

The Purpose of Mission: Jesus Commission

1. Intro & Context

- The book of Acts is a wonderful book for us to study
 - One of the things that is so great about Acts is that it's a narrative full of drama, intrigue and action
 - It also chronicles the growth of the early church
 - And so it helps us understand the background to NT letters like Ephesians, Corinthians, Romans and Galatians, 1 & 2 Timothy etc which are cities, churches or people that are mentioned in Acts
- But the main reason why Acts is such a good book to look at is
 - Not because it gives us the history of the early church
 - But because it gives us the history of the **mission** of the early church
 - And while Acts gives us an insight into what life in the early church was like ...
 - It's primarily interested in showing us the spread of Christianity!
 - How the good news of Jesus broke through all sorts of barriers to change lives, families, cities, cultures and people
- Before we get into the details of the passage, it's helpful to know that the book of Acts was written by Luke ... the same Luke who wrote the Gospel
- Reason we know that is because if read the introduction to Luke's gospel ... he says how he investigated the life of Jesus in order to write trustworthy account for the benefit of a man called Theophilus
- Here in Acts 1:1 ... the book of Acts is also being written for the benefit of this man Theophilus
- What's clear is that Luke intended his gospel and Acts to go together
 - And in some sense Acts was meant to be the sequel to Luke's gospel
 - Luke's gospel is volume I and covers the life, death and resurrection of Jesus
 - It ends with
 - Jesus risen from the dead,
 - spending time with his disciples,
 - helping them make sense of his life in light of the OT scriptures and God's grand plan of salvation
- It's no accident then that Luke picks up here in Acts 1:1-3 with a flash back
 - recapping where he left off in his gospel,
 - with Jesus risen from the grave,
 - preparing his disciples over period of 40 days in Jerusalem,

- prior to his ascension and the next phase of God's salvation plan
- Now the question is ... what's Jesus going to do at this critical moment
 - Jesus has just come to earth as the Son of God
 - Entered into human history ... in order die on the cross for sin
 - He's miraculously risen from the dead
 - Now's he's with his disciples ... preparing them for life without him before he returns to his Father in heaven
 - What's he going to say?
 - What does he want to happen next?
 - Does it all stop here with Jesus? Or will the story continue?
- It's a pivotal moment in God's salvation plan and in the history of the world
- And in these opening verses of Acts, Jesus answers that by giving his disciples three things
 - A Mission
 - A Message
 - A Motive
- God's salvation does continue ...
 - It starts with the disciples
 - And as we unpack the passage this morning, where going to see that it continues with us today

2. A Mission

- And 1:8 we get the a summary of what the entire book of Acts is all about when Jesus says to his disciples
 - *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."*
- Virtually all commentators agree that 1:8 is the theme verse of the book of Acts
 - That is, this verse sets the agenda for the entire book
 - Because as we read the book of Acts outlines how the disciples start proclaiming the good news of Jesus and how that message spreads out from Jerusalem to Judea, Samaria and onto to all the nations
- Illustration – Pebble in a pond > concentric circles going out
- And so in these opening verses of Acts, Luke wants us to know the key thing Jesus taught his disciples in those 40 days between his resurrection and his ascension is ... you have a mission

- I don't know about you but when I hear this ... I'm expecting to hear the theme music from Mission Impossible
- But According to Luke there's no music, no exploding device, no guns ... but there is mission
- What is that mission?
 - *be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*

- The word 'mission' comes from Latin word Missio
 - Missio = sent / sending
- God is missional God ... because he sends
 - He sent Jesus into the world to die for the sins of humanity and bring restoration and reconciliation between himself and us
 - And now ... Jesus is sending his disciples to carry on his mission ... by being witnesses to Jesus in *Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth.*

- So what we see here is that part of being a disciple of Jesus means to go out as a witness to Jesus
 - The disciples had had three years developing this wonderfully intimate relationship with Jesus
 - Jesus called them to himself, loved them, served them, died for them
 - Through his death and resurrection he's made them children of the living God
 - And now he sends them out

- **Application**
- You see, that's what being a disciple of Jesus is about ... God calls you in only to send you out
- When you become a Christian, when you put your trust in Jesus Christ for your salvation, you enter into this amazing relationship with the one true God who created you
 - And through Christ, you have blessing and forgiveness, and peace with God and the sure hope of eternal life
 - God draws you in > and that's amazing!
- So to be a disciple means he draw you in ... but at the very same time ... he also sends you out
 - He only blesses you so you can go out and be a blessing to others

