
The sermon text for today is based on the text
Acts Chapter 1 verses 6 to 14

How often as humans do we try to go back to the same as we had before once we see the new ending? During the lockdowns of 2020 as we faced the uncertainty of COVID and our churches were closed I heard many people say as the end of the lockdown was immanent, I can't wait to get back to what we used to do.

We are comfortable in what we know and have known. The Israelites were no different. Remember how they complained when they were in the wilderness about how much they missed Egypt? In the book of Numbers 5, 'The rabble with them began to crave other food, and again the Israelites started wailing and said, "If only we had meat to eat! We remember the fish we ate in Egypt at no cost—also the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic. But now we have lost our appetite; we never see anything but this manna!"' This is when God provided manna and quail.

Our human hearts are drawn to the comfort of what we know and have known. This is no different from the disciples and no different to us today.

Then they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"

What are the disciples asking? To return the political power to the Israelites and to banish the Roman Empire. But yet in any kingdom of the world is there not corruption? After all did the Israelites nail Jesus to the cross because He spoke the truth?

Whether the disciples were conscious of what they were asking about or not our text highlights the kingdoms of the world in contrast to the kingdom of God in Jesus Christ. See the Kingdom of God is one of authority, one of forgiveness and grace and peace and love. The kingdoms of the world inevitably end up with corruption as they lord it over people rather than serve them.

Even in our own church how often are we tempted to enforce our rules that are human made against the new comers to our church?

Jesus reminds us all that His kingdom is not of this world and responds to the disciples.

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, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Jesus shuts down the question of the disciples with the fact that only God knows when. He shuts down the idea of a kingdom restored on earth, in the world sense and clearly lays out that it is God's authority that matters in terms of kingdoms and times.

After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into 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.” Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day’s walk from the city.

The disciples are standing there looking up probably in disbelief. But while they do not have authority in the kingdom of God they will receive the power for the work in the kingdom of God.

They do not have an answer for the restoration for the kingdom of Israel, rather they stand there with the promise of the power from God. They will receive the Holy Spirit. Not for a building up of themselves but that they will be witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” They have this gift of power, this gift of God’s very spirit to be truth tellers of Jesus. Witnesses to the love of God in Jesus and the work He does in our own lives. Witnesses to our lives changed by God’s love in Jesus, and truth tellers of Jesus who set us free.

And this word of Jesus to be witnesses to the whole world is to us also. We have no authority only God does in His kingdom yet we have power in the Holy Spirit of God to be witnesses here where you are today, to the next street over and to other parts of Brisbane and to the whole world.

So let us follow what the followers of Jesus did.

When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

Let us pray, and work together and go and be truth tellers of what Jesus has done in our lives and what the truth is that Jesus died for all, to offer them forgiveness of sin, life and salvation.

Let us ask our Lord to send us as His witnesses and truth tellers into the world, to share His love to the ends of the earth in the place and vocation He has called us to serve in.

Amen