Why stand here looking

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Preacher: Rev Alan Montgomery

[0:00] Good morning. The reading this morning is from Acts, the first chapter of Acts, verses 1 to 11. That's Acts, chapter 1, verses 1 to 11.

Acts, chapter 1, and verse 1. In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen.
After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of 40 days and spoke about the kingdom of God. On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command, Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about.
John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit. Then they gathered round him and asked him, Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom of Israel?
He said to them, It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority, but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.
[1:23] After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently to the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men, dressed in white, stood beside them.

Men of Galilee, they said, Why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus who has been taken from you into heaven will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.
Amen. As I think about this world over these last few years anyway, there's one word that comes out from various conversations, and that is regeneration.
It appears to be the in word, whether in a particular area, town, or city. However, if truth be told, regeneration have been with us since the beginning of time.
Indeed, since the fall, because God has been on the move, seeking to regenerate this world and this land.
[2:53] and the Lord Jesus Christ has come, that we may have life, and we have it in all its fullness.

We hear too from the medical profession that parts of the human body, the skin, the stomach, the liver, the fingernails, or the hair, regenerate itself.
We speak of urban regeneration. Regeneration. Revitalization. Redevelopment.
Where is urban decay? And then we have to think about spiritual regeneration. Where God is always looking to revitalize, renew, or reawaken, revive his people.
Thank you.
[4:31] No notes. Campbell Morgan was a British evangelist and contemporary of Gypsy Smith, pastor of Westminster Chapel and who preceded Martin Lloyd-Jones.

And he remarked on one occasion, I never begin my work in the morning without thinking that perhaps God may interrupt my work and begin his own.
And that would be a good thinking process for each and every one of us. I would begin to, each day, to begin our work, that maybe God will interrupt our work and begin his own.
I waited for the Lord my God. Waiting for God is not laziness.
Waiting for God is not abandonment of effort. Waiting for God means first, activity under his command.

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[6:01] Second, readiness for any new command that may come. And third, the ability to do something, to do nothing until the command is given.

In Acts chapter 1, the passage that was read for us this morning, it was said to the disciples, at that time following Christ's resurrection, and prior to his ascension, men of Galilee, why are you standing here looking into the sky?
Why are you standing here looking into the sky? When you recall the scene from Peter's denial to resurrection of Christ, when the women who had gathered at the empty tomb, were given instruction, now go and tell the disciples and Peter.
And I can hear them saying to those women, don't forget Peter. He's got an important part to play in my mission. I want to use him.
I want to empower him. I want him to be a leader within the group. But how do you think Peter must have been feeling since betraying his Lord and Master?
[7:51] Well, I would think he must have felt embarrassed. He must have felt empty, lonely, sick to the depths of his stomach, helpless, self-torturing himself.

He must have felt ostracized as those words came back to haunt him when he said to Jesus, I will never leave you.
I'll never say, I don't know you. I will even die for you. And all the others said the same.
But it was Peter who had let his Lord down. And just as Jesus said to Nicodemus when he came asking questions that evening, you must be born again to enter the kingdom of heaven.
And Peter himself reminded his readers in 1 Peter chapter 3, 1 and verse 3. In God's great mercy, he has caused us to be born again into a living hope.
[9:16] Paul said to the church at Rome, but be changed within by a new way of thinking. Then you'll be able to decide what God wants for you.

And later on in that epistle, he said, I want to be wise about what is good and innocent about what is evil. You see a new birth through what Christ has done.
And development of that new life in Christ is taking place. it's taking place in Peter's life. It's taking place in those to whom the apostles were writing.
And it's taking place in your life and in mine. Regeneration is a spiritual transformation in a person brought about by the Holy Spirit.
it's a continual work. I remember as a young man hearing someone say to me one evening in a house group, I'm saved, I'm being saved, and I will be saved.
[10:43] And in my innocence, in my naivety, I said, no, you're wrong. And very graciously he pointed out to me, I'm saved.

I'm continually being saved. and when I get to heaven, I'll be completely saved. Change from glory into glory.
We sang that hymn this morning. Till in heaven we take our place, till we cast our crowns before him, lost in wonder, love, and praise.
Do you long for that day? Or are you uncertain as to whether it will be a reality for you?
Don't forget Peter. His mind had to be renewed. His commitment had to be revitalized.
[11:51] And even when they met up with Jesus, some on the road to Emmaus, others in various groups, and with Peter, the breakfast on the beach, Christ was telling them in some way that this man who was his follower would be transformed and empowered.

and how we need to have our lives transformed and how we need to be empowered by the Holy Spirit coming upon us and allowing him to fall upon us.
And from these moments when Jesus met the disciples, those various instances, fresh hope began to spring up.
yet as he moved towards the Great Commission, queer on a mountain in Galilee, Jesus said, all power in heaven and on earth is given to me.
So go and make followers of all people in the world, baptize them, teach them, and I will be with you always. And that promise given to those disciples that day is no different from a promise that God gives to us today in this century, in this year, in this church.
[13:28] I am with you always. Never forget it. He never leaves us on our own to get on with the business. He empowers us and strengthens us.

And you'd have thought that that commissioning would have inspired them. But in the reading we had this morning, we are told in Acts chapter 1 verse 11, but some stood about looking into the sky.

