



Sermon Growth Guide

October 18, 2020

The Beautiful Story - Beautiful Mission

Acts 1:1-11

Key Verse: Acts 1:8

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Big Idea: God empowers you to witness His salvation to everyone around you.

Foundations

Last week Christ rose from the dead. He beat death itself. O Death, where is your sting? Is there anything left to say or do?

Paul writes in Romans 10:17, “Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.” **The Beautiful Story** continues this week by Jesus empowering His disciples to carry the Good News of salvation forward to all peoples, to the end of the earth.

Think about this: the Good News of salvation came to us here in Colorado through 2,000 years of God’s people sharing the Good News (and traveling around the world), passing down the gospel from generation to generation, declaring that there is Light and Life in Jesus.

The Ascension of Christ was the trigger point that was willed by the Father for the descending of the Holy Spirit, the empowerment God’s people needed then and need now to carry out the Great Commission.

Next week we wrap up this 11-week series by looking at the **Beautiful Kingdom**. Open and close your time of further study and application in prayer. Ask the Spirit of God to guide and guard your time in His Word—and to empower you each and every day as you witness His love to everyone around you.

Understanding God’s Word

The book of Acts opens with these words: “in my former book...,” referring to the book of Luke. Read the final 10 verses of Luke and discuss the overall context we find ourselves in this week.

The disciples miss the point (again!) in verse 6. What are they wanting and how do we slip into the same misguided thinking today?

Host a conversation around verse 8 and the call to be a witness to the resurrection.

Applying God’s Word

This week we are reminded that God empowers us to witness His salvation to everyone around us.

How can you be a better witness to the love and grace of God this week? Maybe you need to begin to build a new habit. Maybe you need to break a bad habit. Be specific.

Witnessing God’s Word

The **Beautiful Mission** is about God’s people living so radically for God that the world sees the love of God being poured out before them. Think of one person who needs a Kingdom witness. Take a moment to close your time by praying for this person. Identify a way in which you can witness the love of God to this person this week.

We're walking through *The Beautiful Story*. We're zooming in on the big moments, the really big moments. The real moments in real history when the whole crux of things took a cosmic shift toward full restoration. Creation. Humanity. Fall. Promise of redemption. The Messiah. The death of God. Last week we celebrated the historical resurrection of Christ. And today, His ascension. Sparking the **Beautiful Mission** of the church, His bride, His hands and His feet to witness salvation to all who believe, the mission that brings Light and Life, true and lasting beauty.

When we talk about the beautiful mission of God, we're talking about increasing the number of people who will be forever caught up in rapturous joy, delighting themselves in the very near presence of God. This is a big deal! Which gets me thinking, "Jesus, didn't you want to stay back here with us and do this yourself? I think you're better suited. My resume doesn't line up with what you're asking."

Friends, the tension herein is beyond our ability to bear: if we as the body of Christ miss Christ's mandate upon our lives to purely and boldly witness the gospel there will be people—friends, neighbors, family members, co-workers—who miss the opportunity to hear and receive the salvation of the Lord. Who can possibly stand up under such a weighty reality? (Paul in 2 Corinthians 2:16).

Yet the solution is right here in the text! Verse 9: "After He said this, He was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid Him from their sight." Miss the ascension, miss the solution. Understand the ascension, understand the solution. Recall the words of Christ from the gospel of John prior to His arrest, "but very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you," (John 16:7). And in our text this morning, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you ..."

There are three implications of the ascension of Jesus that ought to thrust your heart into daily, moment-by-moment witness to the resurrection of Christ, and this is the great mission of the church. Christ's resurrection is the lightning bolt, the mission of His people, our continuous witness, and is the rolling thunder that has been gaining echo for over 2,000 years. Miss the ascension, miss the solution. Understand the ascension,

understand the solution. Those you cross paths with are counting on you living this out each and every moment of your life. Implication 1 of Christ's ascension: God's mission is guaranteed. Implication 2: God's mission is mandated. Implication 3: God's mission is empowered.

First, implication 1: God's mission is guaranteed. God's mission is the fulfillment of God's covenant with Abram, that the salvation of the Lord will reach the peoples of the earth through Israel "... and in you shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:3b).

Now watch this progression: "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned" (Isaiah 9:2).

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).

"Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you (Isaiah 60:1).

"The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).

And finally, (Isaiah 55:10-11): "As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."

I take the time to read these promises from God to you to remind you, to remind all of us, that the outpouring of God's salvation is taking place and will continue to take place! Where are we at with all this? Is it actually happening? After all, we're now over 2,000 years into Christ's ascension.

I want to show you a map that shows our geographical relationship to Jerusalem. I am at this very moment proclaiming life in Jesus



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Christ exactly 6,924 miles from the temple in Jerusalem and some 2,000 years after the life, death and resurrection of Christ. “Tear this temple down,” Jesus said, “and in three days I will raise it up again” (John 2:19). And now the whole earth has access to the presence of God, which is what the temple symbolized.

It’s such an exciting time to be alive! If you follow Wycliffe Bible Translators you know this. Following the commission of our Lord, the church has been striving to reach the ends of the earth for over 2,000 years and we see amazing indications that we’re close, at least of the level of global proclamation.

