Witness

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 01 November 2026

Preacher: Fiona Lloyd

[0:00] Good to be here. We're continuing our service, our series on the Word and Spirit. So before! we start on that I just want to share with you as we're having communion just now! and we're holding the cups ready for them to be served out and ready to take the wine together to acknowledge our wants in Christ.

I just looked to the side of me and Georgia was sitting on the steps with her little cup of wine waiting to drink that and just the way she was holding it I think probably moving it slightly while she was waiting but the light was reflecting off the surface of the wine and I just thought it was a lovely illustration because it ties in very nicely with the things I'm talking about this morning.
So if you can just hold that image in your head the light reflecting and we're going to one of the things we're going to talk about is you know the light of Jesus reflecting off us.
So just hold that image in your head and maybe when you go home, oops so I'm losing this wire, you know and you make a cup of tea or whatever or maybe you have a glass of wine with your evening meal or juice but you know look just remind yourself of the light reflecting, the light of Jesus reflecting.
So as I said we're continuing our series on word and spirit and our focus today is on witness.
[1:32] So we're going to start by reading from Acts chapter 1 together. I think I'm going to read it from there rather than my Bible and I hope that I might be able to see the word better.

So this is Luke who wrote the Gospel of Luke and then he continues with a further letter to Theophilus and he's talking about the early church but this is a very introductory passage.
It's a well-known passage and we often have this one at Pentecost. So he says, So when they met together they asked him,
He said to them, He was taken up before their very eyes and a cloud hid him from their sight.
Amen. You'd think really that Jesus knew he was going to be taken up to heaven and the Holy Spirit was going to come and be with the disciples.
[3:53] You'd think there might be more, if I'd been organising it I think there'd be more of a handover like, Hi guys, this is the Holy Spirit, I'm leaving him with you now and I'm going up to heaven. But Jesus didn't do that and I think there's an important lesson in that which we'll come to later.

So, the theme for our service this morning is witness. And I just really want to start by examining what we think of when we hear the word witness.
Witness. There's a very old film based on a play written by Agatha Christie called Witness for the Prosecution. Anyone seen that?
It is really old. It's a very good film. So, witness can be somebody who testifies in court. In that particular film, I'm not going to spoil it by giving away what happens, but there is a witness for the prosecution who is a key character in how the story unfolds.
But if you're called as a witness to court, and those of you who have been to court in your professional roles, like Mike and Andy, know that you're obliged to state what you've seen and or heard.
[5:09] You need to give the facts. You are a witness to what has happened. Often, you're a witness to a crime or to how somebody's responded to a particular crime.

The important thing is that when you're a witness, what you say should be based on facts. You're not giving your opinion or trying to persuade the jury one way or another.
On the whole, you're giving facts and the jury have to interpret those facts. But you are a witness to what has happened. We could have a witness as somebody who countersigns a document.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

So, if anybody's ever written their will, to make it legal and valid, it has to be witnessed. Somebody has to sign it and say, yes, I was there, I've read this and I agree that this is the last will and testament of this person.
We also talk about witnesses in the sense of those who can verify, or otherwise, a historical event. So, if you remember back to when you did history at school, which for some of us is longer ago than others, but we often looked, or in my history lessons, I remember looking at different sources and finding out about things and what was often important, if it was available, was eyewitness accounts from the Times.
[6:31] If you had somebody who was actually there when a particular event happened, they were a witness to that. And so, what they said could hold great weight. Now, obviously, if you're an eyewitness to an event, we might all put our own interpretations on that, but still, having an eyewitness, somebody who was there at the time, can be really powerful.

And that ties in with the idea of witness in the Bible. So, biblically, particularly in the New Testament, or in the New Testament, rather, a witness is somebody who tells others about their relationship with Jesus, their experience of Jesus.
And you get the same word in the Old Testament, talking about God and what he's done, about your witnesses of what God has done. A reading book by Tyler Staten, which John has quoted from, and he talks about a witness is someone who sees or experiences something that's important for others to know about.
I think it's important to say at this juncture that we often use the word witness as something you should go out and do.
Go out and witness for your faith. But actually, in our modern world, and usually in Scripture as well, actually, a witness is someone who testifies to what they have seen and heard.
[8:01] We can see, as I said, witness as something we do or should do, and that can bring with it a sense of guilt and a sense of pressure.

