Seeing what God is Doing

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[0:00] Good morning everyone. Morning, morning, morning, morning, morning. I get the easy scripture this week. If you were here last week, I don't, unlike Russ, have to talk about men's anatomy and the laying on of hands. If you missed that one, I'm sure you're all going to dash home and download it onto your podcast now and catch up and think, my goodness, what was all that about. Nevertheless, it's challenging. The scripture this morning is challenging and it's challenging in many ways because it doesn't encourage us at all to have an easy life.

Because here we have this morning this story that we're told of Peter being challenged to go and do something which is quite effective in the power of the Holy Spirit. Some may say that it's part of growing older and wiser. I don't know whether that applied to Peter because the more and more you read about Peter, he was quite a sort of let's go do it sort of guy. But here he has, he's got this wisdom and wisdom is I hope that in this service and in this series we are discovering more and more the wisdom of what God is asking of us to go and do and to be. Because Peter has arrived in Jerusalem and in our reading it's already leaked out about this thing that he actually goes and eats with sinners. He actually eats with people who effectively the food is unclean. He is eating with Gentiles. And here is critics of a dream and he shares again that dream that he was showed by God just before we get to the reading that we've had this morning about this ability to go out and share and to be with other people. Effectively, William Barclay comments that Luke was right that we realised how Christianity so very nearly just became an offshoot of Judaism instead of being Christianity in its own right. And so the fact is here we've got this reading where
Peter comes and there is these people that come to him and said why don't we go and do this? We've had this revelation we need you to come. Bear in mind the context. Disciples are being dragged away, they're being crucified, they're being killed, they're being tortured. In your wisdom strangers come to you and say oh by the way do you mind coming to this person's house? Because they'd like you to hear your mind would go wild wouldn't it? You think what's behind this request? But here we have the essence of this story that the early Christians are moving in the power of the Holy Spirit but what they're doing is they are joining in with what God is already doing. I want you to hold on to that this morning. The fact of joining in with what God is already doing. We can look around at our neighbours, we can go on prayer walks, we can do all sorts of things. The essence is whatever we do we look in to what God is already doing. John Wimber said you've seen my ministry, now show me yours. It's about joining in with what we see God is at work already and that's the wisdom of it. That God has already gone before us to do that, to actually join in with his purposes of where he already is. So often as Christians we try don't we, we create posters, we create lots of literature, we create lots of paper for people to come to know
Jesus but actually it has very little effect. The effect is is for us as Christians in the power of the Holy Spirit to have the Holy Spirit to have the courage and wisdom to join in with what God is already doing in people's lives. I sometimes wonder if we're blind to the work of God and as to what's happening all around us right here and now in the everyday and the wisdom of seeing that and thinking yes Lord I see you at work. This is where our reading was this morning. He was being called to these people who were actually asking, asking, asking, saying send for this, send for this person because I know it's going to make a difference in my life.
Perhaps we're all thinking of that God's work is rare, that maybe we don't see God at work, that we have got to go and do it rather than actually, I think there was somewhere in the Bible wasn't it where Jesus said follow me? Yeah, follow me. Where did we get that so wrong that we felt that we had to go out and do stuff and then wait for Jesus to come and join in with what we're doing? Actually it's follow me, I'm there already. All you have to do is come and join in. All Peter has to do is to respond to the leading of the Holy Spirit. You may be aware of a national phenomenon that is

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happening and many of you might have been part of this. We're going to get some slides up here in a minute.
[5:56] If I give you a clue before it comes up. Thank you so much.

If you're listening on the podcast, there's a whole congregation looking at me now thinking, oh yes, there's Wally. We're going to get some slides up on the screen in a minute for us.
That's a minor technical issue that's coming up. You see, somebody came up with the idea of drawing, of having this book, and many of you have seen that, of where actually you have this whole picture and you're supposed to find out where Wally is.
You spend all this time looking through, finding out where this person is and what he is doing and how he is doing it. I don't know, I've had one of these. I go on for ages. I'm looking through.
I spend ages trying to find out where Wally is. And this whole thing of joining in with what Jesus wants us to do, that so often we struggle, don't we?
[7:05] We struggle to find out where Jesus is at work. We ask, we pray, we look, we discern, and yet so often we come away despondent because we think, well, why are we looking? Are we looking in the wrong place, Lord?

