

The Mission of Jesus and the people of God

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[0 : 0 0] We're reading from Acts chapter 1, verses 1 to 11. And while staying with them, he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which he said, You heard from me, for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit, not many days from now.

So when they had come together, they asked him, Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? He said to them, It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority, but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.

And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes and said, Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven?

This Jesus who has taken up from you into heaven will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven. This is the word of the Lord. Thank you, Margo.

So let me pray for us briefly, and then we're going to look at the scripture together. Heavenly Father, your word is so wonderful and alive and speaks to us. It's amazing that 2,000 years after it's written, in a very different context and culture, your word still speaks to every human heart.

[2 : 1 3] We pray, God, that you will speak to us. God, we want to know what is your mind? What is the will of the Lord? What do you want to say to us in this passage? And so help me to explain it, but help us to hear and receive and, Lord, to be challenged where we need to be, but to be encouraged where we need to be as well.

God, call us to be aligned with you and to align our lives with your will. I pray this in your great and wonderful name. Amen. Amen. If you are new to Watermark, my name is Kevin, and it's great to have you with us.

If I haven't met you, please do come and say hi afterwards. I'd love to meet you and get to know you, but it's great to have you with us today. And I'm glad to see so many people still in Hong Kong, despite the long weekend.

Sometimes on long weekends, there's like nobody here, just the staff that have to be here. It's their job, but it's great to see so many people with us this morning. We have recently celebrated Easter.

And if you don't know, Easter is the high point in the Christian calendar. It's the biggest weekend of the Christian year, Jesus' death and resurrection. And at Easter, every year, we are reminded that Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross and his subsequent resurrection changes everything.

[3 : 2 8] It changes the plot line and the storyline of the whole world. This world is full of brokenness and pain and sadness and agony. And Jesus' resurrection tells us that that's not the final story.

It inverts all of those things. And in the words of Sam from Lord of the Rings, everything sad and broken and wrong and unjust with this world is becoming untrue. Jesus' resurrection tells us that salvation and forgiveness of sins really is possible.

Jesus' resurrection tells us that he really is the Lord, the King that he proclaimed to be. Jesus' resurrection tells us that hope is not just a fantasy or a wild idea.

It really is real and we can bank our lives on it. In two weeks' time, we are going to be having a bunch of baptisms here at Watermark. And baptisms is the most exciting thing.

It's a visible picture of an invisible spiritual truth. And the picture is that when you put your faith in Christ, you are united with Christ. You're united in his death.

[4 : 32] In other words, our old life dies with him. Our old life that is constrained by sin and death is put to death. And we are raised to new life with Christ. Just as Jesus rose again on Easter weekend, our lives were raised with him to a whole new life.

And one day we'll be raised in glory with him. And so we're going to be celebrating that in two weeks' time. But the question remains, if you become a follower of Jesus, you've died, you've been raised, you've been baptized, now what?

So what? What should we do? What does this mean for our lives? Does this actually change anything? If Christianity changes the storyline of the world, does it in any way change the storyline of your life?

Or is it that you become a Christian, follow of Jesus, and life just continues with no difference? Maybe for those of us that are not yet Christians this morning, if you were to become a follower of Jesus, what difference would it make in your life?

One of the things that I love about Watermark is that this church is full of people that have come to faith in Watermark Church. All sorts of people, whether through friends or explore course or colleagues, many, many of us have become followers of Jesus in Watermark.

[5 : 52] It's the only church you've ever known. And of course, there are a number of us that became Christians maybe elsewhere. Maybe growing up in another city or another church or another country. And maybe through your parents or a friend or a colleague, you became a follower of Jesus.

But however you became a follower of Jesus, now that you are one, what do we do? What does the next 1, 10, or 30 years of following Jesus look like?

And that's a very important question because sometimes we can think the goal of Christianity is just get as many people into doors as possible. Just shove them in. However, it doesn't matter how.

And once they're inside, well then, I don't know, just kind of hold on and hope for the best. First, friends, here's a question. Is the goal of your Christian life just to try not mess up, try not sin too badly, and just hold on and hope that you get to heaven one day?

