

You Will Be My Witnesses

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[0 : 0 0] root canals exactly exactly there's few things that can strike fear into a human being than the word root canal and there is nothing that can stir up more fear in a Christian than the prospect of having to talk about Jesus to someone who is not a follower of Jesus yet we can put it on the same scale as a root canal and more often than not our fears keep us from witnessing to others about Jesus there's the fear of offense one of them is if I share the gospel with someone tell about Jesus to this person and they think I am a real doofus and will have nothing to do with me from there on out I could lose a friendship

I could lose credibility with others if I do at work I could lose my job I could be accused of being a narrow-minded bigot which you don't want to be accused of or it could just be really weird like I share the gospel with my neighbor and then the next day we're bringing out the trash on the side of the road and we're looking at each other and he's kind of like what are you doing here freak show it could also be from a fear of failure we don't witness to others because we fear we don't know what to say we fear that we're going to look stupid we have this fear that what happens if I say something wrong and this person ends up in hell because I've told them the wrong thing man we can live in our fears we can be ruled by our fears but let me just drop something into your mind right now what if what if God has actually placed you into people's lives so that you would bear witness about Christ to them and what if that when they hear you speak of your Jesus of who he is and what he's done for you and they hear that

God begins to draw them to himself and they come to repent and believe what if what if God wants to use you to advance his kingdom what if God has actually purposed to use you as his witness for his glory over the last several weeks we've been looking at God's word to know how to be a modern day disciple of Jesus Christ and we've been defining discipleship to Christ as intentionally living your life for Jesus every area of your life for Christ that's what disciples do because he's worth it this morning is the last installment in this series to live intentionally for Jesus means you will bear witness about Jesus to others to live intentionally for Jesus is to bear witness to Jesus to others he's worth it and his worth overcomes our fears a witness is a person that testifies to the truth of something that he or she has seen or heard and maybe maybe you've witnessed a car accident before and the police come and they take their statements from the witnesses who saw what happened

I recently got rear-ended by by Jockey and Andreas and I had to give a statement or maybe you've been called to be a witness in a court of law and as you take your place on the witness stand a clerk comes up to you and asks you some version of do you swear to tell the whole truth the whole truth and nothing but the truth so help you God and you say I do when we talk about witnessing we're talking about testifying to the truth of something we've seen or heard now at the beginning of the book of Acts the risen Jesus Christ commissions all of his disciples to be his witnesses to whoever wherever to be a 21st century witness of Jesus to be a 21st disciple of Jesus is to be a 21st century witness witness to Jesus to testify to the truth of who he is and what he's done for us would you open up your Bibles now to Acts chapter 1 and I'm going to read through 6 verses 6 through 11 Acts is right after the gospels Matthew Mark Luke John and then you're in Acts and as you're turning there let me just give you a little heads up as to what's been going on here the passage that we're about to receive to read it's a dialogue we're going to see the disciples ask Jesus something Jesus is going to respond by saying something and then these two angels come out of nowhere and ask another question it's really interesting but all this happened 40 days after Jesus has been raised from the dead and so Jesus has been raised he's been appearing to his disciples in various places and now we come to this they've gathered together on the Mount of Olives outside Jerusalem so when they had gathered Jesus and his disciples they the disciples asked him the

risen Lord Lord will you at this time restore the kingdom of Israel and Jesus said to them it's not for you to know times or seasons that the father has fixed by his own authority but you will receive power when the

[6 : 26] Holy Spirit has come upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth and when he had said these things as they were looking on he was lifted up and a cloud took him out of their sight and while they were gazing into 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 this Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven this is God's word here's how we're going to proceed this morning I'm going to kind of slow down and walk you through that passage again I want you to see some things and then I'm going to make the point of the passage it has to do this passage and bring it to bear into our 21st century context so let's start with this story 40 days following

Jesus resurrection the risen Christ is gathered with the disciples Bethany Mount of Olives outside of Jerusalem verse 6 the disciples ask Jesus a question remember these disciples are all Jews from the northern region of Israel called Galilee and they say Lord will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel that's a very interesting question now remember at this time Israel was still under Roman rule in occupation and so here's what's going on in the disciples minds Jesus has been raised from the dead we're watching and hearing now a risen king the Messiah and so what they're thinking is he's the guy he's the Messiah so maybe now's the time when the Messiah comes kicks the Romans out and sets up his reign in Israel and so they're expecting that the land of Israel to be liberated from foreign occupation these disciples are asking a question that goes something like this it's more of a statement hey it's time to get these foreign occupiers out of here and restore the true kingdom with Jesus as the Messiah king to the land of Israel they have an ethnocentric geographic understanding of the kingdom of God they're thinking that Jesus is going to bring the kingdom just for them the kingdom is about them one could say they could be making the kingdom of God into their own image and it's just not limited to the first century here in the 21st century we have a tendency of thinking that the kingdom of