Are you not using me? How are we doing with that? Are we okay? We're going.
The thing is, I think we'll leave that, shall we? That's great. Fine. The thing is, is that in this national phenomenon that works, all of a sudden everybody was looking for Wally.
But, if you're like me, if you've been in Bristol on a Saturday night, you will realise that there are lots of people who want to dress like Wally. All of a sudden you find these people, they're grouping together.
And all of a sudden you get three Wallys together. Then all of a sudden you find out there's about eight in a pub. In fact, it's got to the point where people have gathered together in national convention centres.
[8:16] And it's difficult not to find a Wally in there because they're all together. There was a guy who came up with this idea of finding Wally to write a book called Where Is Jesus?

And he took the same idea. And you're supposed to look through these pages to find out where Jesus is. Doesn't work.
Because the issue is, is Jesus is at work everywhere. You don't have to look. Jesus is there in amongst everybody who we meet, day in and day out, working.
It's for us to have the wisdom to join in with what God is doing in their lives. And so often we search and look and seek to find. But actually the issue is, is that if we were more open to the Holy Spirit, just as Peter was, that we would just go and respond.
I love this bit in the thing. He just arrives there, doesn't he? As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them. And as he had come on us at the beginning, it's no different.
[9:33] All he had to do is go and respond to what God was asking of him. And then I remembered that the Lord said, John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.

So if God gave them the same gift as he gave us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I should stand in God's way? What am I doing to stand in God's way?
What doesn't give us the courage to actually go and do and follow and join in with what he's doing? In the everyday, people that we meet, wherever we are, whatever we're doing.
The question asked in the passages is, Lord, when was it that you saw me hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison and did not take care of you?
Jesus is there in the everyday. How do we respond? Every encounter, every day, every journey, everything we do.
[10:42] And as Peter says, who was I to think that I could stand in God's way? I just want you to just reflect over this last week of the people that we have met, the conversations that we have had, the opportunities that would have been there, that we would have had to share in the wisdom that we're talking about, to speak in to a life to make a difference.

It's a great story, the fact that the whole people have then received and come to faith. It's a lady called Philippa who, it's great to hear sensational stories, isn't it, of how lives were changed.
But there's a lady called Philippa who would describe herself probably just as an everyday person who had just lived out of Christian faith until actually somebody was bold enough to actually speak to her and engage.

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Could we have that clip, please? Thanks. It's done for me. What hasn't he done, maybe? No, I mean, it's wonderful. It completely changes your outlook on life.
I mean, I wasn't an alcoholic or a drug addict. I was a respectable sinner. But even so, there was that missing element, the meaning of life. So it gave me a purpose and a meaning to life.
[12:12] And I realized after a while, that's what I'd been searching for all my life. But I just didn't know what it was. I was looking for happiness in other ways. Obviously, everybody has difficulties in life.

And those things come up. I think last year, I went through a very, very difficult year. In May last year, my brother died. He had a stroke and didn't regain consciousness.
So there was the shock of that to deal with as well. And then a couple of months later, my husband went to be with the Lord. He was gloriously, wonderfully taken into heaven.
And it was a really special time. There was great peace in our home and we were able to take care of him right through until he said he was ready to go. So it was a glorious passing.
But then, of course, the reality of it sets in later. And then a couple of months after that, my son, who'd been living with us, went to live in America. So I had three enormous waves, really, is how it felt.
[13:16] It felt, here comes another big wave. Lord, you're going to have to help me get through this. And he did. Over each one, he did. He's always there.

He's so close to us. As soon as we cry out to him, he's there. And all we have to do is join in with what he's already doing.
That seems pretty easy to me. So what stops us? Thank you. . .
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