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Have you ever stood about and looked at something not knowing what you're looking for or looking at?
I remember my mum and dad saying to me on occasions, what are you looking for? And I'm saying, I don't know. They said, well you won't find it here. Yeah. And I wonder what those disciples were looking for, looking into the sky.
Were they expecting Jesus to come back at that moment? But they had to wait. And wait they did.
[14:50] And when the Holy Spirit came upon them, they received what Jesus had promised. The promised blessed Holy Spirit.

and then Peter delivered his powerful sermon and 3,000 were added to their number.
He didn't do it on his own. He didn't even do it with the other disciples round about him. He did it by being empowered by the Holy Spirit.
By leaving himself open that the Holy Spirit may fill his life and give him the word to say. And great many people came and heard and believed.
Have we forgotten that promise? Or are we still looking around waiting? Standing, looking around.
[15:57] we can be idly standing around. We can be unmotivated. We can be asking the question, what will I do next?

It seems to me that the comment made that day, why are you standing around looking, was a wake-up call.
a reminder that a commission and purpose have been given and they were the very people who were working along with God and God working with them in his Holy Spirit were bringing it to pass.
The story is told about a fisherman who always caught fish. fish. He never left the pool without any fish.
And the game keeper got to hear about this and thought this man must be poaching.
[17:14] And word got back to the fisherman's ear and he reputed that. It's not the case. And so they went out fishing again. Now at one point with the game keeper present he took a stick of dynamite out of his bag lit it and threw it into the water and the fish came hurtling out and were caught in the fisherman's net.

The game keeper was not amused. This went against all fishing laws. He became angry and irate and indicated that he would report him to the relevant authorities.
That that the fisherman took out another stick of dynamite lit it and threw it into the game keeper's lap and said well are you going to dilly dally or are you going fishing?
You see there was an urgency and when God said to the disciples and says to us don't stand about idly there's an urgency in the message we have to share.
the pneuma the power of the Holy Spirit God wants to give to each and every one of us.
[18:57] No one should walk out of this building today without being empowered by God's Holy Spirit. I want it to you.

The things that got you where you are will seldom be the same things that keep you there and almost certainly will not be the things that will take you forward into a changing future.
You see the future is never a continuation of the past. The secret is to allow the past and the future to coexist in the present.
You might have reminded remembered me saying that a previous leader of the Church of Scotland moderator made the comment we as a denomination could easily be street walking into oblivion.
A cultural tsunami has turned this country upside down and we need to be prepared to allow God to change us.
[20:48] We cannot discount the possibility of a Christian revival. people I'm sure you've longed for it.

I'm sure you desire God to do that in your midst. We're not asked to think about it.
We're asked to allow God to do it. will we do it this morning and ask him to fill our lives? Let go and let God.
How much of a risk was it for Jesus to let go and leave it to his disciples past and present? He didn't let them go on their own.
Although he wasn't there physically, he was there spiritually in their midst by the Holy Spirit.
Because the answer is this, each and every one of us have a message to proclaim.
[22:05] However we do it, the good news of the gospel that Jesus loves and Jesus wants to save you have faith to share.

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To share that encounter you had with the risen Lord. Share it with people. Help them understand your story, how God has saved you.
You have a love to display. What's that? To love each other. as I have loved you. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself. Now some of his might not have very good neighbors, but that's not a problem because Jesus says love your neighbor as yourself.
And we have a mission to accomplish, a world to reach, and you have a ministry to perform to heal the sick, to drive out demons.
[23:31] Even in this age, even in this generation, the sick need to be healed, and the demons need be driven out.

And you have a work to do. So why stand about looking? I'm sure there have been times when you've stood about looking, not knowing what to do.
As somebody said, it's like watching paint dye, referring to an activity you consider extremely boring.
But like those early disciples, we too need a wake-up call. And Jesus says to each and every one of us, start where you are.
Give what you have with the same resources as to those whom Jesus said, Lo, I am with you always.
[24:56] Remember this. One of those disciples betrayed him. One doubted and one denied and yet he gathered those people together and he used them.

Later, Jesus appeared to the eleven as he was eating. He rebuked them for a lack of faith and their stubborn refusal to believe those who had seen him after he had risen and he empowered them by his Holy Spirit.
And if he could do it with them, he can do it with you.
How many of us are willing to let God empower us by his Spirit? Don't stand about looking.
You have a mission. to accomplish and let the glory of God shine out of your life and into your community and see the transformation that can take place.
[26:23] We need to be inspired. We need to be empowered. We need to be infused by the Holy Spirit, not by ourselves.

but with him walking with us and working through us today and every day. Let's pray.
Father God, thank you. We want to confess that there have been times that we have stood idly by, unmotivated, wondering wondering what to do and have forgotten that you have given us a call and a commission and a desire to work with you and work for you.
And thank you, you've not left us on our own, but you've promised your Holy Spirit. Forgive us, we pray, when we fail to recognize or realize that we have that amazing resource that can do wonderful things.
Let us reenact the New Testament, those first Christians, century Christians, who allowed the Holy Spirit to come upon them and renew them and empower them.
[27:53] Lord, I want to pray that today, in this place, we will ask you to fill us, to empower us, and thank you that you'll answer our prayer.

In Jesus' name, Amen. Revive thy work, O Lord.
hand me by Peter,■ ch and Steve, hey!
Thank you.
Thank you.
[29:43] Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.
Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.
Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.
Thank you. regenerate us, that we may be what you want us to be in our community, in our neighborhood, in our family circle.
[31:39] Powerful people who the love of God simply radiates and people are captivated because your spirit touches their lives.

Thank you for what you've done and who you are and bless us this morning. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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