Colorado’s Paul Edwards states, “We’re in the greatest period of acceleration in 20 centuries of Bible translation.” Paul is the Executive Director for Wycliffe’s Last Languages Campaign, a 10-year, \$1 billion campaign to fund the remaining translations of the Bible. And from Wycliffe’s annual report just last year: “(We are) working to ensure that every person on earth will have access to Scripture in a language and form they can clearly understand. We rejoice that Bible translation work is in progress in more than 2,600 languages in 161 countries around the world! ... (Our vision is) to see a Bible translation program in progress in every language still needing one by 2025.” Folks, that’s in five years. Are you kidding me?! Are you hearing this? God has willed that all the peoples of the world be blessed and that is exactly what is happening! This is God’s mission and it will not fail. The mission of God is backed and guaranteed by the resurrection of Jesus, the will of the Father and the power of the Spirit. Implication 1 of Christ’s ascension: God’s mission is guaranteed. Implication 2: God’s mission is mandated.

You and I are called by God to herald His Kingdom and the salvation therein.

Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very

end of the age” (Matthew 28:18–20).

“We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God” (2 Corinthians 5:20).

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

I’m not going to spend much time here on this second implication. The clarity of Christ’s commission and mandate and desire leaves little room for creativity. You and I are called to witness the love and grace of God to everyone around us. You will be my witnesses. Period. Recall from last week Jesus’ desire that Mary “go and tell.” Our Lord eagerly desires that you live as a joyful witness to the resurrection. How are you doing here? Any room to grow as God’s faithful and joyful witness?

Catch the tension here: if we fail to embrace and live out the mission the Lord has entrusted to us, what’s the future of this church and this city? Globally, the mission of God is secure, I don’t lose sleep over the eventual fulfillment of the mission of God. God has willed it to happen and it will happen. Global timeline and the health of your local community, however, are up for grabs. God has willed that His people be bestowed with a nobility beyond telling, to be proclaimers of life. That’s our mandate; let’s live it. But how? *But how?*

Implication 2 of Christ’s ascension: God’s mission is mandated. Implication 3: God’s mission is empowered. Here’s the big idea this morning: God empowers you to witness His salvation to everyone around you.

“Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about” (Acts 1:4). How often do you wake up and operate out of your own strength instead of the strength of the Lord? Ephesians 6:10 knocked me to my knees a few years ago: “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.” Jesus’ word to the disciples then and to His disciples now is to wait. Wait on the Lord. His timing. His strength. “Unless



the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain.” Unless you have waited upon the Lord, your witness is not only in vain, but your witness could actually damage the Body of Christ. Some of you will remember how Brennan Manning put it: “The greatest single cause of atheism in the world today is Christians, who acknowledge Jesus with their lips, then walk out the door, and deny Him by their lifestyle. That is what an unbelieving world simply finds unbelievable.” For the sake of Christ, don’t rush around all the time, but wait for the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Operate out of God’s strength, not your own. God’s mission is guaranteed. God’s mission is mandated. God’s mission is empowered.

Acts is a continuation of Luke. Some of the final words of Luke read, and these are words of Christ, “I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.” Are you walking in the knowledge that as a child of God you are “clothed with power from on high”? Power for what? Power to witness. God empowers you to witness His salvation to everyone around you.

What might your week look like should you walk in the strength of the Lord and in His might? Clothed in heaven’s power this week, what will you do differently? What will be different about your conversations? Your behaviors? Your thinking?

Do you understand that the Kingdom of God lays claim to its people comprehensively? There is not one inch of your life that Jesus does not say, “mine!” (Kuyper). “Be my witness. Feed my sheep. Find my other sheep, ‘I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd’” (John 10:16). Mission. Witness.

A dear friend visited a few months ago. He was saying goodbye. He and his family are moving overseas into an Islamic culture for one purpose: to see the Bible translated into the local language and to see a church planted and flourishing before he and his wife die. They want to live a peaceful and pleasant life, of course. But more than anything, they want to see their new community worshipping Jesus. They want the lost to be found. They want to be the Light and Life of Jesus.

O church family, that we might have this same mindset to seek and save the lost. We have a similar opportunity here. Yes, the people of Colorado Springs already have the Scriptures. And yes, there are many churches in this great city. But do you know what else this city has? Neighbors walking in darkness. Neighbors who have no idea that the story of it all really is beautiful.

“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” (Acts 1:11).

When we come to this intersection in **The Beautiful Story**, there’s really only one way forward for the Christian: witness the Resurrection. Witness that the story really is beautiful. Let go of your flesh’s top preferences! Let go of anything that does not assist you in knowing Christ and making Him known. Witness that the story really is beautiful. Do not give your neighbor any opportunity to question the beauty of Jesus Christ by the way in which you live. Live for God. Let your life sing of the glories of God! Jesus is coming back soon. Until then, we witness.

“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Peter 2:9). O may your life be a life that declares the praises of Him who has rescued you. One of our values as a church family is “Share Good News: Do all it takes to reach those who do not know Christ.”

Let’s pray. Jesus, we celebrate that your mission to seek and save the lost is guaranteed, mandated and empowered. Holy Spirit, empower us to be your faithful witnesses. Tear out from our hearts anything that is getting in the way of your beauty being displayed in its full radiance to this city through your people. May the lost of this city be found by the purity and courage of your bride, the church. Father, you tell us in Isaiah that beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news. O God, may this congregation be chalked full of beautiful feet walking out your beautiful mission in Jesus’ name. Amen.