And if, by the way, you do sin, just don't tell anyone. Just put on a brave face and pretend that everything's fine. Okay, don't do that. That's not a good idea. Is the overarching goal of our Christian life to maybe do more and more Christian things, get more and more involved in church, serve in more and more ways, and kind of ascend the ranks of Christian leadership.

[7 : 07] So you become a deacon, then a small group leader, and then maybe an elder. And then if you're really amazing, a pastor, and if you're super amazing, you can become a missionary somewhere. Is that the goal? Okay, no, that's not the goal.

Friends, if you're a Christian, hopefully you know what Jesus saved you from, but do you know what he saved you for? What does the next 5, 10, 30 years look like?

And maybe the same is true for us as a church. Is the goal for Watermark just to become a bigger, more influential, well-known church in Hong Kong? That we could draw everybody here and say, look how amazing Watermark is?

Or is the goal of Watermark just to remain small and intimate? We all kind of know each other, and it's just a cute family. And we don't grow too big because we all know each other one by one. Friends, is the purpose of our church to be a nice community that gives nice talks and does nice things, like handing out food to the poor and the marginalized?

What is it that Christ calls us to? Well, for the last nine weeks, we've been going through John's Gospel. And we've been looking at John's biography of the person in the ministry of Jesus.

[8 : 16] And today we're going to be taking a pause on John's Gospel, and we start in the book of Acts. And for the next two months, we're going to be working through the first six chapters of the book of Acts. And we'll be starting today in chapter 1, verses 1 to 11, as Margo read to us.

And the book of Acts is all about what happens in the life of followers of Jesus and the early church, and what it is that God calls us to. And so in this passage today, we're going to see two very simple things, okay?

Very, very easy to start off. Just going to start off nice and slow. Jesus' mission and our mission. Jesus' mission and our mission, okay? So let's dive in and start.

Jesus' mission. Let's just look at the book of Acts. What is the book of Acts? The name Acts is shorthand for the longer title, the Acts of the Apostles.

And the book of Acts is the second volume out of a two-volume historical record written by a guy called Luke, okay? Luke's first historical record is the Gospel of Luke.

[9 : 19] Remember Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, the third Gospel in the New Testament. So Luke wrote these two historical documents. One is the Gospel of Luke, and the second one is the book of the Acts of the Apostles, or what we know as the Book of Acts.

And when you read these two books in the Bible, there's a lot of overlap, written by the same author for a similar intention. And you would expect that, and that's what we see. And so both Luke and Acts start off with an introduction that tells us why Luke is writing these historical documents.

Look at how he starts off his Gospel. He says this in Luke 1, verse 1 to 4. He says, Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile the narrative of the things that have been accomplished, it seems good to me also, having followed things closely for some time, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things that you have been taught.

Okay, so here's this high-ranking Roman official. His name's Theophilus, and it sounds like he has commissioned Luke, who we later find out is a physician, a medical doctor, someone who's very good at diagnoses and investigation.

Theophilus seems to commission Luke to do research on this person of Jesus of Nazareth that he's heard about, and to write a historical record whether the things that he's heard is actually true.

[10 : 41] And Luke does this research, and he finds out it is true. And he writes this historical record for Theophilus, saying, I want you to know these things that you can have certainty about the things that you've heard, and believe them to be true.

Well, look at how he starts his Volume 2, the Book of Acts. He says something similar. Verse 1. In my first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day that he was taken up, that's into heaven, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles that he had chosen.

He presented himself alive to them after his sufferings, by many proofs, appearing to them during 40 days and speaking about the kingdom of God. Okay?

So, here Luke is saying, I've written about Jesus and his early ministry, but now Theophilus has the second account that I want you to know, and it's the Book of Acts. And look at how he describes it.

And he says, In our first volume, in the first book of Theophilus, I've dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until he ascended into heaven. So, in Luke's Gospel, he tells all about Jesus' life and work and ministry, but now what is he going to do?

[11 : 53] In his second volume, which we call Acts, he's going to deal with all that Jesus continued to do, his life and work and ministry. In Jesus, in the first volume, in Luke, Luke tells us all that Jesus did himself in his bodily form.

Here he's going to tell us all that Jesus continued to do through his church. And so Luke's point is that Jesus' life and ministry and work and mission didn't end with his death and resurrection and ascension.

It continued, but now continues through the church. Now, these two stages are going to look a little bit different. In the first one, Jesus does it in his body.

