

Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

Date : 2 June 2024
Sermon Title : To Look Or Not to Look
Speaker : Rev Reuben Ng
Text : Acts 1:1-11

INTRODUCTION

This is the first of a new sermon series on the Book of Acts. Due to time constraint, we will not be able to cover all 28 chapters of the book this year but will only be covering chapters 1-9. As the sermon title says, we shall explore whether we are “To Look or Not to Look” in Acts 1:1-11.

ACTS 1:1-11

- ***In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach (Acts 1:1)***

Here, Luke the author of the Book of Acts refers to his former book, the Gospel of Luke. This Book of Acts is his 2nd book, and it focuses on the acts of the apostles.

- ***until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. (Acts 1:2)***

Jesus gave instructions to the apostles through the Holy Spirit. This reminds us of Jesus’ reliance on His Father; doing what His Father does and saying what His Father says. In the same way, if we take the life of Christ seriously as a model/example, we should learn to move away from simply relying on our own abilities and intelligence but always seek to see what the Father is doing and rely on the Holy Spirit to also do these things because God’s work can only be done God’s way with God’s strength and enablement.

- ***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 forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. (Acts 1:3)***

God’s Word in John 21:25 says that not all the teachings and wonderful works of Christ were recorded because all the books in the world would not be enough to contain them. In the same way, not everything Jesus did in the 40 days to prove that He was alive and resurrected was recorded. However, from those recorded in Luke, we know that He appeared to many people, such as to the two men on the road to Emmaus and after that to His disciples whom He invited to touch His physical body and have breakfast with Him.

For we walk by faith, not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7

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- ***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. (Acts 1:4)***

Jesus gave them an explicit command not to leave Jerusalem but to wait for the gift of the Holy Spirit which His Father had promised.

- ***For John baptised with water, but in a few days you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 1:5)***

The disciples would be baptised/immersed/surrounded by the Holy Spirit. We know that the disciples later received the Holy Spirit during Pentecost, 10 days after Jesus' ascension. Today, like the disciples, we are also called to be baptised with and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

- ***Then they gathered around him and asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6)***

Immediately after hearing this about the Holy Spirit, the disciples asked if that was the day the Kingdom of God would descend upon earth, and if they were in the last days where they would see Him face to face. They wondered if Jesus would make everything that was messy and wrong to be right again.

A few decades later, Apostle Paul wrote to the church in Thessalonica (2 Thessalonians 2) in response to prophecies that Jesus had already returned. Paul explained that Jesus had not returned, because the man of lawlessness had not been revealed. This appeased the Thessalonian Christians but later Christians who read Paul's letter speculated on who this man of lawlessness is, with various persons who had done enough bad things being named as such throughout these 2000+ years. There had also been many predictions of Jesus' return that did not come to pass.

Many well-meaning Christians today continue to wonder when the last day will be, but **Acts 1:7** reads:

- ***He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.***

We are not called to speculate on who the man of lawlessness is and we are not to entertain any predictions on Jesus' return, not even from people in authority. Instead, we should trust that God, in His infinite wisdom, has everything in control.

Mark 13:32-3 makes this clear: “*But about that day or hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come.*”

- ***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)***

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The only reason we have a church today is because Christians throughout history have taken this command seriously, spreading the Gospel all the way to Singapore.

- ***After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. (Acts 1:9)***

This is one of the most dramatic scenes in the Bible – Jesus miraculously taken up right before the disciples. They looked at Him float up until a cloud hid him from 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.” (Acts 1:10-11)***

The men in white, likely angels, anti-climactically asked the disciples why they were standing there looking into the sky and informed them that Jesus will come back in the same way they saw Him ascend to heaven.

What’s Wrong with Looking?

We may wonder what is wrong with us looking when we refer to these passages:

- a) Revelation 1:7 – “Look, he is coming with the clouds,” and “every eye will see him, even those who pierced him”...
- b) Revelation 16:15 – “Look, I come like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake...”
- c) Mark 13:32-33 – “But about that day or hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come.

Look or Not Look?

“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him. (Matthew 24:42-44)

This shows that although we are not to speculate about Christ’s return, we are to look and keep watch and be ready!

Be Ready...What does that mean??

Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure. (1 John 3:2-3)

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- **Be Holy** – Purify ourselves by aligning our lives with God; living a life set apart for God through our thoughts, speech and actions. Let us reflect on which areas of our lives we need to calibrate to align with God's will.
- **Be Witnesses** – Acts 1:8 reminds us that we will receive power when His Holy Spirit comes upon us. The Holy Spirit empowers us when we are living lives aligned to God but if we try to witness for Jesus when our lives are nothing like Jesus', we will not be effective. When we set ourselves to living holy lives and are empowered by the Holy Spirit, there will be many opportunities to share the Gospel or direct people to Christ. When we share the Gospel, we are preparing ourselves and helping others to be ready for Jesus' return.

CONCLUSION

All who have accepted Jesus are children of God. This should fill us with hope as we wait with joyful anticipation for Jesus' return. Let us not fall into either extreme of entertaining speculations about His return, or not being bothered about it. Instead, let us prepare for His return with the right posture – by being holy and witnessing for Him.

A. Review Sermon Application

Purpose: Reflect on how you have been embodying God's truth.

- 1a. How successful have you been in fulfilling what you/your group had committed to do for the last FaithWalk!?
 - 1b. What were some challenges you faced and what would you like to celebrate?
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2. Reflect on and share how you are preparing for Jesus' return by: (i) keeping yourself pure and (ii) witnessing to others about Jesus?

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B. Relate Sermon Content

Purpose: Relate with the Truth and Resolve for Transformation.

3. Read Acts 1:8 aloud.

a. Have you received the baptism of the Holy Spirit?

(i) If you have, share with your group the difference in your life after being empowered by the Holy Spirit.

(ii) If you have not, or are unsure, pray with your group members to seek the Holy Spirit's empowerment upon you.

4a. (i) What are some challenges you face in waiting with joyful anticipation for Jesus' return?

(ii) Do you entertain speculations about Jesus' return? If yes, what does it reveal about your trust in God's Word?

(iii) What is the danger of being not bothered about Jesus' return?

4b. How can your Life Group leader and members support one another to live a holy life and be equipped to share the Gospel, so you may be prepared and also help others be ready for Jesus' return?

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C. Testimonies, Prayers and Action

Purpose: Give glory to God, seek Him and embody His Word.

5. Share about how the Holy Spirit has empowered and enabled you to do God's work in His way.

OR

Give thanks to Jesus for His promise that He will return one day as He had ascended to heaven.

6. With a prayer partner, pray for God's help to walk in purity and for opportunities to witness for Jesus wherever you are.

Pray also for our church to be well prepared for Jesus' return, setting ourselves apart for God through holy living and witnessing for Jesus, by the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

Optional items:

Suggested worship songs:

1. A Thousand Hallelujahs – Brooke Ligertwood
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vR_sl9lkowA&ab_channel=BrookeLigertwood
2. Holy Forever – Chris Tomlin
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lkHgXKemCRk&ab_channel=ChrisTomlinVEVO
3. This is Our God – Phil Wickham
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IC_eI8B1qGI&ab_channel=PhilWickham

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