

WHAT JESUS IS DOING TODAY

Acts 1-6

INTRODUCTION: Many people do not know that the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts were written by the same author, but they were. **Acts was written as a sequel to Luke by the beloved physician.** In fact, if you read the last part of the gospel and then immediately read the first part of Acts, they are clearly telling you the same thing with only minuscule differences.

So for our text today, I am going to mix the two. Both are describing what Jesus said and did after the resurrection and before His ascension back into Heaven. The red text comes from Luke, the blue text from Acts.

Taken from Luke 24:36–53 and Acts 1:1-8 (NKJV)

36 Now as they said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, “which,” He said, “you have heard from Me;

44 Then He said to them, “These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.” 45 And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. 46 Then He said to them, “Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, 47 and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 And you are witnesses of these things.

8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

51 Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven.

Dr. Luke said that he **wrote his gospel to give an orderly account of all that Jesus began to do and teach.** At the end of Luke and the beginning of Acts, Luke describes Jesus departing the earth and ascending back into Heaven from which He came.

The primary work Jesus came to do was completed. By offering His own blood as a sacrifice for our sin, having died in our place upon the cross, the purpose for which Jesus entered the world was accomplished.

Nevertheless, Jesus was not through.

- He had promised His followers that He would never leave them nor forsake them.
- He said to those who would obey His command, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Consequently, **the Book of Acts can be described as the account of all that Jesus continued to do and teach.**

What is especially interesting and important for us is that Jesus does not stop working at the end of the Book of Luke. Jesus is working in the very last verse of the book, and friend, He continues today.

Jesus is working today. He is working in my life. I will tell you honestly that if I did not have confidence that Jesus is actively, graciously, powerfully, working in, around, and through my life, I would resign as your pastor. I would just quit.

Jesus said, "Apart from Me you can do nothing." And this preacher knows it is true.

- Several times a week I try to explain, teach, preach, the Holy Scriptures to different ones of you, but God says that His Word is spiritually discerned. So I realize that no matter how diligently I prepare, no matter how hard I try, if the Lord does not do His work when I proclaim the Scriptures, you don't get anything from them.

But the Lord does do His work! Every time. He promises His Word never returns void but always accomplishes the purpose for which He sends it.

So while I do my best to prepare as my own offering to the Lord, I have a confidence that the end result will not merely be a product of what I can produce. Jesus is working, and He makes it work!

- If I did not know with a certainty in my spirit that the Lord has led us to tackle this Behemoth-size project we call Building 4 Generations to Come, I would not be doing it.

Leading the church in this is the most difficult thing I have done in all my years of ministry. It is not the most painful thing, but it is the most difficult thing. And, if I did not know that Jesus was working in us, through us, around us, sometimes in spite of us, to establish this church as an Acts 1:8 Church 4 Generations to Come, I would be in despair.

Folks, let me tell you what many of you do not know. Your staff is working their fingers to the bone to follow the Lord in what He has led this church to do. But while I believe God has given to me as a pastor the strongest complete staff with whom I have ever worked, each one, godly men and women, trained, competent in their fields and beyond, **the task of Building 4 Generations to Come is too big for us.**

It is a God-sized task, and only He can do it!

But He is doing it! Jesus is working. He is working in each of us, and He is doing things with us and through us we do not have the power to do alone. And none of us want to do it alone. We all know, apart from Jesus, we can do nothing. But as we abide in Him, and His Word abides in us, He will give us much fruit!

- Now my point in all of this is to emphasize that Jesus is working today. He is working among us. And what we will see over the next four weeks as we focus our attention on passages in the Book of Acts is what Jesus is doing today in the world, in the church, and in the lives of the people who trust and love Him.
- I hope you are at this moment prompted to ask, **“Is there something I can do to help with what the Lord is doing among us to Build a 4 Generation Acts 1:8 Church?”**
- **Yes, there is!**

- And many, many are helping. Many have joined Jesus in this work.
- Listen, our choir, our orchestra, all our instrumentalists, our praise teams, Bro. Doug, everyone who is a part of our music ministry has accepted their new roles in trying to keep our worship pleasing to the Lord while at the same time making it worshipful to all generations of worshippers. They have done it with a sweet spirit, and a cooperative attitude: and we should be grateful for their efforts.

We have not arrived yet, but we did not expect to have arrived yet. But they are working, and Jesus is working!