But actually, if you read through Scripture, when Jesus talks about, you are being my witnesses, he's saying, you know, you'll talk about what I've done, you'll tell people the things I've done, but it's about who you are in Jesus and what your experience of Jesus.
I think the danger, if we think of witness as just something we go out and do, you know, on that particular weekend, we're going to have a real focus on going out and telling people about Jesus. And it's really good to tell people about Jesus, don't get me wrong. But there's a danger it can then be seen as an optional extra, you know. Next weekend, I've got some free time, so I'm going to go out and witness and forget that actually witness, it should be seen as part of who we are.
When we talk about being witnesses to Christ, that's who we are. It's not something that we do. And okay, it can feed into our, how we respond to others, and it should do that, but I think it's really helpful to see it.
[9:15] First of all, I am a witness to the life of Jesus in me. It's that light of Jesus reflecting off me. And as I seek to tell, explain about what Jesus has done for me and talk about him as part of my life, that can feed into my conversations with others, but it's primarily about who I am and my relationship with Jesus.

It's not about, oh, I need to go and witness. I'm feeling really guilty because I'm not very good at going out and sort of badgering people in the street or whatever, and we get a false idea of what witness is, which sometimes isn't helpful.
It can feel intimidating and leave us with a sense of guilt. But saying we should ask the Holy Spirit to show us how our lives can reflect Jesus feels much more achievable.
It's challenging still because I know there are times when my life doesn't really reflect Jesus. It reflects the fact that I'm feeling grumpy or I'm too tired and irritable as a result.
But our lives should reflect Jesus and that's primarily what we mean by witness. and that's something we can all achieve. I think that ties in really well with our church vision statement, which I'm struggling to read from here.
[10:42] But as followers of Jesus, we seek to be with Jesus, to become like Jesus, and to do what Jesus did. And the being with Jesus is how we learn to do those things, but becoming like him and doing the things he did.

When we do that, we bear witness to who he is and the difference that he's made in our lives. So the good news is this is not something we are expected to do on our own.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

We are not supposed to sort of, you know, sit and clench our fists and concentrate really hard and all of a sudden we'll be witnesses to Jesus because we'll just be completely transformed. Okay? We know that God can do that if he wants to, but because he wants relationship with us, it's usually an ongoing process and a learning from him. And this is where I like the fact that Jesus didn't just have that hand over and say, right guys, here's the Holy Spirit, I'm off now.
No, he said, wait. Wait in Jerusalem, don't leave Jerusalem. Wait until you receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. He did say, it'll be in a few days, so he did sort of say, it's not going to be, you're not going to be waiting for an indefinite period of time.
[11:59] But there was that sense, you need to wait. And there's a real lesson for each of us there because sometimes we think, well, I think God wants me to do this, so I better get off and do it straight away.

And sometimes we forget to wait and to listen to the Holy Spirit and to be guided by him. So it's important that as we open ourselves up to the Holy Spirit, we ask for his help in being a witness to who Jesus is.
We wait, we allow him to speak into our lives, we allow him to guide us. If he prompts us to do something, we're open to him saying, but I want you to do it tomorrow or next week.
I don't want you to do it today. There are other things I want you to do today. If you read, as we read through that passage and Jesus talks about the Holy Spirit coming and he said, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you.
The Holy Spirit will transform you. But there's a silent then. It's not actually written as then in the passage, but the implication is, then you will become my witnesses. Then you will go and witness to who I am.
[13:15] If you remember just slightly earlier in the gospel narrative, if you think back to the night when Jesus was betrayed, but he spent a large part of his last evening with his disciples, having a meal together and teaching them.

