

# Sunday 14th January 2024 - Sunday Service

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Date: 14 January 2024

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[ 0 : 00 ] Hello again. I hope you're all feeling drier than I am. Last week we thought about why! Jesus leaving us is good news. It's interesting isn't it right at the end of Luke's story the! beginning of Acts Jesus goes. If you're interested in that question then visit the website listen to the sermon. We're thinking about the same passage but we're thinking about it slightly differently this morning. So before we do that let's pray. Lord thank you so much that you don't leave us without good news. Thank you that you don't leave us without help. Thank you that you don't leave us without a future or a plan. Thank you that you're not just trustworthy while you were here on earth but you are trustworthy always. Please help us today to know that you are good, that you came for us, that you have the power to save us and help us and that you will keep us to the end. In Jesus' name. Amen.

We like to think that there's a plan and a purpose to the most important things in life don't we? We like to think so and then we get disappointed. So for instance it's only when ITV does a documentary on the post office workers who were unfairly convicted of fraud over 10 years ago. It's only then that Rishi Sunak thinks it's important enough to do something about it.

Or just think about Tube. You know Tube? Broadband company who are inflicting their engineering works on the Farnham area at the moment. So they turn up to improve everybody's lives, so they say, and then they install a telegraph pole at the end of your driveway, as they did with some poor soul.

Or they cut through the internet cable. If you live on Lord Daylink you'll know exactly what's happened there. And there you go, there's at least one. What is the plan?

Is it all just reactive? Stuff happens, then we do something about it. Seems like there's no plan. Who's making these decisions? And what we really want to see is one person who sees the whole picture everything that's going on and that person sees me too.

[ 2 : 22 ] That's what we really want. And some people don't think there is such a plan or such a purpose. But on some level we all feel there should be such a plan. Right?

And we're all kind of looking for that person. Otherwise it's just a big machine. John Templeton who was a great believer that science and faith help each other said this. Would it not be strange if the universe without purpose accidentally created human beings who are so obsessed with purpose? Most of us don't live like that. We don't live like there's no plan or no purpose. The question is, what is it? And who's the one person who sees it all and still sees me?

Well the two Bible passages that we've read today help us with exactly those questions. And they help us to see that Jesus is that one person. And he says there is a plan and there's power and there's a part for you to play.

Just a little bit of context. We said it before just now in this passage. Jesus has risen. He's finished his earthly work and he's about to return to heaven.

[ 3 : 36 ] And these are his final words if you like. His final instructions for his disciples before he goes. So let's ask this question first. What's the plan? What's the plan?

If you've got that passage in front of you I'd encourage you to have it in front of you. Then it's Luke 24 verse 44 that we're looking at first. He said to them this is what I told you while I was still with you.

Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the law of Moses the prophets and the Psalms. So God's plan the plan for the world for fixing the world has always been the same. Jesus will come as predicted and he will do everything that God's messengers promised in the Old Testament referred to in that verse promised that he would do. That's why we read the Old Testament.

If you look at Acts chapter 1 verses 1 and 2 Luke speaking in my former book Theophilus I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and teach until the day he was taken up to heaven after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen.

[ 4 : 44 ] God's plan is the same one that Jesus gave instructions about to his original followers as we've just read and which those original followers wrote down. with the help of the Holy Spirit and that's why we read the New Testament.

What's the plan about? Look down to verse 3 second part He appeared to them over a period of 40 days and spoke about the kingdom of God.

So the plan is about the kingdom of God. The plan is to build the kingdom of good news. That's what we're thinking about when we're looking at Acts. Building the kingdom of good news.

Okay, so we're a little bit wiser but if you've been listening you'll realize I haven't actually told you what the plan is. I've told you a lot about it. Look back at verse 46 in Luke chapter 24 Jesus speaking He told them this is what is written the Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in His name to all nations beginning at Jerusalem.

How will the kingdom of good news be built? What even is the good news? Well this verse tells us. You see the good news isn't actually better social care for everybody though that's a good thing isn't it?

[ 6 : 09 ] And the good news actually isn't preach human rights and democracy all over the world though we may think that's a good thing. And His message actually isn't everything will be alright if people could just learn to be kind to each other.

That's not Jesus' message. It's this. Jesus who is both God and man suffered and died to bring us back to God.