In the second one, he does it through his church. In the first part of Jesus' ministry, it's initiated by baptism of John. That's what he says in verse 3, I think, or verse 5.

In the second one, it's initiated by baptism of the Spirit. And yet, both of these, the difference is not that big. In both of these, Jesus is what Jesus began his work and ministry in the Gospels.

[13 : 00] He's now continuing to do through his church. So the book of Acts is actually the continuation of Jesus' mission and his ministry here on earth. When Jesus died and rose again and ascended into heaven, that wasn't the end.

That continues through his church. Well, then the question is, what is his work? And Luke tells us. He tells us both in Luke and in the book of Acts.

Look what he says here at the end of chapter 4. Jesus one day is preaching, and the people are astounded. And everyone says, okay, Jesus, come to stay with us for a minute. Don't go anywhere else.

And look at what Jesus says. Luke 4, verse 43 says, No, I must go and preach the good news of the kingdom of God to other towns as well, for I was sent for this very purpose.

So what was Jesus' work and ministry? Coming to preach the good news of the kingdom of God. What is the kingdom of God? It's the fact that there is a king, and he rules and he reigns, and there's a rebellion in the world.

[14 : 03] That's why the world is not as it ought to be. But this good king is putting everything right in the world again. This king has come to his rebellious kingdom, and he's helping to put things right and put things in order.

It's the good news of the kingdom of God. That does sound like good news. If your life is anything like my life, there's a lot that's not right with this world. And Jesus, the king, has said, I've come to put things right, first by his death and resurrection, and secondly, when he comes again.

Jesus came to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God. But look what he says here in the book of Acts. Look at your, if you've got your Bible, your bulletin, look at what he says in verse 3.

Jesus presented himself alive to the apostles after his sufferings through many proofs, appearing to them during 40 days, speaking to them about the kingdom of God.

So throughout Jesus' three years of earthly ministry, he's proclaiming in word and deed, both his teaching and his actions, word and deed, the good news of the gospel of the kingdom.

- [15 : 11] The king has come. And the king is squashing the rebellion and putting all things right again. And then in the book of Acts, the kingdom of God is going to continue, not through Jesus' ministry, or not through his bodily ministry, through the body of his church.

The kingdom of God is going to advance through word and deed. So when Jesus gathers with his disciples for these 40 days after his resurrection, this wasn't just the boys, you know, sitting in the bar with a beer, kind of laughing about, ha, did you see the resurrection?

Did you see the look on those guys' faces when they saw the empty tomb? Ha, it's amazing. Well, that was fun. Boys, it's time that I leave. I'm going to go to heaven. Best of luck now. Jesus wasn't just gathering the boys, reminiscing about the good old days and his final farewell.

Jesus is teaching them and then sending them out and saying, my mission to bring the good news of the kingdom is going to continue. But now it's going to continue through you, through the disciples.

Jesus' mission isn't finished. It is continuing. And that's what Luke wants us to see, that the story of Jesus doesn't end with his death and resurrection. It continues. It continued through the homes and the streets of Jerusalem.

- [16 : 26] It continued through the synagogues and the marketplaces of Judea and Samaria. Jerusalem, sorry, Judea and Israel. It spread into the villages and the towns of Samaria.

That's the province next door to Judea. And ultimately, it spread to the ends of the earth. And so within one generation, the gospel is spread west to Rome.

Within another generation, it spread east to India. And it continues on and on and on until the 6th century. It reaches Xi'an province in China. And then it reaches Japan and Korea.

And ultimately, to the ends of the earth, just as Jesus said. Jesus' mission continues and continues still to this day. God's mission is not simply to offer comfort and relief for the terrible and uncomfortable things that happen in life.

Jesus is not just a friend or a buddy or a comforter to help us get through life. What is his mission? His mission is the good news of the kingdom of God. And we see this, and that's what Jesus is doing.

- [17 : 31] That's what Luke wants us to see. That just as Jesus' mission to Jerusalem and Judea spread throughout his lifetime, so it continues through the church. But what is Jesus' work?

Well, look at what Paul tells us in the book of Ephesians. Ephesians chapter 1. Paul tells us this, that this is God's great plan for the world. He says, God has made known to us the mystery of His will and His purposes, His plan for the fullness of time.