And one of the big things he talks about, the big topics, was the Holy Spirit. He said, you know, I'm going soon, but I'm not going to leave you on your own. You're not going to be orphans. You're going to have somebody with you to help you and to guide you and to teach you and remind you of everything that I've said.
But Jesus never intended that his disciples should go it alone once he'd gone back to heaven. And he doesn't intend for us to go it alone either. When we witness to who he is, when we share about who he is, when we reflect who Jesus is in our lives, we do that with the help of the Holy Spirit.
There's a famous passage in Galatians which we often quote when we're talking about the Holy Spirit, about the fruit of the Spirit, his love, joy, peace, and so on. But if you go to the couple of verses later, it continues talking about the Holy Spirit and it says, keep in step with the Spirit.
and I think that's a lovely image. If Andy and I go for a walk, we adjust our paces so that we're walking together.
[14:40] Quite often, I'm a faster walker than Andy but we learn to walk together because that's what relationship is about. I remember a number of years ago when I'd had a major operation, well, a reasonably major operation and all of a sudden I was very slow and Andy was the one that was much quicker.

And I was sort of hobbling along behind him and Andy adjusted his pace. But when we walk with the Spirit, we want to keep in step with him.
We don't want to run off or we shouldn't want to run off ahead and leave the Holy Spirit behind but keep close so we can hear him speaking to us and prompting to us.
And we talk often about being Spirit-filled and Jesus sent his Holy Spirit so that we could be filled, we could be equipped to serve him, we could be equipped to worship, I should say worship, but also to witness.
And just one of the things we picked up, Tyler Statton says in his book, he talks about Spirit-filled. Who wants to be Spirit-filled? About half of you, that's a good step.
[15:56] It's awful when the preacher does that, isn't it? But often in our modern church culture, not necessarily in this church but the wider church culture, often when we talk about Spirit-filled, we think about lively worship and powerful sermons which are great things to experience but actually if we're truly Spirit-filled, I don't think it's primarily about what happens in here, it's about what happens in our lives outside the church.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

You know, it's all very well to come in here and I can get very excited in worship and raise my hands and then miss a few chords on the piano because I'm doing that. You know, we can say, go home and say, wow, that was a really powerful sermon this morning that spoke to me or you might go home and say, I didn't get much from that but either way but when we go home the evidence of whether we're Spirit-filled or not shows in our everyday lives.
If I come in here and have a great time worshipping God and singing songs and waving my hands around or whatever but then I go home and I forget about him until next week, I'm not really Spirit-filled, I just had a nice morning.
So, the Holy Spirit, sorry, that's me dancing around, the Holy Spirit is there to guide us not just on Sundays, but everyday and I know we all know that but it's important to remind ourselves of each day that we walk with Jesus, we need to be listening to the Holy Spirit.
When we go to work, we need to be listening to the Holy Spirit. When we go to the supermarket, when we're with our family, we need to seek to be listening to his voice.
[17:40] So, we've talked about witness primarily about who we are and about just reflecting the life of Jesus through the way that we live and I just want to focus on this a little bit more for the second part of the sermon and basically, it boils down to the way that we love one another, the way that we love our communities, the way that we love our world and so I want to focus on three different strands or patterns of love.

At the Last Supper, which we've also already mentioned, Jesus talked a lot about the Holy Spirit but he also spoke about the importance of the disciples loving one another.
He said, a new command I give you, love one another as I have loved you, so you must love one another.
So, it wasn't to sort of, you know, try and love each other when you feel like it. No, as I have loved you, you need to love one another in the same way and by this, everyone will know that you are my disciples if you love one another.
We witness to the love of Jesus and the light of Jesus by loving one another and allowing his love to flow through us. Witness as well should not just be a one-size-fits-all description.
[19:16] When I look around this church, I can see lots of different people, different generations, different styles of clothing, different hairstyles. When I talk to you, you've got different interests.

