

# Acts 1:1-11

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] well we're starting a new sermon series today as announced looking at what happened immediately after jesus was crucified died and buried and then three days later rose again until the summer we're going to be looking now at the book of acts where we will see god's plan for the rest of history in light of jesus resurrection in acts all of us will see how we are invited now to enter into the story of god at work in the world and how we're invited to share his gospel and extend his kingdom that everybody may repent and believe and be saved through the work and words of jesus this past wednesday a new course started at saint john's called introducing jesus these evening sessions were intended for people of every sort of spiritual background and belief to gather together and look at who jesus is and why he matters from the gospel of mark so david if you want to go back to mark wednesday night we started our first session this week with a question for everyone to consider if you could ask god one thing one question what would it be there were some great suggestions someone shared i would ask about validity how do we know that the bible is true how do we know that jesus actually lived and died and then really rose again it was a perfect question to start our session because none of us here were there 2000 years ago none of us have seen the risen jesus so how do we know the story of jesus is true it's a question all of us should ask ourselves and those of us who are christians should be prepared to answer if someone else were to ask us in our text the people who are around jerusalem on the ground ask him one question they actually have their moment to ask god one question and they don't need to ask about validity they don't need to ask if the resurrection is real because they are the eyewitnesses of it they're the ones who saw and touched and heard the risen jesus so the question they ask is this what now christ is risen indeed so what's next and those two questions i want to frame our text today first how do we know that jesus is actually risen and second if jesus is risen and what are we supposed to do now what's next how should all of us be living in light of the resurrection of jesus christ our passage answers the first question by focusing in on jesus and telling us three things about him to prove that he's risen and the focus then shifts from jesus to his followers revealing what's next for them jesus promises three things that will happen to his followers and then through them so by looking first at jesus and then at those who follow him we see the answers to both how we know he's truly risen and how we should now live in light of the resurrection of jesus christ so first let's look at jesus starting at verse 1 of chapter 1 on page 909 how do we know that jesus is actually risen this is how the book starts in the first book o theophilus i've dealt with all that jesus began to do and teach until the day he was taken up after he'd given commands through the holy spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen to them he presented himself alive after his suffering by many proofs

appearing to them during 40 days and speaking about the kingdom of god the first thing to notice about jesus is that he is alive verse 3 he presented himself alive after his suffering by many proofs if the story of jesus was written to be a fairy tale or a legend or a myth then this sentence would not be included the only reason the author would describe that jesus presented himself alive by many proofs to many people as the basis of our belief in the resurrection it was proven by jesus himself and recorded by his eyewitnesses these eyewitnesses of the risen jesus wrote about it and their testimony now forms what we call the new testament see you don't read goldilocks and hear about how she returns home and presents proofs to her family that she really did encounter a domesticated family of bears living in a human home in the woods it's a fairy tale there's no proof it's not necessary george lucas gives us no proof that the events described in star wars really did occur a long time ago in a galaxy far far away it's fiction proof is not necessary the author of acts writes differently this is not fiction he wants us to know that this story is verifiable history it's based on evidence presented to eyewitnesses to give us proof of its validity these eyewitnesses moved from unbelief to fear and skepticism to then faith when they encountered the risen jesus they went from hiding for their lives because jesus had been killed to then boldly proclaiming before the world that jesus is risen and all of them without exception were willing to die to defend their testimony they saw him they touched him they heard him they ate meals with him they went on walks with him they had bible studies with him they broke bread with him there's a chicago tribune reporter who to his great horror found out that his wife was being wooed to believe in jesus this guy was horrified he did not want to be married to a christian so he used his professional investigative reporting skills to attempt to disprove the resurrection once and for all to bring his wife back to her senses with definitive proof that the resurrection of jesus was a fable and a hoax but to his shock the more he studied the easter events as a secular journalist the more he realized the proof for the resurrection was overwhelming his research led him to the exact opposite of his initial goal he ended up disproving his own disbelief he became a christian by trying to debunk jesus resurrection his name's lee strobels and his book is called the case for christ and it sold over five million copies it's worth reading jesus is alive that's the first thing we learned from acts chapter one secondly we learned that jesus is still at work in the world if you look back at verse one you see that the author luke refers back to his first book a biography of jesus that's in our bibles and we call the gospel according to luke in acts chapter

