

9-22-19
POWER TO BE A WITNESS FOR THE LORD

TEXT Acts 1:4-11

Intro:

Each year we take a whole month to focus in on what we call the Great Commission, and our Christian duty to be involved in this supreme mandate from our Lord. That mandate is to spread the gospel to the whole world and make disciples for the Lord and preach and teach all things Christ commanded. This year I wrote a new Scripture song based on Acts 1:4-9. These verses contain what we know as the Great Commission of the church.

After Jesus gave this commission to His disciples He said he was going away and would return. We are now waiting for His return but until He comes we are commanded to busy ourselves in this great endeavor.

This is the great mission or commission of the church. This is what we should be all about.

As I was thinking about this commission, I began to think of how our nation mobilized to win WW II. If only we would see the urgency to mobilize to win the spiritual war against our great enemy Satan!

CONSIDER FOR A FEW MINUTES HOW OUR COUNTRY MOBILIZED TO WIN WW II:

We can read the following accounts of this great effort:

When the United States entered the World War II the whole nation was mobilized for the war effort.

When the United States declared war after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the United States government created a system of rationing, limiting the amount of certain goods that a person could purchase. Supplies such as gasoline, butter, sugar, and canned milk were rationed because they needed to be diverted to the war effort. War also disrupted trade, limiting the availability of some goods. For example, the Japanese Imperial Army controlled the Dutch East Indies (today's Indonesia) from March 1942 to September 1945, creating a shortage of rubber that affected American production.

On August 28, 1941, President Roosevelt's Executive Order 8875 created the Office of Price Administration (OPA). The OPA's main responsibility was to place a ceiling on prices of most goods, and to limit consumption by rationing.

The OPA rationed automobiles, tires, gasoline, fuel oil, coal, firewood, nylon, silk, and shoes. Americans used their ration cards and stamps to take their meager share of household staples including meat, dairy, coffee, dried fruits, jams, jellies, lard, shortening, and oils.

Americans learned, as they did during the great depression, to do without. Sacrificing certain items during the war became the norm for most Americans. It was considered a common good for the war effort, and it affected every American household.

Civilians also contributed to the war effort with the purchase of U S Government Defense Savings Bonds or "War Bonds".

Men, women, and children worked for the war effort on the home front. As men went to war, women entered the work force. Children helped with scrap metal drives and victory gardens where vegetables were grown and shared by the community. Recycling was important since there were shortages of everyday items as well as major appliances, because factories changed regular production to wartime efforts. Ration coupons were needed to buy gasoline, sugar, coffee, meat, canned food, clothes and shoes. Children would take their little wagons and scour the streets for rubber or cans or any scrap metal.

Now the truth is that there is a greater cause that we have then even the effort our fathers made to sacrifice to win WW II.

The Lord told His disciples that all power was given to Him in heaven and in earth. He commanded his disciples to go and share the gospel to everyone everywhere. This is a greater cause than even what we geared up for in World War Two.

Yet the truth be told, if the people of this nation had not sacrificed and geared up to work together, we would never had won that war.

The fact is that the reason we won WW II was not just because of the soldiers that fought the battles. It was won because of the support given by the citizens of this nation. The sacrifices that they made behind the lines is really what allowed us to win World War two.

So too, the US is the number one supporter of missions financially around the world. This may be the number one reason the Lord is allowing the US dollar to be the standard currency of the world. A by product of this is the wealth we have in this nation. If we forget our Lord He may just take away the by product!

CONSIDER:

In 1939, total aircraft production for the US military was less than 3,000 planes. By the end of the war, America produced 300,000 planes. No war was more industrialized than World War II. It was a war won as much by machine shops as by machine guns. More than 2/3 of all military tanks, planes and ships were built by the US during WW II.

American Jeeps were so rugged that for years the Filipinos used them as passenger vehicles and established a whole line of vehicles they call Jeepneys.

When Johannes Tangub was preaching here, he made mention of how the American soldiers affected the Filipinos for good with the gospel.

How many times I have heard Filipino Pastor's use Douglas MacArthur's famous words "I Shall Return.." to illustrate the fact that someday Jesus will return to permanently defeat our great enemy Satan and the Kingdoms of this world.

Now just imagine what we could do for the cause of Christ if the Church mobilized for the advancement of the Kingdom of God like our nation did to win World War II.

It is our job to occupy till our Lord comes.
It is our job to prepare as many people as possible for the return of Christ.

This morning let us look at Acts 1:4-11 and this great commission of our Lord for His Church.

Acts 1:4 And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me.

Acts 1:5 For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

Acts 1:6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?