God the saving reign of Jesus should look like us should look like the way we look it should be here and so Jesus in verse 7 responds to their question and let me just tell you up front he doesn't tell them what they want to hear he doesn't answer their question the way they wanted him to answer it Jesus begins in verse 7 it's not for you to know times or seasons that the father has fixed by his own authority in other words I can't tell you if this is that time it's not for you to know you don't have security clearance from the father only he knows one thing you can't miss from this statement is that the father the first person of the trinity is exercising authority over time he has fixed the times and the seasons according to his authority time serves the father's purposes and then in verse eight Jesus answers their question not with a yes or no or not with a hey here's the time he answers their question with mission but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth the disciples the Jewish disciples were not expecting this they were expecting the risen Messiah to be kicking out the foreign occupiers and restore his messianic kingdom reign to ethnic Israel within the geography of Jerusalem but what he tells them is I'm not kicking them out I'm not kicking the Gentiles out I'm sending out you to the Gentiles I'm sending you out to proclaim my saving reign for all to hear including the

[11 : 56] Gentiles to the end of the earth he's not kicking the nations out he's sending his disciples out on mission and this mission is going to start in Jerusalem which is the city the capital of Israel and it's located in the region of Judea and then north of Judea is Samaria and then beyond all that are the ends of the earth Jesus is saying hey gang I'm going global with the saving reign of God and you're going to need the Holy Spirit to do what I've commissioned you to do and then in verse nine there are no time for questions Jesus commissions his disciples and then we read and when he had said these things as they were looking on he was lifted up and a cloud took them out of their sight after telling them that he is going global with his saving reign and that he has just volunteered his disciples to be the promotional force he then splits he takes off and he takes off in the most memorable of ways now if you want to learn how to make a memorable exit from a party look at it right here he basically says okay

I'm sending you guys out on a global mission to expand my saving reign and he basically does a mic drop at that point and then he's like taken up lifted up and what we see from these verse nine is

that he gets on a cloud escalator of sorts that lifts him up and out of the sight of his disciples into heaven he ascends bodily into heaven and is now at the right hand of God a position of authority have you ever released like a red helium balloon before kind of a balloon release and you let that thing go and you're watching that red balloon go up into the blue sky and you just keep on watching it watching it and you're like I think I still see it I think I still see it and then it kind of disappears you can't see it anymore verse 10 they're still gazing into heaven as Jesus is ascending when this other surprise happens out of nowhere two men are standing by them in white robes

I was with a couple guys yesterday and we're kind of joking about this it's like they're looking up into the sky and then all of a sudden two guys are like whoa like where'd you guys come from they're dressed in white the last time two showed up was 40 days earlier on resurrection Sunday at the empty tomb and they asked a question why are you looking for the living among the dead he's not here he is risen these are two angels and you can't help but wonder if they're the same two angels that were at the empty tomb and here they are in verse 10 proclaiming the ascension of Jesus they proclaim the resurrection bodily now they're proclaiming hey he's gone up look at verse 11 men of Galilee why do you stand looking into heaven this Jesus who's taken up from you into heaven will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven and what is that way he went into heaven on a cloud he's going to come back on a cloud and what that is is a veiled reference to the day fixed by the father in which the risen son of man returns from the right hand of power coming on the clouds of heaven to be given dominion over all people and all things for all time Daniel 7 13 through 14 and when he comes he's going to bring judgment he's going to make all things right and there's no doubt that we're talking about Jesus this Jesus who was taken up from you into heaven will come in the same ways as you saw him go on the clouds all authority basically these two angels are saying to

Jesus disciples hey guys stop looking up in the air it's time to get down to business the same way he went up is the same way he's going to come back now go wait for the Holy Spirit to come and send you out so 40 days after the resurrection the risen Christ commissions his disciples to be his witnesses to all people everywhere the kingdom of the Messiah the saving reign of God isn't just being limited to to be proclaimed to all people regardless of their ethnicity regardless of their location God is seeking to do a global work of gathering people to worship him through Jesus after saying these things Jesus of course is taken up in a cloud into heaven the rest of the book of Acts is the outworking of Acts 1 8 we see in chapters 1 through 7 the early church empowered by the [17:54] Holy Spirit preaching the gospel to Jerusalem and then in chapters 8 through 12 we see the early church empowered by the spirit making Jesus known to all Judea and Samaria and then in chapters 13 through 28 we see the early church empowered by the spirit proclaiming Jesus to the ends of the earth so here's the point here's why this is in our Bibles returns we his church bear witness to him to all people everywhere that's the point until he comes back we are to be witnessing about Jesus to others the church is the witnessing community of the risen Christ it's who we are and it's what we do so if you're a disciple of Jesus and you're seeking to live intentionally for him you will be witnessing to him you will be telling others about him and it's the worth of