So at the end of time, this is God's plan for all the world. At the end of time, to unite all things together under Christ or in Christ, things in heaven and on earth.

So Jesus' message is going out, as we said, Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, the ends of the earth here in Hong Kong. And what is His message? His message is that at the end of time, Christ is going to unite all things under the rule and the reign of Jesus for the praise of His glory.

That's God's great, big, cosmic plan, is to reverse the disastrous effects of the sin of Adam and Eve and to bring all things under His gracious and His pleasing rule.

[18 : 46] One day, Jesus, His king, is going to rule over everything and those who refuse His rule will be separated forever and those who receive His rule will joyfully and gladly live under His dominion and His throne room forever and ever.

And that mission started way back in the Garden of Eden when God says to Adam and Eve, I will send a snake crusher who will reverse the effects of sin and Satan and death and bring an end to it.

And then it continued through God's promise to Abraham and to Israel and to David. And it continued through Jesus and His coming and His teaching and His preaching. And ultimately, the high point was this death and resurrection on the cross where He did defeat sin and Satan and death.

But after Jesus' resurrection, as we said, Jesus didn't just gather His friends and say, oh, that was fun. Okay, well, best of luck. Jesus then says, this mission to take the good news of the kingdom to the ends of the earth continues.

But it continues through you. And that leads to our second point. Jesus' mission, the good news of the kingdom, and our mission, our mission is to continue Jesus' mission.

[20 : 06] Jesus tells His followers that neither the story of the world nor the mission of God is over. In fact, it's just getting started. But the disciples, they are a little confused.

Because they see that Jesus has risen from the dead. They know He's obviously the Messiah. Neither the Romans nor the Jews nor death could stop Him. Jesus died and rose again.

Obviously, He's the Messiah. And so, for the disciples, this means that the kingdom of God is now going to come. But in their thinking, they're still thinking politically, nationalistically.

For them, the fact that the Messiah comes, the kingdom of God comes, means a great king like David is going to ascend to the throne. And it means that Israel is now going to be politically and religiously powerful and great again.

And this Messiah is going to restore Israel's political and religious fortunes. And this Messiah is going to make Israel great. And so, look at what they say in verse 6. It says, when they'd come together, the disciples say to Jesus, Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?

[21 : 19] This is what we've been waiting for. Jesus is risen. This is now our time. Our time to shine. We're going to destroy the Romans. Israel's going to be made great again. Except Jesus says, no, no, look at verse 7.

No, it's not for you to know the times or the season. The Father is fixed by His own authority. Jesus says, no, that's not how it's going to work. Actually, my kingdom is going to go forward, but it's not how you think.

It's not going to happen through political power or institutional power or financial power. How's the kingdom going to go forward? How's God's cosmic plan to renew all things and to bring all things under Jesus?

How's that going to happen? It's not through politics. It's not through institutions. It's not through financial power. It happens one life at a time that changes as God's kingdom gets into our hearts and God brings us into His kingdom.

Look what He says, verse 8. You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.

[22 : 26] Jesus has this great big cosmic plan to unite all things under Him. At the end of time, all creation, things in heaven and on earth are going to be united under Christ in the new creation and how's that going to happen?

One life at a time. As His people take His mission and His message of the kingship and the lordship of Jesus into their cities and their workplaces and the marketplaces and the gospel advances one life at a time through the witnesses of His disciples.

Jesus is bringing His disciples into His global mission so that Jesus' mission now becomes our mission. Jesus' mission and our mission.

I think we see this clearly in verses 9 to 11. I don't know if you remember when Margo read at the end there's this story about Jesus says this, you know, you'll be my witnesses, Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, the ends of the earth.

and said when He said these things as they were looking on Him He was lifted up and a cloud took Him out of their sight. And you think that's a bit weird. What's going on here, right? Well, there's a story in the Old Testament.

[23 : 39] There's a great prophet in the Old Testament. His name is Elijah. Elijah is the greatest prophet in the Old Testament. Speaks God's word. But there comes a time towards the end of Elijah's life where he needs to hand over his mission, his mantle, his calling to his kind of disciple, the next guy.

His name is Elisha. I know they sound similar but they're two different people. And so Elijah takes Elisha into the wilderness and there he says you are going to carry on my mission.