- He only calls you and gives you forgiveness, so you can go out and proclaim forgiveness to others
- It's not like in the Mission Impossible movie where Tom Cruise is told
 - "Your mission should you choose to accept it ... "
- No! Discipleship and mission go together – they're two sides of the one coin
- And this happens time and again throughout the Bible
 - God says to Abraham > come on in, I'm going to bless you > now go
 - God says to Moses > come over to here to the burning bush, I want to meet you > now go to Pharaoh
 - He says to Isaiah > come to me and I will cleanse you of your sin > now go out and preach
 - Over and over again> God calls people to himself, in order to send them out
- The reason God calls you in to himself ... into forgiveness and peace and blessing with him ... is to send you out on a mission to be witnesses to him to all nations
- Some of you might be saying ...
 - "But Jesus is commissioning the disciples here ... these are his hand picked leaders, the future leaders of the church ... therefore ... that's the clergy"
 - "That's John's job – he's the mission pastor. It's his job to carry on telling people about Jesus. We pay them to do that [well we don't pay John], I hope he does a great job. That's his, that's not my job"
- But the problem with that is what Jesus says at the start of v8
 - *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you;*
 - The one who was going to empower and equip the disciples for this mission is the HS
- And so because every disciple has the HS
 - That means every disciple is on the same mission
- **Application**
- This is why our mission here at C@P is
 - To live the BE and MAKE disciple of Jesus
 - We want to see everyone in Peakhurst and beyond (...) transformed by the good news of Jesus
- If you're a disciple of Jesus here at C@P, then this is your mission
- Why? Because Jesus says, being a disciple means you have a mission

- And it's so encouraging when people here at C@P live out this mission Jesus gives us
 - Jocelyn > has been praying for a non-Christian friends for years ... last year she became a Christian (friend, not Jocelyn)
 - Rebecca > has a passion for scripture > Why? ... because she can be a witness to kids here at PSPS
 - Scott > Police Academy > living out this mission > shares the gospel with one of the other cadets > started following Jesus
 - Lisa and Tim wanting to witness to their neighbour > invited them to Christmas carols

- Being a disciple means you have a mission
 - God calls in you to send you out

3. A Message

- So the disciples have this mission to be witnesses for Jesus ...
- What's the message?

- There's a couple of clues in the text
- The first clue is there in v1
 - *In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach*
 - The implication is that message to be proclaimed will be about Jesus
 - That is ... the message of volume II will be the content of volume I

- This is confirmed for us later in the chapter when the disciples are choosing a disciple to replace Judas
 - Judas Iscariot, had been one of Jesus' 12 disciples, but he'd betrayed Jesus, and later taken his own life
- So the disciples need to choose a replacement
- What's the criteria?
 - *v21-22 Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection.*
- It had to be someone who had witnessed all Jesus did and said, including his death and resurrection
 - Why?

- Because this is the message that needs to be proclaimed as they go on this mission
- The message was to go and tell people about Jesus
 - His teaching > miracles > love for the lost
 - And most importantly, his death and resurrection
- But that's not all
- We get another clue from Luke ... not from Acts, but the end of his gospel ... which captures the same events of the opening verses of Acts 1
 - *Luke 24:45-49 Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. 46 He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things. 49 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."*
- The message can't **just** be about who Jesus is and what he did
 - It needs to include the implications as well
 - The implications are two-fold
 - First, is that the gospel has a consequence
 - Second, is that the gospel requires a response
- The consequence of the gospel is forgiveness of sins
 - The whole reason Jesus came to earth in the first place was to fix the problem of humanity's rejection of God that had left us alienated from him and under his judgement
 - And Christ's death on the cross was God's means of absorbing his wrath, paying the price for our sin
 - In other words, at the cross a cosmic transaction took place
 - The price we deserved to pay for our rebellion against God was paid for ... in full ... by Christ
- The consequence of that is forgiveness
- It means
 - Reconciliation with God
 - Restored relationship with the creator of the universe that is so intimate that he considers you one of his children
 - Peace and blessing and a sure hope of eternal life

- So that's the first thing ... the gospel has a consequence
- But the second thing is the gospel **requires a response**
- And in v46 Jesus says the disciples are to not only preach forgiveness of sin, but they are also preach repentance
 - That is, they're to call on people to respond to the gospel in repentance

- You see Jesus death for our sins is a gift
 - Like any gift ... it doesn't cost us ... but it cost God greatly ... it cost him his son!
 - But like any gift, until we receive it ... we aren't blessed by it
 - I can buy XXX a birthday present, cost me some money ... but unless XXX takes it from me ... he/she won't share in the blessing of receiving it

- Gospel is only good news when people see how wonderful a gift it is ... and they take hold of it
- And the way we're to take hold of Christ's death for us is by repentance

- Word repentance literally means 'changed mind'
 - It means to turn around, change from
 - living for ourselves, to living for God
 - being king of our life, to making God king of our life
 - following our own wills, to following God's will
- You see you can't share in the blessing of forgiveness of sin and eternal life and not change your allegiance and your life
 - To do so would be like a sportsperson signing a contract for a new club, taking the all the money upfront and then continuing to train and play with his old club

- **Application**
- If you're here this morning and you're not a Christian ... here is the message that Jesus wants you to know and believe
 - He is real > he did die on the cross for your sin > many saw he'd risen from dead proving he **is** the Christ
 - And now he is offering you forgiveness and healing and hope and blessing and eternal life here and now
 - And if you want that ... [and why wouldn't you want that?] ... then he's saying to you now ... repent
 - Turn around
 - Give you life to Jesus