Jesus that will overcome your fears time out Mike Mike wait wait wait wait wait wait wait wait wait wait wait wait wait wait wait come come on over here Mike for a second I just need to talk to you come here buddy what can I do for you are you telling me that as a follower of Jesus I need to actually talk to people about you seriously I need to open my mouth up and I need to identify with Jesus and talk to them about about Jesus seriously it's not me who's telling you I'm telling you but it's Jesus who has commissioned you he's commissioned you as his disciples to be his witnesses to speak the truth of who he is and what he's done

I mean Matthew 28 Jesus is giving all authority in heaven and earth and he says go therefore make disciples of the nations and the way that we make disciples of the nations begins with witnessing to others about the person and work of Jesus Matthew 5 Jesus tells us the church to be salt and light in a decaying and dark world we are to show and tell the gospel I'll never forget my second grade teacher at Roaring Brook Elementary School in Avon Connecticut her name is Mrs.

Ball and I had a crush on her the size of China I could smell her perfume down the hall that serious stuff right there she was 59 and I loved her Mrs.

Ball had a time what's called show and tell and so me and my students would bring things in to show and tell our classmates and I brought in my 85 pound long hair German shepherd her name was Jody and I brought Jody in who is my joy and my classmates carefully pet her and I got to tell

about my dog it was a joy show and tell Jesus Jesus is calling us to show and tell about him our joy so when we bump into a passage like Colossians 4:6 let your speech always be gracious seasoned with salt so that you may know how you ought to answer each person the presumption is we're in proximity to non-Christians and they have questions about our lifestyles and that we need to know how to explain why we're living lives distinct from everybody else and so when

[22:08] Paul says you may know how that you may know how to answer each person Paul's not saying hey would you guys be ready so that if someone comes up to you and asks for directions to the Mars Cheese Castle you'll be ready to answer them that's not what we're talking about here's what we're talking about we need to be able to give an explanation for why our lives are distinct from everybody else so if we have people coming up to us and asking hey why are you so happy all the time it's an opportunity to bear witness show and tell Jesus if we have someone come up to us and say hey I notice you don't lie anymore opportunity to show and tell Jesus hey you're not sleeping around anymore show and tell Jesus hey you're not smoking weed anymore show and tell Jesus hey you're not you're not flipping out and freaking out and getting angry all the time anymore show and tell Jesus we give a reason an explanation we know how to answer people we listen to what they say we listen to what they ask and we respond by showing and telling about Jesus very appropriately 1 Peter 3:15 but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord is holy always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for the reason for the hope that is in you our lives are to be distinct we are to do the good works

God has called us to and then the people who see it are to give glory to our father in heaven Matthew 5:16 so what I want to help you see here is the point is until Jesus comes back we're to be witnessing about Jesus all who live for Christ will testify to Christ now I thought about asking you all to raise your hands with this who is scared to talk to others about Jesus just two of us do you know what that means when we raise our hand and say yeah it's scary for me to think about sharing the gospel with my boss or it's scary to think about sharing the gospel with my neighbor who's living with his homosexual lover it's scary to me do you know what that means it doesn't mean we don't share the gospel it means we need courage it means we need boldness it means we have an opportunity so for the remainder of our time

I want to encourage you from this text I want you to see five encouraging truths from Acts 1:6 through 11 that ought to motivate witness in your life here's number one be encouraged by the sovereign control of your heavenly father in chapter 1 verse 6 the disciples say so when they had come together they asked him Lord will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel and Jesus says it's not for you to know the times or seasons that the father has fixed by his own authority what kind of being has the authority and the power to determine times and seasons who does that a being who is sovereign over all time and whose time does his bidding that's who that is and let me just let you know

God is not just sovereign over time he's sovereign over all things listen to Acts 17:25 to 26 this is a sermon that Paul was preaching in Holy Spirit boldness he says God himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything and God made from one man Adam every nation of mankind to live in all the face of the earth having determined periods times and the boundaries of their dwelling place where they live that they should seek God and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him so the one who determines times and seasons also determines when and where people live so that they can somehow find him do you know what this means God has placed you at this time and at this place to help people find him to bear witness to him think about the apartment you live in or the neighborhood you're in or the townhouses you live in think about