You're going to advance my mission. And Elijah then disappears kind of goes into clouds, into skies and he disappears and nobody sees him ever again. And Elisha now continues his work and his ministry.

I think Jesus is saying the same thing is happening here. As I go you are taking over my mission and my responsibility. The things that I have that I have been doing I'm now asking you to do.

Just as Elisha handed over his ministry just as Elijah handed over to Elisha so am I handing over my ministry to you. Friends all of history the entire storyline of the Bible is moving in a very clear and defined trajectory.

[24 : 49] I know at the moment things feel very volatile and uncertain in the world. You read the newspaper and you think what on earth is going on? It's all melting and falling apart. No it's not. The whole of the history of the world is moving in a very very clear and defined end.

And this is the end. Hundreds of billions of people from every culture every country every language every ethnicity every people group gathered around the throne of Jesus worshipping and declaring that he is king in the new heavens and the new earth and us living out under the rule and the reign of King Jesus.

As Alan read to us in the call to worship Colossians 1 says all things were made by him and through him and for him and between now and then that day Jesus who is very much alive and well and his mission is very much alive and well Jesus is working to bring about his master plan.

But how is he doing it? through the church through you and I. Jesus' mission becomes our mission. Friends for those of us that are followers of Jesus what is Jesus calling you to do now with your life now that you've decided to follow him?

What are the next 5, 10 or 30 years look like? Is the overarching goal of your life just to try and not sin not mess up too much and if you do don't tell anybody about it just try and hold on and get to heaven one day?

[26 : 22] Is the overarching goal of your Christian life just to try and do more and more stuff to serve more and more here and there and everywhere and ascend the ranks of the church leadership so that one day you become a deacon and a small group leader and an elder and maybe if you're a super spiritual person you can become a leader?

Is that the goal of your Christian life? Friends what is God calling us to as a church? Is our goal just to become big and fancy and popular so that everyone comes to Watermark and whew okay we did it.

Friends it's our goal to move to a fancy building on the south side that looks so nice and we get in there and okay we've achieved our mission we're in. What a sad and miserable mission.

What a small and pathetic mission. Friends the goal of your life if you're a follower of Jesus is nothing less than to join his cosmic grand eternal mission to make him known to the ends of the earth and maybe that starts with just your family maybe starts with just your block of flats but for the gospel the good news of the kingdom the good news that the brokenness of this world is not the final story all that's wrong with this world is not how the story ends the story ends with God putting all things right and that all people can be included in that story and reconciled to this God and made known and have hope in this world and in the world to come our mission our plan our calling in life is to be part of that cosmic plan that is going to last way beyond your three score in ten years or maybe eighty if you're lucky.

Friends I wonder how many of us if we're honest after becoming Christians and growing in our basic knowledge of God in the Bible how many of us would describe our Christian life as a little sterile a little boring a little anemic and if we're honest our workplaces and our jobs are far more exciting and exhilarating and got more of a challenge because we think the goal of the Christian life is just be good and don't mess up and if you do mess up don't tell anyone about it just pretend that you're doing the good thing and hold on to the end but Jesus is calling you and I to something far bigger and grander than that you will be my witnesses my ambassadors not just to the UN or to another nation to cosmic powers and forces for all eternity Jesus calling us to nothing less than joining God in his cosmic plan to bring all things under the rule and the reign of Jesus and that doesn't mean you need to be a pastor or a missionary you get to do that just the way that you love and serve and engage your neighbors or your colleagues or your friends you get to do that in the way that you parent your children or the way that you are a parent to your children or the way that you are a child to your parents friends whether you are a university student just trying to study for exams or a mom with a two month old baby that spends all day feeding and changing diapers or whether you're the CEO of a bank or managing director or whether you're a foreign domestic worker or whatever you are