And God validates that life. He says yes to Jesus' life and His death by raising Him again just like we saw Kate coming out of the water. And the plan is for that message of hope to be shared with everyone so that anybody who turns away from their wrongdoing and back to God can be forgiven and can share in that new life.

That's the good news. That's God's rescue plan for free for the world. That's how He builds the kingdom of good news which will last forever. So what do we do with that?

Well it's simple. we need to know the man we need to know the plan. So if you don't know Jesus then you need to know Him.

[ 7 : 26 ] And we need to learn the same instructions that those early followers learnt through the Holy Spirit. We need to understand what the kingdom of good news is about. So Kate everybody here we need the Old Testament we need the New Testament we need to know the person who they speak about.

otherwise we're like the person who never reads the manual. Maybe it kind of works but you won't really get it. What's the plan?

It's to share the good news about Jesus that He died that He rose and that He offers forgiveness. You might have noticed that the apostles would quite like to know when all of this is going to be done.

When are the upgrade works going to be complete? Acts chapter 1 verse 6. Then they gathered round Him and asked Lord are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?

And you kind of understand the question don't you? But the question also shows they don't really get it. They don't really understand what the kingdom's about because it's not about Israel it's not national it's international and it's not about the kingdom political it is a spiritual kingdom and it's not right now it starts now and it finishes in the not yet and His kingdom doesn't look inwards for comfort for wealth it looks outwards with compassion and hope that's why we have the rest of Acts otherwise Jesus could just have fixed it right there and then so that's the plan the one person who sees the big picture and sees me will build a kingdom of good news by offering forgiveness to anybody who will accept it and that person sees you Kate and they see me and they see everybody in this room Jesus does answer the question of when and He answers it with two promises now promises are great aren't they if you can keep them if you've got the resources to follow through that's why when the politicians get up and they make all sorts of promises just before the election the question you want to ask is have you costed that have you figured out how you're going to deliver it are they in your power to do it that's kind of the question we're left with isn't it that's great promises but where's the power where's the power for God's people and God's plan the first

promise is that Jesus will return you see that verse 11 this same Jesus the angels say who has come back in the same way you have seen Him go will come back in the same way you have seen Him go into heaven but the second promise is that that same

[10:28] Jesus who has come and who will go and will come back He's going to supply the power too each of His family has promised everything they need to carry out God's plan and build the kingdom of good news look at verse 49 back to Luke chapter 24 I'm going to send you what my Father has promised but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power in verse 4 of Acts chapter 1 on one occasion while He was eating with Him He gave them this command do not leave Jerusalem but wait for the gift my Father promised see there's the second promise in verse 8 but you will receive power Jesus is saying simple stay wait pray I will give you the power that you need I will send what the Father promised just as sure as the Father sent me like He promised and when that happens you will be clothed with power it's like the feeling you get when you put on a new suit for a new job right or a new dress for a night out somehow you just feel a little bit more empowered than you did there's a story about a man who had a job goes like this came into the area where he was going to be doing the job and he was given a car that wouldn't start without a push so he had a bit of a think and he came up with a plan he went to the local school could never do this now and he said please can I borrow some of the kids right and he got the kids to push and he did his rounds and as he did his rounds he'd either park near a school or he'd park on a hill or he'd leave the engine running and he did that for two years and eventually he had to stop and he handed over to the next guy and the new guy came and he starts proudly explaining his method for keeping the car going well use the kids and always park on the hill and the guy looks under the hood and he says oh I think this is your problem connects the cable turns the ignition car roars into life you see the point you see the power was there all the time the trouble was he wasn't connected to it there was no connection but no illustration really does that justice does it because actually what we learn when we look at the rest of this passage is that the power isn't just a resource it's not a fully funded place or a full bank account it's a person look at verse 2 of Acts chapter 1 what does it say after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen and verse 5 for John baptized with water but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit you will be soaked with that power and verse 8 you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you see just like a Christian's hope isn't in some hokey religion but in a person the Lord Jesus in the same way the thing that powers us is not a thing it's not some mystical force it's a spiritual person the Holy Spirit so Kate you've got a powerful friend to help you walk the rest of your road and understand