God stacking the deck of all those residents with you as his witnessing ace he's got you there for a reason and it's not just that he's placed you there God has placed everybody else around you there as well he's sovereign over it all and so the walk away is this God has placed you already in a mission field it's your neighborhood it's your school it's your club it's the gym you go to the coffee shop you frequent it's woodman's or festival these paths that you live out your life they are intersecting with other people and it's all under the sovereign care and purpose of God so you know what that means we don't need to do drive by evangelism we don't need to go knock on a door and try to get through the gospel as fast as we can and get the door shut in our face and just feel good about ourselves because we've delivered the goods we've got people all around us already waiting seeking so get to know their names as the weather warms up and as you find yourself outside more and your neighbors are outside move towards them get to know their names start getting to know

their stories and as you get to know their names and their stories you get to share life with them because they're going to want to know your name in your story and your story has a hero and his name is

[29 : 13] Jesus and it's just a matter of time before you start to show and tell them to them so the first thing that should encourage you is God's sovereign over it all and he's placed you where you're at for a reason to be his witness second encouragement be emboldened by the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit the Holy Spirit is the second person of the Trinity and he indwells each of us for a variety of reasons now do you remember that the disciples on the night that Jesus was betrayed when they were in the garden do you remember what happened to the disciples they heard the crowd coming to arrest Jesus and they bolted they abandoned Jesus in fear they ran they were afraid but in Acts 2 the fulfillment of Acts 1 8 takes place they they received the power of the Holy Spirit the Spirit of God on Pentecost is poured out on the early church all of his disciples men and women boys and girls all disciples in that upper room the Holy Spirit was poured out on them and the cowardly disciples were all of a sudden transformed and they were made into by the Holy Spirit courageous Spirit empowered proclaimers of the crucified and risen Christ we see it in Acts chapter 2 in Peter's first sermon boy that is bold it's the Holy Spirit emboldening him to preach Christ it's a dramatic change from where they were just 40 43 days before cowering running hiding afraid the difference is the Holy Spirit and the moment Christian you believe in Jesus you were indwelt by that same

Holy Spirit he resides in you and he is willing and he is able to empower you to be a bold winsome witness for Christ to all around you but I need to tell you this as well the Holy Spirit just does not come on us just to make us bold do you realize the mission that Jesus has called us to is humanly impossible we in and of ourselves are unable to change someone's eternity we cannot make someone transfer them from the kingdom of the domain of darkness into the kingdom of the beloved son we can't do that we are unable to revive someone who's spiritually dead and bring them back into spiritual life we can't do that what we're able to do is faithfully proclaim the gospel message and as the gospel message goes out the Holy Spirit gets done what only he can do bring people who are spiritually dead and raise them from the dead and give them spiritual life to take people living in darkness and bringing them into the glorious light of our savior so not only do we need boldness because we're afraid we need the

Holy Spirit power that changes people we're not going to depend upon our presentations we're not going to depend upon our techniques we're going to depend upon the power of the Holy Spirit working in and through us to convince people of their need for Jesus so here's the application we do what the first century church did we pray we pray for boldness we pray for the Holy Spirit to be poured out afresh we pray the Holy Spirit will accompany our witness and convince people of their sin and spotlight Jesus and bring them from death to life and not only that we ask others to pray for us for those of you who are life group as you're heading towards the summer be asking hey life group folks would you be praying for me because I really want to be sharing the gospel with my neighbor her name is this would you start praying for me and for my neighbor praying for opportunities that I can show and tell

Jesus to her in Ephesians 6 and Colossians 4 Paul asks these churches to pray for him for boldness and clarity and speaking about Jesus to others let's do the same don't just pray for yourself pray for opportunities to boldly engage others for Jesus you know what's going to happen here's what happened you get to share Jesus with somebody else and you walk away you're like that was awesome what a privilege I got to share the good news here's what I want to impress upon you the effectiveness of our witness is not dependent on our presentation the effectiveness of our witness is dependent on Holy Spirit power we must be dependent on him third be courageous because the unstoppable advance of the kingdom of heaven let me just sum up this way

[35 : 02] Jesus says I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it you see it played out in Acts the gospel spoken by the spirit and power church is unstoppable Jerusalem Judea Samaria to the ends of the age to fellow Jews and then to Samaritans and then to Gentiles with tremendous response unstoppable gospel powered by the spirit through his church unstoppable I have a question for you do you believe that the holy spirit who empowered the first century church to proclaim an unstoppable gospel is the same holy spirit empowering the 21st century church to proclaim the same gospel to this people me too fourth be bold in your witness because the return of