[29 : 32] Christ has got a cosmic calling on your life the vision God wants us to grasp is nothing less than his cosmic plan and Jesus says here in verse 8 you will be my witnesses Jerusalem, Judea that Jerusalem was the place where they lived Judea was the province Samaria is the province next door and ultimately to the ends of the earth I don't know if you've ever gone on Google Earth I know Google Earth was like a long time ago but once upon a time when Google Earth was still cool I don't know if you ever went to Google Earth right and what do we all do on Google Earth you all look for your own apartment right so you search where do I live okay you find your own apartment and then you zoom out and you zoom out and you find your street and then your suburb and then your district and then Hong Kong or maybe if you lived somewhere else back in the day your country and then your continent and finally you zoom out as far as Google Earth will go that's something of the plan that God wants us to see this cosmic plan for the whole world to make his name known in Watermark there are two songs that we sometimes sing that always cause a lump in my throat and kind of get my eyes a little bit moist and I feel a little bit emotional there are actually many songs but two in particular the one is this there's a line that says all the earth will shout your praise our hearts will cry these bones will sing great are you Lord and the reason the song gets me emotional

I first heard the song first started singing it when I was back in our old church in Cape Town South Africa and at that time we were thinking of moving to Hong Kong and we were processing God's call for us to move and join Watermark and I remember sitting in Cape Town the bottom of Africa right and thinking about Hong Kong the greatest city in the world and singing this line all the earth all the earth from the bottom of Africa where we speak Zulu and Nosa and other things like that to Hong Kong where you speak Cantonese and Mandarin and Tagalog and Nepali all the earth and everywhere in between will cry out great are you Lord that's the vision I want to give my life to here's another song that always moves me Psalm 150 the chorus is praise the Lord raise your voice you heighten all your depths from furthest east to furthest west pray let everything that has breath praise the Lord friends are you a Christian this morning that's the mission

God's called you to and that's the mission that Jesus sends his disciples on and Luke is introducing the book of Acts the book of Acts is an amazing story of how the gospel spread to the furthest corners of the known world and Jesus says my mission is your mission are you up for it he's sending his disciples out now as we come to close I want us to consider one question why is it that this is so hard and why is it that we don't really do this why is it that the global cosmic plan of God that all things are made by him and through him and for him so seldom grips our lives and I think there's many answers but I want us just to consider two potential answers this morning why is it that we find this so hard and don't do this I think the first answer we've got to reckon with and wrestle with is the possibility that we just don't care that if we're really honest with ourselves we actually just don't care and that in our list of a hundred priorities

Christ and his kingdom is kind of like a hundred and ten and that almost anything else in life is actually more important to us and friends this I think is maybe not true for many of us but if that is true I think we need to grapple with the possibility that just maybe we're actually not even Christians and we're actually not even saved and we're not born again and we're not Jesus followers and we're not part of his kingdom and that we are actually still dead in our sins and there's a particular danger with that and this is a very insidious kind of danger and the danger with that is that the problem with that is that this kind of sin is a religious kind of sin which makes it particularly dangerous Jesus once in his ministry he says to some Pharisees he says you're blind but the problem is that you're blind to your blindness you can't even see that you're blind if you could see that you were in trouble and you came to me and said Jesus we're in trouble help us well then I could help you but the problem is you keep on telling me no don't worry we're fine we're not blind we can see and the fact that you are blind the fact that you're blind means that you're going to die in your blindness and friends the problem with religious blindness is that we think we are fine but actually we're dead in our sins and one day we will not be part of God's cosmic kingdom we will be separated forever and ever

Jesus said that in every church there are true converts and true disciples and there are those that think there are disciples and converts and at the end of the age he will reveal to us what is true and so we must reckon with the possibility that maybe actually we just don't care because we're actually not even saved and that is very very sad and friends if that is you I encourage you come to him ask him to change you but I think there's another possibility and there's another reason why we just find this so hard and I think that for most of us for maybe 99% of us the reason why we we don't engage in God's cosmic global mission plan to bring all things under the rule and reign of Christ is that it is impossibly difficult it's actually just so impossibly difficult you know I've been a pastor for about 15 years which means that for Prince the last 15 years almost every waking hour of my life

[35 : 45] I have been grappling with this question how do I follow Jesus and help other people to follow Jesus more I mean that's the question that pervades every moment I'm awake for the last 15 years or so and friends as a pastor this is my full-time job I find this hard and I suck at this I get distracted by a million other things and sometimes if I'm honest I love to get distracted by other things I get distracted by almost anything I love sport and so I will find myself spending hours scrolling my phone following sport you know sports scores and as I said to somebody the other day I'll start at the cricket and then the rugby and then the football and then the golf and then the formula one and I'll work my way down to ping pong or whatever there is I mean twiddly you know flying chess or Chinese checkers anything sometimes to distract me from having to read my Bible okay I know that's a bad confession I'm sorry my point is it's hard it's hard if you are a follower of Jesus hopefully there's something in our hearts that says