- What more can we do?
- **We can be patient.** If we need more information because we don't understand something, we can ask kindly. We can ask a person who might actually know the answer instead of asking someone we know does not know just to raise doubt or questions in their mind. We can be patient.
- **We can pray more.** I have confessed to you. Every staff member will tell you the same. Just ask them. We need prayer! This is a spiritual undertaking. Our staff prayed more in seeking God's direction to understand what He wanted us to do in Building 4 Generations to Come than we had ever prayed as a staff.

Now that we are confident we have heard from God, and the church has unanimously agreed, we have not abandoned the prayer, we have intensified it. Our ministerial staff meets every Tuesday morning

for about an hour and a half to pray primarily about this work of Building 4 Generations to Come. So you can help us by also praying more!

- **We can give more.** Some of the time and energy of your staff has lately been drained by trying to figure how we can do more with less resources. Our church is committed to doing our ministry with the resources God sends through His people. We have no other income, and we do not operate in debt. If there are things we think would be good to do, maybe even things we have done in the past, but the money to fund that work or that activity has not been given, we cannot do it!

I told you in the fall when I challenged each of us to repair the financial walls of our church that Karen and I bought one of those stones to catch us up and we increased our regular giving. When the New Year came, we decided to continue the higher level of giving because we believe in what God is doing among us.

What can you do? Are you bringing your tithe to the storehouse as the Lord commands? Are you whom God has prospered, giving beyond the tithe, investing in eternal things rather than things that will one day pass away?

Folks, hear me. All of what I have shared with you is the practical application of the wonderful truth that is before us that

- **While Jesus has finished His work of salvation upon the cross,**
- **And while Jesus has ascended back to the right hand of the Father in Heaven,**
- **Nevertheless, Jesus continues to work**
 - **in us,**
 - **through us,**
 - **and around us,**
- **to consummate His work in the glorious Kingdom of God.**

So, what does the text of the Book of Acts tell us that Jesus continues to do today to bring about the consummation of His Kingdom?

- The first answer (and we will only see one today), is that **Jesus is making witnesses out of His followers.**

Jesus said, in Acts 1:8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and **you shall be witnesses** to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Since we describe ourselves as an Acts 1:8 Church, I know you have heard me quote this verse many times, and preach concerning it on many occasions. So some of you are getting ready to tune out, thinking, “I’ve heard this before.”

Please, please don’t!

I want to draw your attention to an aspect of this verse different from the part, Jerusalem to end of the earth. We need to think seriously about this word “witness.”

What is a witness?

- **A witness is a person who tells what they know to be true.**

What do we know to be true about Jesus?

- **Jesus is the Son of God. He is God who became flesh and dwelled among us.**

Now, Jesus did many wonderful things. He healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, made the lame walk, and raised the dead. But all of these things are really proofs of what we already said. Jesus is the Son of God who became a man and lived on the earth.

But Jesus did not come to the earth just to live. He came to die. So let us give a second major statement about what we know to be true about Jesus.

- **Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins.**

Not for His own sins, for our sins. God said the wages of sin is death. Jesus said, “I will die in their place.” Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins. But He did not remain dead. And this is our next statement as a witness that we know is true.

- **Jesus rose from the dead.**

He is alive today. He is the King of the Universe. And this living King makes an incredible offer to every man, woman, boy, and girl on the face of the earth. And that is our next statement as a witness.

- **Jesus offers forgiveness of sin and eternal life to all who trust Him as Lord and Savior.**

Now, would you agree with me that these things are some of the most important statements that we witnesses could say about our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? We can summarize that in just three sentences.

- **Jesus Christ, God's Son, died on the cross for our sins.**
- **Jesus rose from the dead.**
- **Jesus offers forgiveness of sin and eternal life to all who trust Him as Lord and Savior.**

The Bible gives a special name to those three statements. The Gospel

When Jesus said, Acts 1:8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and **you shall be witnesses to Me** in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Are you interested in what Jesus is doing today?

Do you want to know how Jesus is working in 2018 to move this world toward the consummation of the Glorious Kingdom of God?

Do you want to know how Jesus wants to work in your life and mine, today, tomorrow, and every day until He calls us home or comes again?

This is it! Jesus is making witnesses. And for each of us who have been saved, who have put our trust, our faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, these words of Jesus to these disciples right before He ascended into Heaven, are words He speaks to us through the Scripture we have read. This is for us.

Jesus says, “You shall be a witness to Me!”

Just tell people what you know to be true about Jesus.