Christ is one day closer remember remember those angels hey guys stop looking up there he's going to come back in the same way he went on the clouds he's coming back let me put it to you this way the day that Jesus returns is the last day you will be witnessing to Jesus do you know why everyone will see him everyone will see him at that time on that day there's no more need for public witness because he has come your days of witnessing are numbered he's coming back be faithful be bold when we talk about the second coming of Jesus it should sober us it should cause us to loosen our grips on the things of this world and narrow our focus on what matters most worship of God his fame spread through the nations application his return is one day closer not one day farther out it should sober you embolden you focus you finally be a bold witness of

Jesus because he's worth it he is worth it acts 1-8 you shall be my witnesses not witnesses to ourselves not witnesses of Wisconsin not witnesses of an old building witnesses of a living Jesus there are two things that go into a compelling witness awe over who he is and gratitude for what he's done let me just say it this way the reason why we're afraid of witnessing is not a technique problem in the words of Paul Tripp it's an awe problem our view of Jesus is too small so let me remind you of a couple things

Colossians 1 15-20 one of the most awe inspiring descriptions of Jesus in your Bible he is the Lord of creation and the Lord of redemption take a look at it it is amazing Revelation 19 Jesus shows up on a white war horse and he's got four names faithful and true because his word always proves true he's got another name that nobody knows himself because he himself is beyond comprehension of any of us he's the word of God the ultimate final revelation of God and he is the last name King of Kings and Lord of Lords this is the one whom we bear witness to not a little Jesus a big Jesus Lord of creation Lord of redemption faithful and true a name no one knows the word of God King of Kings and Lord of Lords are you lacking boldness in your witness worship

Jesus see him for who he is and let your witness be driven by worship all of the risen one and it's not just who he is it's what he's done gratitude can you believe it it never gets old the second person of the Trinity humbled himself by taking on human flesh was crucified on a Roman cross God's wrath was poured out on him in full for those who were sinned against him what has he done he's rescued you and me from the power and penalty of sin we've been delivered from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of the beloved son in whom we have redemption the forgiveness of sins the forgiveness of all of our sins he has set us free from slavery to sin he's given us a new life and a new eternal destiny do you know what happens in the heart of a sinner who's been forgiven much she loves much incredibly grateful and it goes like this

[41 : 20] I'm so grateful for what Jesus has done for me I want to tell others about it so that they can experience the same grace the same freedom the same forgiveness and deliverance the same joy you see Jesus is our hero he's the one we proclaim and out of great awe for who he is and deep gratitude for what he's done we witness to others around us not because we have to because we want to we're compelled to could you imagine calling your mom today hey mom happy birthday or happy mother's day sorry yeah you know I've been really busy mom and I you know the wife's been riding me to call you all day today to wish you happy mother's day so have a good one gotta get back to clipping my nails really compelling right versus hi mom

I am so grateful that you're my mom the older I get the more grateful I am you have made me the man I am I want to be like you mom and thanks for being my mom for still being my mom gratitude delight blessing joy the first one obligation duty the second one gratitude joy blessing let's not witness to Jesus out of obligation and duty let's witness to Jesus out of gratitude and awe and joy people want to know how do you witness to Jesus what do you tell them well you tell them how awesome he is and you tell them how grateful you are for what he's done for you and he offers them the same

Acts 1 6-11 shows us that until Jesus returns we his disciples must be witnessing about who he is and what he's done that was true of the first century church and it's just as true as the 21st century church a disciple of Jesus bears witness to who Jesus is and what he's done out of deep awe and gratitude God God God God God is going to save people through our witness and the Holy Spirit is going to use us the bottom line is this Jesus is worth our witness and his worth overcomes our fears I want to tell you about two resources that I think will really encourage you there's a book it's called the secret thoughts of an unlikely convert it's by

Rosaria Butterfield she was a feminist English professor at Syracuse in a lesbian relationship and she engaged with a Christian whose faithful witness led her to the Lord it is a wonderful wonderful

account it is so encouraging and instructive I would commend it to you the second book I would encourage you to read or listen to is a book called Gospel Fluency by Jeff Vanderstelt speaking the truths of Jesus into the everyday stuff of life particularly part five the gospel to others he is so helpful in instructing us and equipping us how to speak the gospel into people's lives with where they're at but make sure you listen to the four parts that precede it because they show you the worth of Jesus as 21st century followers of

Jesus we're to be 21st century witnesses to Jesus let's pray Lord Lord Jesus our risen king you are worthy and we would ask that you would use us as your church to bear witness to who you are and what you've done empowered by your spirit for the glory of your name among the nations God would you help us to witness in our homes and send us to the nations we ask this in Jesus name amen