I want to follow Jesus but there are a thousand other things that seem more appealing and if you try and do this on your own you will fail and what Luke wants to tell us here in the book of Acts is that Jesus' mission is so important but it's so big and it's so vast and so expansive and it demands so much of your life that you'll never do it on your own never unless you're empowered by God himself unless God himself comes and works in your heart and helps you and gives you the power that you can't do on your own and so look at how Luke tells us this look at verse 4 Jesus says to his disciples he's going to send them out on this global mission okay but he says before you do anything while staying with them

Jesus ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem but to wait for the promise of the father that means the holy spirit which he said you heard from me for John baptized with water but you will be baptized with the holy spirit not many days from now Jesus is about to send these uneducated unsophisticated fishermen and tax collectors on this worldwide mission as his kingdom ambassadors and representatives to speak to governors and emperors and kings and rulers and authorities the Jews and the Gentiles the rich and the poor everyone but what did he say you can't do it but I can do it through you so wait for the holy spirit and when god's spirit empowers you to do it then you'll be my ambassadors god gives us himself to accomplish the task that he's called us to do to take the good news of the kingdom the resurrection of Jesus into our homes and our neighborhoods and our workplaces and our city and ultimately to the ends of the earth and so

Jesus says you will receive power when the holy spirit comes upon you and then you'll be my witnesses in Jerusalem Judea Samaria and to the ends of the earth friends you can't do it on your own none of us can none of us is smart enough educated enough powerful enough rich enough brilliant enough clever enough none of us can do it but he can and so what God asks us to do is to actually get on our knees and humble ourselves and say Jesus I hear you your mission is my mission we need you God give us your spirit give us your power and send us out friends Jesus is so gracious and so kind he never leads us or sends us anywhere without giving us himself and his spirit so as we come to a close I want to leave us with four very simple questions many of us have to come to believe and experience in the reality of

Jesus and his death and his resurrection but now what what does that mean for our lives does anything change is the goal of your life just to try and hold on and make it to heaven no friends Jesus has this cosmic mission this plan and he's calling you to be part of it and Jesus mission is now your mission and he's sending you out he's empowering you to call all things under the rule and the reign of Jesus but as we close let's think about these questions friends are you part of God's kingdom are you truly saved are you born again is there even a remote!

[40 : 41] are you giving yourself to Christ and his kingdom are you living for his glory or is Jesus something you just pay lip service to and you live for your own glory is Christ's cosmic plan even interesting to us friends are you convinced of the message of the gospel is it good news to your heart is it good news enough to actually tell somebody else that Jesus has come that forgiveness of sins spirit and living dependently upon him are you resting in him have you come to the end of yourself and friends are you saying Jesus I need you come and do for me what only you can do but what I so desperately need let's take a minute to think and ponder on this and then I'll pray and then we'll close in a song let's take some time together let's pray together well and so is your mission and

God one day your mission will end with the fullness of time all things all of us all people that have surrendered to you and received you as Lord and King be part of the new creation the new heavens and the new earth and we will love you and enjoy you forever!

to live for your kingdom help us God to be a part of your mission God whether it's at home with babies whether it's at university whether it's in the marketplace it's the way we raise our children or the way we look after our parents in every sphere of life to live!

for you and your glory Jesus we confess that sometimes there are a thousand other distractions that actually are more important to us and when we try and do it in our own strength when we try and live for you in your glory it is overwhelming and we fail a thousand times each day but God you're so gracious you're so kind you never point the finger!

and tell us we're pathetic you just invite us back to you Holy Spirit we need you Spirit of God we need you this church watermark we need you individually Jesus we need you God as we sing this next song won't you come and fill us with yourself empower us call us to yourself and then send us out on your mission whether in the streets of Hong Kong or to the furthest most remote parts of the world God we look forward to the day when people from every nation and tribe and tongue furthest east and furthest west sing great is the Lord worthy to receive worship we look forward to being part of that Jesus come and help us

[44 : 00] I pray in your great and glorious name amen