God's plan for you and help you do it it's not just a power source it's a person and the same person is willing to help all of us and this is what that power achieves back to Luke chapter 2 verse 45 what does Jesus do he opens their minds so they can understand the scripture and verse 2 what does the Holy Spirit do he gives instructions doesn't he that's what the Spirit's power achieves he opens people's minds to understand he helps people believe he helps people know what to do he helps people believe and belong that's his role so where's the power well the answer is he's right here with us and all we have to do is ask for his help that isn't something we can control do you notice all the words used to describe it receive be baptised be clothed they're all passive aren't they we ask and we're given a gift and the Holy Spirit will help you play your part that kind of raises another question doesn't it what is our part what is our part in this plan and that's the problem with plans aren't they they're either too small you know you hear it and you think no it's got to be more than that

I want to achieve more than that or it's too big you hear the plan and you think I'm just going to be chewed up and spat out by that plan we hear what our part is at work or at school and we think I can't do that or I don't understand that or else you hear the plan you know it comes through the door on a postcard it says upgrade works in your area and you think yawn but God's plan is both breathtakingly big and totally doable but we need to start with what our part and the plan actually isn't if we're going to understand what it is here's what isn't your part Kate everybody here your part is not single-handedly to change the world okay your part is not dream big and solve climate change because otherwise we're all going to die no pressure that isn't your part your part is not all of you please be the next

Billy Graham we can't handle that can we and notice what else it doesn't say it also doesn't say just follow your heart don't let anyone tell you what to do be who you're going to be it doesn't say that either does it because we all know if we think back over the last week that our hearts have told us

about 18 different things and which one's the right one so what is our part verse 47 verse 48 repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached to his name in his name to all nations beginning at Jerusalem the message of King Jesus being with us to free us and restore us is to be preached that just means publicly announced to all nations in fact to the ends of the earth is that big enough for us and what's our part verse 48 you are witnesses!

of these things and we get the same again in verse 8 of Acts chapter 1 you will be my witnesses! witnesses in other words we tell our story we say this is what we've seen this is what we've heard this is what Jesus has done for me these are the facts of my life based on the facts of history this is what I've believed and what I've experienced Jesus died for me and he's called me and now he's changing me we tell our story and people telling their story of what Jesus has done for them is exactly what we see in the whole of the rest of Acts that's our part tell your story and Kate you've started doing that already you didn't know it but you were preaching when you were in the pool you publicly announced what Jesus has done for you and then when you wrote your story and your mum read it out for you you were being a witness all of us can do that our part verse 11 is also not something else and we talked about it last week it's the angel speaking men of Galilee they said why do you stand here looking into the sky so our part actually is not to gather in a holy huddle and stand looking up to heaven until he returns to rescue us from this place that is also not our part but amazingly our part is to tell our story and then the Holy Spirit might just use that to build the kingdom of good news to help somebody else trust in him the Lord Jesus

[19:59] I'll tell you another story it's called The Little Light of the Seasick Man you heard this story there's a man at sea who's very seasick if you've ever been seasick you know someone asks you to come and do something at that point well they might get an answer but it won't be in the form of words will it here's the man seasick and while the man's sick he hears that someone's fallen overboard and he's thinking I really should do something to help I really do something to help but I can't I'm just you know I can barely get up so he grabs the light that's next to him you'll have to imagine an old fashioned oil lamp right and he holds it up to the window up to the porthole and he hears later the drowning man was saved and when he feels better from his seasickness he goes out and about the boat and he talks to the man who was rescued and the rescued man says I was just going down for the last time when I stuck my hands above the water and a beam of light fell on my hand and the rescuers could see where I was and they grabbed me and pulled me up so there you go the light of the seasick man can save someone maybe we feel like that we think what can I do you know you're the seasick man what are you going to do hold up your light tell your story it's not too big a part to play is it but it's part of the greatest plan ever and Jesus invites everybody here today to be a part of that plan to come and meet him to be safe with him and to shine our lights for other people to hear the same good news amen let me pray father we thank you that you've not left us alone but you've left your holy spirit with us so that we have the power to do what you ask we thank you for your plan which is as big as we could ask for and we thank you for our part in it which we can manage lord with your help help us to tell our story lord help us if we don't yet know you to come and meet you and trust you and be part of building your kingdom of good news in Jesus name amen