- **You can talk about how He is helping you today navigate the difficult paths of your life.**
- **You can tell them about some particular things He has done for you in the past.**
 - Maybe He healed you.
 - Maybe He met a serious financial need.
 - Maybe He comforted you and guided you through an especially painful time in your life.
- **But do not omit the most critical part for them. Do not omit the gospel.**

- **Jesus Christ, God's Son, died on the cross for our sins.**
- **Jesus rose from the dead.**
- **Jesus offers forgiveness of sin and eternal life to all who trust Him as Lord and Savior.**

That is what Peter did.

Ten days after Jesus told His followers to be a witness to Him, filled with the Holy Spirit, Peter stood before the massive crowd assembled for the Jewish Feast of Pentecost and simply told them what he knew to be true about Jesus. He told them the gospel.

THE GOSPEL!

- **Jesus Christ, God's Son, died on the cross for our sins.**
- **Jesus rose from the dead.**
- **Jesus offers forgiveness of sin and eternal life to all who trust Him as Lord and Savior.**

Three thousand people were saved.

After the lame man was healed, Peter and John did the same thing. They said what they knew was true. They did not heal the man. Jesus did. Then they told them the gospel.

Two thousand more people were saved.

You may be thinking, "Yeh, but that was then, this is now."

Folks, I'm telling you. Jesus is still working. The gospel is still the power of God unto salvation. When we will be faithful witnesses, sharing the gospel, people will be saved!

I have never been accused of being a neat freak, and honestly my office is a bit of a mess. Part of what is lying around are little colored books like these. I make a new one for each mission trip and it has all my schedules and info I need. I just carry my brain in a pocket where I can get to it.

When I lead a team to Brazil, the team members see me take out my little book often and I record the number of people who prayed to trust the Lord Jesus as we went house to house just being witnesses, just sharing the simple gospel.

Green book – team of 7 from SABC – Rafael Fernandes – 2.5 days – 148 prayed

Antonio Martins – 2 days – 231 put trust in Christ

379 people

Blue book – team of 10 – Tenente Ananias – 2 days – 214 prayed

Encanto - 2 days – 346 trusted the Lord Jesus

560 people

Just 16 days including travel to get there and back, just 17 people = 939 souls, precious, eternal souls. And folks, I didn't try to pick up the books with the highest numbers. On some trips we have more, on some less, but it's always in the hundreds.

Jesus is still working. The gospel is still the power of God unto salvation. When we will be faithful witnesses, sharing the gospel, people will be saved!

When we take teams to West Africa and go to the villages composed of grass huts, we go as witnesses. We tell what we know. We often tell more of the Bible because they know nothing about the one true God, but we always culminate with the gospel.

In a single village we will often have 100 to 150 people pray to receive Christ and start a church in that village that very day. A team of three or four can go to from two to four villages a day.

We have had teams share the gospel for less than a week and see more than 1,000 people come to Christ.

Because Jesus is still working. The gospel is still the power of God unto salvation. When we will be faithful witnesses, sharing the gospel, people will be saved!

I don't have to be a mind reader to know what some of you are thinking. "Yeh, but not here in the United States."

Jesus is working right here in the U.S. He is working right here in Panama City.

Last year our Medical Clinic, while they ministered to the physical needs of people, also shared the gospel and saw 8 come to Christ.

A Sheltering Tree saved 2 babies from abortion and led 12 women to faith in the Lord Jesus.

Our Benevolence Center last year had 253 people pray to trust Christ as their Lord and Savior! But to see that, they shared the gospel more than 15,000 times!

Jesus is still working.

The gospel is still the power of God unto salvation.

When we will be faithful witnesses, sharing the gospel, people will be saved!

CONCLUSION: Dear lost friend, would you like to have your sins forgiven and receive the gift of eternal life? You can today.

Dear brother and sister in the Lord. Jesus is still working among us. Let us continue to work together side by side, arm in arm, loving one another, praying fervently, giving generously, and being faithful witnesses.

Listen, being a witness and sharing the gospel does not mean you have to be aggressive or insistent. In Brazil, in Ghana, anywhere we go on mission, at the Center of Hope, we never pressure anyone to even listen to the gospel. If they do not want to hear, we do not even try to force it. We just offer it. Many want to hear. Some who hear believe and trust the Lord Jesus. Our job is not to persuade and certainly not to coerce. Our job is just to tell what we know to be true, to share the gospel. Jesus takes it from there, and He always does a great job.

Do you need to be a more faithful witness?