagements, cultural events, hospital visits, relatives, etc.). Were you aware of open doors to witness in any of those settings (Col 4:2-6)?
6. Looking to the months ahead, pray for God to open a door for you to witness where he is "sending" you.

Those questions by pastor Brian Morgan