You might have different ways of worshipping God. You might have different passages that speak to you particularly, different ambitions in life. We're all different and that's a good thing.
God did not make us to be all identicate Christians. We shouldn't be clones of one another. So witness will look different for each one of us.
It's important that we all reflect Jesus and bear testimony for what he's done. But it's okay if the way I do that looks different from the way Carol does it or the way that John does it or whoever.
We're not meant to be carbon copies of one another. We're meant to be carbon copies of Jesus but not necessarily one another. So being authentic and being ourselves is really important.
[20:23] So let's just move on to focus on different aspects of love. I talked about three patterns or three strands of love. These are very broad guidelines but they're good starting points.

So spoken love. We talk about our love for Jesus. We all talk I mean you might think oh no I can't do that. We all talk actually about things we are passionate about.
Some of us talk more than others but actually if we get maybe in a one-to-one situation or somebody we're really comfortable we all talk about the things we are passionate about. Okay?
If you come when John's preaching there's a fair chance that Newcastle United will sneak into the sermon some way because John is passionate about Newcastle United. I'm less passionate about football but I love gardening and I love reading.
A lot of you very kindly bought me books for my birthday this year and so if you get me talking about books I'll go on for quite some time. We're all passionate about different things and we'll talk about those things and in the same way talking about Jesus should be natural.
[21:37] You know I'm not afraid to say oh I really enjoyed this book. John's not embarrassed to say I support Newcastle United and I'm really keen to know how they're getting on.

And talking about Jesus should be natural in the same way. And as we talk about our garden or our love of our family or whatever the things that excite you and you like to talk about.
Well talking about Jesus should be just as natural. It shouldn't be a oh I've got to sort of gear myself up now to talk about Jesus. No it's a this is part of my life.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

I want to talk about Jesus because he's important to me or I want to talk about something that's encouraged me or I want to talk about the fact that I'm going to get baptised because this is important to me.
What's really important is that we find ways to be honest about our relationship with Jesus. Not in a oh I need to get this all out because I might never speak to this person again but just let me tell you what's going on in my life.
[22:42] Let me tell you about what Jesus means to me. And I think what's really important is that we approach it with the attitude of this is my experience.

This is who Jesus is to me. This is what Jesus has done in my life. Because we can get in a mindset of well that person over there doesn't know Jesus so I've got to say you must repent and you must get back.
And actually when people talk in that way it can be quite off-putting. And sometimes there is a place for that but generally if somebody comes to me and says you must do this and you must do that and you must you know I start feeling a bit fed up about it.
But if somebody comes to me and says let me tell you about this that I've enjoyed recently or this that means a lot to me it sounds much more interesting and I'm drawn into the conversation.
So when we're a witness for Jesus we're talking about our experience and our love. Not in a sense of well everybody's experience is equal we're not saying that but we're being respectful and we're saying this is my experience let me tell you what Jesus means to me.
[23:46] Let's talk about supernatural love in the next slide. So this doesn't mean necessarily that our lives are filled with major miracles all the time and we leap from one healing to I don't know thousands being converted because we put something online or whatever.

It's not and although we read in the gospels about Jesus doing powerful things and then the disciples in the power of the Holy Spirit doing amazing things actually there's lots of stuff going on in the background and lots of everyday stuff and I think sometimes we're so busy wishing we could experience one of those big amazing miracles that we forget to pay attention to the smaller miracles that happen in our lives every day.
so experiencing supernatural love can mean just being aware of how God is working looking for those smaller miracles as well as sometimes praying for the bigger ones.
It means living our lives in the knowledge that Jesus is Lord. A supernatural love is allowing God to work in this supernaturally by the power of the Holy Spirit so that the way we live shows that we believe that Jesus is Lord.
One of the things Tyler Statton suggests that why not ask God every day to open your eyes to his kingdom around you.
[25:24] If we want to experience that supernatural love if we want to live in the power that the Holy Spirit brings let's ask him to open our eyes to what God is doing.