one luke summarizes his gospel this way dear theophilus in the first book i dealt with all that jesus began to do and teach notice luke doesn't say all that jesus did and taught past tense no the birth life death resurrection and ascension of jesus are only the beginning of jesus work and jesus teaching this second book the book of acts therefore records the continuation of jesus work and jesus teaching jesus is still working theophilus the reason jesus is still at work and his ongoing ministry that continues today is further proof for his resurrection jesus work is not finished in acts we're now entering a new phase of the gospel of jesus christ a new era a new act in the great drama of god at work in the world to bring his salvation and his kingdom and the principal actor is still jesus even today and one of the primary ways jesus continues to work in the world is through the spread of his word did you notice in our text the emphasis on jesus words look back at verse one all that jesus began to do and teach or verse two until the day he was taken up after he had given commands to the apostles and verse three to them he presented himself alive after his suffering by many proofs appearing to them during 40 days and speaking about the kingdom of heaven the way jesus acts is through the spread of his word the book of acts is a record of the ongoing out working unstoppable word and works of the risen jesus the successful spread of the word is further proof that jesus is alive and still at work jesus proves he's alive he proves he's at work and thirdly he proves that he has ascended in verse two he was taken up in verse nine he was lifted up and a cloud took them out of their sight jesus is not physically here anymore which is why we struggle to know if this story is true no one was expecting jesus to leave and to ascend into heaven look at what the disciples were expecting to happen in verse four while jesus was staying with them his followers asked him lord will you at this time restore the kingdom to israel the disciples are thinking jesus is alive death is dead he's actually god's son and he's come to earth risen and ready to reign so let's bring on the kingdom let's plan the parade let's celebrate the day of the lord and restore the kingdom to israel and destroy our enemies forever let's go but instead one of the biggest shocks of history the risen jesus leaves to return to the father and to be enthroned in heaven with the promise that he will return it's a total surprise death has been defeated and yet on the ground the average person feels like their life has been unchanged rome still reigns the corrupt state religion under the pharisees is still in effect they're still hunting and persecuting the

followers of jesus as acts is about to tell us death is still at work in the world and most of the world has no idea what's just happened jesus is alive jesus is at work but jesus is ascended he's gone and this leads us to our second question what's next what's next what are we supposed to do now as we await jesus return the text shifts focus as now we're told three things that jesus promises his followers who are living between jesus resurrection and his return firstly jesus promises his followers that they will be empowered first four while staying with his followers he ordered them not to depart from jerusalem but to wait for the promise of the father which he said you heard from me for john baptized with water but you will be baptized by the holy spirit and again in verse 8 you will receive power when the holy spirit has come upon you followers of jesus are promised that they will receive god's holy spirit jesus promises god the holy spirit will enter into his followers bringing god's presence and god's power into everyone who believes in him the way that jesus will continue his work on earth is through filling his followers with his holy spirit empowering all of us to carry on his ministry and to proclaim his gospel we're told later in scripture that the holy spirit is the proof he's the down payment he's god's deposit that he gives us now that guarantees our salvation in christ the holy spirit entering and empowering followers of jesus is a further proof for us that the story of scripture is true and jesus is risen jesus promises that if you repent and believe in him you will be given god's holy spirit every person who has come to believe in jesus believes because god the holy spirit has been at work in them to turn them to christ every person here who follows jesus follows him because of the work of the holy spirit the holy spirit empowering you from within to do so now everyone here or listing online who feels that something is missing in their life or is desiring to turn away from their sin or the burdens of your past to live a better life that yearning within you is birthed out of the holy spirit the holy spirit already at work in your heart as you hear god's word proclaimed and you're compelled to respond in repentance and faith in jesus the fact that you are here or you are listening is proof that the risen jesus is work is at work in your life drawing you to himself through his gospel being proclaimed and his holy spirit at work in you so god the holy spirit empowers the followers of jesus he and he empowers people who don't yet know jesus to turn and follow him as they hear his word the holy spirit is further proof of the gospel's truth and its power he witnesses to jesus and his resurrection he assures all of us that in christ our sins are forgiven by christ's death on the cross your debt to god has been paid and through christ you have now been granted the status of a child of god who will enjoy life with the god forever jesus promises his followers they'll be empowered as you turn to jesus the holy spirit will