- Now if you're not ready to do that ... if you want find out more ... then I really encourage you to come along to our Christianity Explored course where you can ask your questions, share your doubts and explore further who Jesus is, why he came and what it means to follow him

4. A Motive

- If you're a Christian person here this morning ... God's reminding you ...
 - that the reason he called you to himself and has forgiven you and blessed you ...
 - is to send you out so that others can hear about this life changing truth about Jesus Christ so they might be forgiven and blessed as well
- Many Christians would probably put their hand up and say they struggle to live out this mission that Jesus calls them to
- I reckon if you asked why ... most people would say
 - Forget
 - Doubt
 - Fear
- Two of our goals these next five years here at C@P is to
 - Grow in our confidence in talking about our faith
 - Grow in our confidence in inviting someone to church
- If we're going to do that, then how are we going to overcome our forgetfulness, doubts and fears
- Let me give you three motives that I think will help you do this

Mission brings Good News

- One motive is just reminding ourselves that the gospel is such good news
 - Gospel = good news
 - Gospel is the greatest news anyone could ever hear ... because the consequences are eternal
- Story of an older man who would catch the bus ...
 - He'd stand up and call out in the bus "Does anyone have any good news?"
 - After an awkward moment of silence ... he would say "well I have some wonderful news ... let me tell you about Jesus."

- You see the gospel is the most wonderful news because it brings joy and blessing and hope and peace to our life that we are constantly searching for and unable to grasp hold of
- And if the gospel is such good news ... then why wouldn't you share it?
 - Knowing the truth about Jesus and not sharing it would be like discovering the cure for cancer and keeping it to yourself and saying
 - 'I'm only going to share this with my family and close friends'
 - All the while 100's thousands of people are dying because they haven't been given a cure that could save them
- Sometimes we **forget** just how good the gospel is
- But to the degree you understand and are convicted that the gospel truly is good news for the world ... then it will motivate you to move mountains so that others might also hear it and be saved

Mission is Unstoppable

- Second motive for us in our mission is knowing that God's mission is unstoppable
- At the start of his gospel ... Luke wrote
 - *Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. 1:1-2*
- Now that word 'fulfilled' is important
 - Because what it does is flag to us that the life, death and resurrection that Luke documented in his gospel ... was the fulfillment of God's promises that he'd outlined in the OT scriptures
- And by the end of the gospel / starts of Acts ... God has fulfilled his promise to send Jesus to die and rise again
 - And the part which is yet to be fulfilled is the preaching of repentance and forgiveness to all the nations
- However, by the time we get to the end of Acts ... that too is being fulfilled as the gospel spreads even as far as Rome
- And the point is ...
 - If God fulfills his promise to send Christ to die and rise again
 - If God fulfills his promise to send the gospel out from Jerusalem as far as Rome

- Then we can be sure that God will continue to fulfill his promise of sending his gospel out to ALL the nations
- Because this is God's mission and not our mission ...
 - It's not Mission Impossible ... its Mission **Possible**
 - Better still ... you might say its Mission Unstoppable
- God's plans cannot be thwarted
- Which means you and I can be confident that God will continue to do what he's been doing for the past 2000 years
- Therefore, there's no need to doubt about
 - The relevance of the gospel
 - The spread of the gospel
 - Resistance to the gospel
- Rather than be filled with doubt ... you can be filled with confidence ... because you know God will continue to fulfill what he's promised ... which is for the gospel go out to the nations

Mission is Spirit Powered

- Third motive is knowing that Jesus mission is powered by the HS
- In Acts 1:8 Jesus says Acts 1:8 – *'you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you ...'*
- Jesus promise is that all believers will receive the HS
 - No longer would the HS be limited to just the OT kings and prophets
 - In John 14:26 Jesus says
 - *But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.*
- Because this is Jesus mission, it's Mission Unstoppable
 - And by sending the HS to be a helper / counsellor ... he is giving you the resources and power and energy and wisdom and words to be the witness to Jesus that he calls you to be
 - In other words ... you're not alone
- If you are timid, or fearful or anxious, or afraid of being a witness for Jesus because
 - You don't know what to say
 - You lack courage to speak out

- You are fearful of the response
- Know for certain that the success of the mission and the effectiveness of your witness doesn't depend on your
 - Charisma
 - Persuasiveness
 - Knowledge
 - Courage
- It depends on the HS who empowers and equips every believer to be a witness to Jesus to all the nations

5. Conclusion

- So as we start the year seeking to live out our own mission here at C@P
 - To be and make disciples of Jesus
 - To see Peakhurst and beyond transformed by the good news of Jesus
- It's good to be reminded ... that's Jesus commission to **every** disciple
 - He calls you in to send you out
 - He gives you a message proclaim
 - A message that's about him ... that brings forgiveness ... but requires repentance
- To guard you against being
 - Forgetful
 - Doubtful
 - Fearful
- Know that it's a ...
 - Mission with good news
 - Mission that's unstoppable
 - Mission that is Spirit powered

PRAY