let's not make assumptions or let's not close ourselves down and assume that nothing has happened but let's ask God every day to open his eyes to his kingdom around us.
If you're here when the last Sunday evening service I spoke I talked about Ephesians chapter one and there's a verse in there Paul praying for the Ephesians that their spiritual eyes might be enlightened so that they might know the hope to which they're called and it's that same idea here that we're asking God to open our eyes to what he is doing and then we can testify to that we can witness to that.
We often pray the Lord's Prayer and it talks about thy kingdom come or your kingdom come if you want more modern version but that's about the here and now it's not just some future event.
Jesus talked about the kingdom of heaven is within you. He didn't say well that's going to happen sometime in the future you'll just have to be patient. No he said it's here and now and so when we talk about that kingdom come it shouldn't just be a nice phrase that we say without thinking about it but an opportunity to ask God to open our eyes to what that means.
[26:55] You know what does it mean to ask for your kingdom to come today? What does that look like in my life? And as we do that we can witness, bear witness to what God is doing.

And then the last one, probably a bit more uncomfortable, sacrificial love. But Jesus modelled sacrificial love.
He modelled a love that cost, that went above and beyond, that didn't just consider his own needs but the needs of those around him. And it's important to say this is not just something Jesus did on

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

the cross.
Obviously that was a huge demonstration of sacrificial love but just rewind a bit again to that evening at the Last Supper and Jesus took the time to wash his disciples' feet.
This was something sacrificial, cost him, it was something that as a teacher he shouldn't have been doing, it should have been the disciples or possibly a servant washing everybody's feet. And yet Jesus turned things upside down.
[28:01] He washed their feet and then he told the disciples they should serve one another in a similar way. Don't look for the positions of prestige but look for opportunities to serve one another.

And in the same way we need to be seeking out those ways to serve one another. Now it's fair to say that acts of sacrificial love can often go unobserved and unnoticed and actually that's a good thing.
I know it feels hard when you think I've done something to try and serve you here God and nobody's paid any attention, nobody's given me a sticker for doing well today. God notices the things that you do that are sacrificial, God notices and God delights when we do that, when we make our habits to put others first.
So some things to take away and think about. First of all, let's make it a daily habit to ask the Holy Spirit to help and guide us.
When you're running around in the morning and you're late for work and you're thinking of all the things you've got to do, just stop, pause internally, ask the Holy Spirit to help and to guide you.
[29:19] I want to put a caveat on that from Thomas Merton, or not caveat but just a reminder, Thomas Merton said it can be dangerous to ask the Holy Spirit for help because the Holy Spirit teaches us to die.

Now that feels a bit more awkward and uncomfortable but actually Jesus talked about dying to self. So if we're serious about being a witness to who he is, reflecting his light, then we need to be brave and take that step of asking for help in the knowledge that the Holy Spirit will actually teach us to die to self.
We need to ask where and how we can serve, whether that's in the congregation here or in our wider communities. Let's look for opportunities to serve and let's ask the Holy Spirit to show us those opportunities.
Because you can guarantee if you ask that you will get an answer. And it's not one of those things where you think, well no, I don't like that answer, I'll ask again. Let's be willing to serve as we are prompted.
Resist the temptation to seek recognition. This is not about making ourselves feel good, it's about blessing Jesus. So we need to check our hearts as we serve, that we're doing it in the right attitude.
[30:39] We're doing it to serve and to bless others and to bear witness to who Jesus is, to reflect his light. We're not doing it to make ourselves feel good or to get spiritual brownie points.

So I just want to leave you with a couple of quotes. I found these really helpful. Henry Nowen said, my deepest vocation, my most important role is to be a witness to the glimpses of God I have been allowed to catch.
We don't have to fully understand God before we share about what Jesus has done for us. We don't need to know everything in order to be able to reflect Jesus to those around us.
So my deepest vocation is to be a witness to the glimpses of God I have been allowed to catch. And final quotes, last slide, thank you.
St. Teresa of Avila, who was a 16th century nun and mystic. But I really like this because it really emphasizes that we need to do, we need to be Christ to the world.
[31:56] So Christ has no body now on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes with which he looks compassionately on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good.

Yours are the hands with which he blesses the world. As we make ourselves available to Jesus and we allow his Holy Spirit to direct us, to walk with us, to speak to us, then we become Jesus to the world around us and we witness to the love of Jesus.
Let's pray. Let's pray.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host