Acts 1:7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

Acts 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Acts 1:9 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

Acts 1:10 And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;

Acts 1:11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

I. CONSIDER THE LORD'S COMMAND FOR HIS DISCIPLES TO NOT SCATTER BUT TO WAIT FOR THE PROMISE.

Acts 1:4 And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me.

This was our Lord's first church. Notice how the Lord commanded them to tarry together and wait for the promise.

There are a lot of promises that the Lord has given to us. To receive the promises we need to wait on Him.

Isaiah 40:31 But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

How long did Abraham wait to receive the promise of his son Isaac?

How much did Joseph have to go through to receive the promise of his vision that all his brethren would bow down to him?

Think of the endurance of the prophets etc.

Hebrews Chapter 11 is the hall of fame of faith.

Notice how it says of the great saints of faith:

Hebrews 11:37 They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented;

Hebrews 11:38 (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

Hebrews 11:39 And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:

Hebrews 11:40 God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

Hebrews 12:1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,

Hebrews 12:2 Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 12:3 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

Hebrews 12:4 Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.

Look in this life we are going to have problems, testing, trials.

But those who wait.

Those who stick to it.

Those who do not scatter and run.

THESE ALL RECEIVE THE BLESSING AND PROMISES OF GOD.

So the disciples for 40 days assemble together and witnessed the resurrected Christ. They were taught directly by Him.

Acts 1:3 To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:

Then they waited and had a 10 day prayer meeting in the upper room waiting for the promise of the Holy Ghost.

Those who wait, those who endure, those who don't quit in due time will receive the promises.

II. NOTICE HOW THE DISCIPLES WERE SEEKING GREAT EARTHLY THINGS AND HAD TO BE DIRECTED OF THE LORD TO FOCUS ON THEIR COMMISSION.

Acts 1:6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?

Acts 1:7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

The disciples were men just like us, and as men it is easy for us to get enamored with all kind of things in this world.

These men were Jews, and they were tired of being subjects of Rome. They understood the promises given to the Jews of a Kingdom and the Messiah was to sit on the throne of David.

The Bible says in I Peter 2:11 that we are strangers and pilgrims, in this world.

Hebrews 11 mentions the hall of fame of faith. We are now citizens of Heaven by our faith. You look at the list of characteristics of the people of God and you will notice that none of them received the promises in their life.

Why did Judas falter and fall? I guarantee you that it was because he had ambitions for following Christ that were of the world. He was a thief, he was in it for the money and glory that he saw would never come.

If we have a hope in this world for following Christ we are going to be disappointed.

I Corinthians 15:19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

Why do you think I have continued in this small country church for 36 years now? Let me tell you why. It is because my one desire to be faithful to the Lord where He put me. There is no place too small for His service or there is no place too big. Too many preachers chase after crowds and it seems to me that for them ministry is a sort of show business. Jesus said,

Matthew 23:11 But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.

Matthew 23:12 And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.

I remember when I was younger and first came to the church, people would say to me, you probably will not last long at the church, you probably will go on to a bigger church. I never could figure that out. I did not surrender to serve the Lord seeking great things. Before I was saved that's what I lived for, but when I received Christ these ambitions were crucified!

The truth is before Pentecost the disciples were still seeking great things in this world. The Lord is looking to recruit people of faith. Just like we read about in Hebrews 11:

Hebrews 11:37 They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented;

Hebrews 11:38 (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

Hebrews 11:39 And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:

Hebrews 11:40 God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

II Timothy 3:12 Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

When Jesus was just a young boy and He stayed behind in Jerusalem He said to his parents wist ye not I must be about my father's business. What He meant by that was that He loved His father in heaven and what was important to His father was important to Him.

If you want to be special to God make His business and concerns yours.

When my kids were young they used to think our youngest (Jessica) was daddy's favorite. Truth is Jessica was always trying to please her daddy.

We were on vacation one day and we were staying in a motel and watching TV together. I had the news turned on and the other kids were complaining because they wanted to watch cartoons. Jessica was sitting on my lap, she must have been about 6-7 years old. She turned around to the other kids and said, "Me and Daddy want to watch the news!" Truth is she just wanted to please her Daddy.

Those early disciples struggled a bit with understanding this commission to preach to everyone. They were Jews and for the most part they were only concerned about the welfare of the Jewish people. This idea of preaching to every creature, Jew and Gentile alike, was a bit foreign to them. Look at Peter's reaction to Cornelius in Acts Chapter 10. He had to make excuses about and apologize for leading gentiles to salvation!

Jesus is tarrying.

The Kingdom is not here in a physical sense, our Lord is seeking to recruit citizens for that Kingdom. That is the purpose of the church.

We go out to talk to people who are all wrapped up in the material things of this world. They think these are the things that will make them happy and fulfilled. They are looking for the millennial kingdom on earth. Jesus said it will come, but it will come in God's time. But for now He has a more important job for us to do. We need to recruit citizens for His kingdom. There is plenty of room in that Kingdom.