enter you and begin a work of transforming you into the image of christ and propelling you now to bear fruit for christ convicting you of your sin and giving you a reassurance of god's grace and favor and the gospel's truth the work of the holy spirit is to empower people to believe in jesus and to become like him so what's next for us first followers of jesus are promised that they will be empowered by god the holy spirit second the followers of jesus are commissioned look at verse 8 you'll receive power when the holy spirit has come upon you and you will be my witnesses in jerusalem and judea and samaria and to the ends of the earth all followers of jesus are commissioned to share christ to witness to him and his gospel and his kingdom saint john's is a community of contrast could we say it together i doubt it we're a community of contrast gripped by the gospel of grace to share christ with our city that's our mission statement come to introducing saint john's and david will unpack it for you very few of us feel equipped or empowered to share christ for most of us sharing our faith verbally is a terrifying prospect in a secular place like vancouver we're taught that our personal beliefs should be private and so to speak publicly about jesus is inappropriate and offensive but witnessing to jesus is not limited to walking up to strangers and telling them the gospel in 30 seconds it doesn't mean you need to be that guy at work annoyingly making every conversation about christ and force feeding the gospel to everyone around you whether they have a spiritual hunger or not rather to witness to christ means that you are always prepared to give an answer for the hope that is within you with gentleness and with respect to witness to jesus means that you and i are commissioned to go and love our neighbors to image christ in how we live to witness to him by our words and also by our deeds think about how jesus witnessed to himself in the gospels we just finished mark think back yeah of course jesus witnessed by his words but also by incredible deeds of compassion and justice of standing up to evil of kneeling down to serve and to pray and then to stand to boldly proclaim the gospel we're not just called to be the mouthpiece of christ but his entire body we are his hands his feet called to embody all of him in how we live and how we witness to him and as we witness our success is not measured by the results of our testimony i'm the evangelist on staff i don't get commission if someone comes to faith although jesus says we will be his witnesses and that word witness literally is the word martyr he says to his followers you will be my martyrs the first witnesses of jesus were ultimately rejected and killed by society it's not like everyone living listened to paul or accepted peter or even what jesus taught them the vast majority of people

[ 20:19 ] rejected them and we should remember that the success of our witness is not measured by converts but by our faithfulness to share christ and to tell the good news of his salvation offered to all even if we're made martyrs by doing it this is how jesus continues his ministry today through his people empowered and filled by his spirit modeling him in how we live and what we say commissioned to be his witnesses and finally the last thing we learn about the followers of jesus is this they are sent followers of jesus are drawn close to him by his gospel empowered by his spirit and then commissioned to be sent out into the world we are drawn in filled up sent out verse 8 again you'll receive power when the holy spirit comes upon you and you will be my witnesses in jerusalem and then judea and then samaria and to the ends of the earth there's an outward trajectory of the people of god filled with god's spirit as they witness by sharing and embodying the gospel the god of the bible is a god on mission from the first page to the last to reach those who are furthest from him the entire narrative of scripture is about god striving to reach the entire world with his mercy and grace and blessing unlike every other faith that demands the adherents reach up to god through their works of devotion our god reaches down to us entering our darkness searching us out saving us from our sin and selfishness filling us with his holy spirit and bringing us through christ to be with him forever in scripture god sent israel then he sent his son then he sent his spirit and now he sends his church that all may be saved so if you follow jesus you're a missionary god sends all of us he sends us to our families he sends us to our families he sends us to our neighbors he sends us to our he sends us to the ends of the earth that the good news of jesus may be known that jesus may be known and that his kingdom will extend so that all will be invited and included in god's salvation now in a few weeks time saint john's is sending a gaggle of people our best and brightest to plant a church in east vancouver and so i want to finish by speaking to our dear sisters and brothers who next month are being commissioned and sent by god to form a new church called king's cross and my word to you is this may god bless you and may he keep you may you receive the power of god's holy spirit that you will be the witnesses of christ to east vancouver and to burnaby and to new west and to coquitlam and to poco and to port moody and to whatever's beyond port moody someone who lives in pit meadows is going to come up to me tonight or this morning may you go to the ends of the earth the ends of the lower mainland you have been called and commissioned and empowered

and are now about to be sent as someone who has in the past been sent out from saint john's myself i will be honest this is a hard place to leave king's cross will be amazing a little jealous but you'll miss it here and we will miss you 12 years ago melissa and i were sent from saint john's to go east to a church in burnaby and then to another one in east vancouver and during our time out east as i call it we came here one sunday night to visit and as we drove home we wept because we were so homesick i understand the emotion that you are feeling right now it's hard to be sent it's hard to leave a happy home to go out for the sake of the gospel so we should be commending our brothers and sisters for their willingness to listen to the voice of jesus and go perhaps even to deny themselves as they do so this is what all of us are called to jesus is alive the lord is risen jesus is still at work in the world he is still speaking and acting through his people being empowered by his spirit to share his good news jesus has ascended he's not here but he's in heaven at the right hand of the throne of god jesus is still at the right hand of the lord of christ in the kingdom of god all who are in christ are empowered by his holy spirit all of us without exception have been commissioned to be his witnesses all of us have been called to go out in his name rejoicing in the power of the holy spirit sent out into the world to do the work that he has given us to do to love and serve him through witnessing to his gospel by our works and by our acts thanks be to god amen