It has been taking close to 2000 years to recruit citizens. As the toys of this world become more distracting, as the pull of the world becomes stronger in these end times, the job of witnessing for Christ has not changed but become a bit more challenging.

We preach a Savior who has conquered this world.
We preach a Savior who alone can give meaning to a life.
We preach a Savior who can give us purpose and fulfillment.

We have people that think if only they can make this amount of money that would fulfill them, then they get the money and there is sorrow with it.

We have people who think if only they can get this job or that job that is the answer and then they get the job of their dreams and it does not fulfill.

We have people who look here or there for answers.

There are no answers in this life it is all vanity.

With the things of the world come the fruit of the world, for the things of this world are a by product of the flesh. The flesh is alienated from God and is on the road to destruction and death.

Galatians 5:19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

Galatians 5:20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,

Galatians 5:21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

All these things produce death and sorrow in the end.

But through Christ we receive gifts that this world cannot buy.

Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

Galatians 5:23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

Galatians 5:24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

Galatians 5:25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

Our message is not for this world but our message is for a world to come.

We are recruiting citizens of another world. Those who are content with this world will not want this message. People who live in the world are in darkness. We need to bring to them the light of the gospel.

III. JESUS GAVE THEM HIS COMMISSION AND PROMISE OF POWER TO FULFILL IT. THIS IS OUR GREAT COMMISSION AND WHAT THE CHURCH IS ALL ABOUT.

Acts 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Now how are we going to recruit such people?

In a world that is so consumed with the here and now, with a people that are so distracted by the things of this life, think of the message we preach.

We preach a message of a Christ who does not promise us anything material in this world except what we need. We preach a Christ who has conquered death but we need to wait for that promise of a resurrected body and a kingdom that is yet to come.

We are witnessing for the most part to people who are dead.

Ephesians 2:1 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;

Ephesians 2:2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

Ephesians 2:3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

Ephesians 2:4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,

Ephesians 2:5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

Now how are we going to fulfill this commission?

How do you convince people who live for earthly pleasures, entertainment, money, fame, jobs, things of the world, that these things are not what they need to live for?

We need a miracle. That miracle can only happen as we are filled with the spirit of God. Only God can change hearts!

So Jesus said, to wait and pray, and ask for the power of God to do this job.

The only fruit that will last for Christ is that fruit that is produced by the spirit of God. Everything else is futile and will not last.

This is why Jesus was not excited when thousands came to Him in John 6 and then He preached and the great crowds were offended and He was left only with his 12 apostles. Then He said,

John 6:70 Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?

Only through the Spirit of God can a person truly be born again. Getting a crowd of people is not the answer. All we need to get a crowd is a keg a beer and some music. Back in the days of Christ they came because He fed them not because they believed what He said and preached. So He purposely preached truths to prove they did not believe in Him.

What the Church of Jesus Christ needs today is an upper room experience for power to be His witnesses. We need people who truly are His!

Then finally what I see in these verses is:

IV. WE HAVE THE PROMISE THAT CHRIST WILL RETURN AND AT THAT TIME HE WILL SET UP HIS KINGDOM.

Acts 1:9 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

Acts 1:10 And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;

Acts 1:11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

Mark it down, Jesus is coming back. He is coming back soon!

The Bible predicts certain things will take place before He comes back.

In the book of Daniel the Bible predicts:

Daniel 12:4 But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.

1. Increased ability to travel (Cars, Planes, etc..).
2. Increased knowledge (The internet).

Luke 17:26 And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man.

Luke 17:27 They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.

Luke 17:28 Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded;

Luke 17:29 But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all.

3. Bible says that as it were in the days of Noah so shall it be when Christ comes back. The days of Noah were characterized by two things a day of intense violence and corruption of marriage.
4. Days of Lot, characterized by increase in acceptance of homosexual lifestyle, and abundance of food and idleness.

All four characteristics are present in the day that we live.

Also all these characteristics are prevalent today!

Acts 1:11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

Jesus will be coming soon. For His people it will be a blessed time of hope, for the world it will be a time of judgment that they greatly fear.

2Cor. 2:15 For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish:

2Cor. 2:16 To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?

Conclusion:

As we consider our responsibility to fulfill this great commission of being witnesses for Christ we need to do the following:

1. Let's be unified in this cause, then abide together in the upper room in prayer, so to speak.
2. Let's pray for the power of God on our lives.
This is the only way we can be effective in our community.
3. Let us work together to support those who are on the front lines.
Through missions giving. Remember the example of the war effort. Would to God we would gear up as a church to work together for this greater cause, the world wide missions effort to win people for the Kingdom!