

Text: Luke 24:36-49 (Pew Bible, pg.1048)

Title: Engage ... In the Power of the Holy Spirit

INTRODUCTION

We've been hearing from the words of our Savior the urgent call to engage in on-mission living, and next weekend we'll put it into practice as we spread out all over the city to be salt and light. Then next Sunday we will all gather in one worship service at 11:00am to celebrate the opportunities the Lord has given us to engage. Some of those projects have already taken place, but most of them will happen in the coming week, so please pray for God to empower us for effective service.

I'll ask you also to pray for a group of 175 pastors who will gather here in the Metroplex tomorrow and Tuesday for a time of fervent prayer that God would move in our churches in such a way as to spark a revival and spiritual awakening in our land. We desperately need this, and as the Lord brings it to your mind please pray.

In many ways we're in the same predicament as Jesus' disciples just after the resurrection of Jesus. We read about it Luke 24:36-49. Turn there please. Just after His resurrection Jesus appeared to His disciples to deal with the issue of their lack of power. Read text.

ILLUSTRATION – It's so easy for believers and for churches to become like the Carnival cruise ship "Triumph" earlier this year. The ship was sailing out in the Gulf of Mexico with 4200 passengers on board when a fire broke out in the engine room which knocked out the ship's power. There was nothing for the crew and passengers to do but to sit as the ship drifted powerlessly in the gulf's currents for days and days. Without the electricity to cook food, there was little to eat. Drinking water was in short supply. The rooms on the ship were so hot that people had to sleep up on the deck. The cruise ship "Triumph" wasn't living up to its name and couldn't complete its mission because there was no power.

And the same thing can be true of believers and churches who bear the name of Jesus Christ, but we don't live in the victory and power that goes with that name. So as churches and believers we aren't able to finish the mission Jesus gave us because there's a lack of power. When Jesus calls us to engage our world with His love, it is an urgent call to on-mission living that we cannot achieve in our own strength.

Many of us feel like the first followers of Jesus ... unsure of our place, unprepared for the task, unequal to the challenge. What happened to the followers of Jesus has to happen for us. My prayer this morning is that you and I will experience the reality of the risen Christ as powerfully and personally as the disciples did 2000 years ago on this occasion. As we, like the first disciples, stand on the threshold of the mission Christ has given us to "Engage!" that we will go forth clothed with the power of the Holy Spirit.

We need what Jesus' first disciples needed. They needed...

1. A NEW CERTAINTY

It was a band of bewildered, discouraged disciples who had returned to Jerusalem after the fateful events of the weekend of Jesus' crucifixion. Their hopes had been dashed against the hard rocks of reality. There was strong evidence that Jesus was raised from the dead, but the reality of that had not yet gripped them. And so when Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you," they thought He was a ghost. They still couldn't believe it was true. They needed reassurance and certainty this this was really true.

Mark's Gospel account indicates that the problem may have been a lack of faith. And so when they still couldn't believe Jesus showed them His hands and His feet. They could see the scars of the nails that were driven into Him by those who crucified Him. But to make it even more certain Jesus asked for a piece of fish to eat. He took it and ate it right there in their presence.

Note: It's not our purpose this morning, but there are some very interesting details here about our Lord's resurrected body. And it gives us a clue as to how wonderful will be our resurrection bodies when we inhabit the new heaven and the new earth for eternity.

Next Jesus has to refresh their memory, because apparently they had forgotten.

Luke 24:44 - He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."

The Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms were the three divisions of the Old Testament sometimes referred to in NT times. Friends, you find Jesus on every page of your Bible. As you read OT passages, look for Jesus; He is there.

But without the assistance of the Holy Spirit the disciples still had difficulty putting things together. So it says that ...

Luke 24:45 – (Jesus) opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.

This is amazing. Jesus has access to our minds. He can open up understanding where our own intellect fails us.

Luke 24:46 - He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day,

I'm convinced that the reason our witness and our service is so anemic is that we do not have the sense of certainty that Jesus really is alive and living in us by His Spirit. You do not go anywhere throughout your day that Jesus isn't already there. Every second of your life you live in presence of the Risen Lord. He walks with you and talks with you throughout every day. He's alive!

So we need a new certainty, but we also need...

2. A NEW URGENCY

Luke 24:47 - and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

Now it's so important to get this. There are three words that cannot be separated: to "suffer," to "rise" (v.46), and to "be preached" (v.47). In the original text they all go together. Christ *will* suffer ... He *will* rise from the dead ... and the Gospel *will* be preached.

We get the death and resurrection part. We know how important those two things are for our own salvation, and we believe that. But do we get it that just as sure as Christ must suffer and be raised, that the message of those events must be preached. We're on board with the Cross and the Empty Tomb, but we really are not all that urgent that those truths must be announced to the world ... *and it's our job to do it!*

And notice what is to be announced:

- "Repentance" is what we must do. To repent means "to change your mind." It means that we understand that in our sin we are going the wrong direction and by faith we turn from our sin and to Christ. You cannot be saved apart from this.
- "Forgiveness of sins" is what God does. Forgiveness deals with the guilt that we bear because we are sinners. Only God can take that away. And with that guilt removed we can freely walk with God.

ILLUSTRATION – If you've watched the movie "Despicable Me" you know that Miss Hattie created a cardboard box called "The Box of Shame." Children who misbehaved or upset Miss Jennie were sent to the "The Box of Shame" as punishment. And so many people live in a real box of shame. And the way to get out of that box of shame is not to just start feeling better about yourself. It's a spiritual problem. The way out of the box of shame is to, by faith turn from our sin and to Christ. And when we do that God gives forgiveness of sin ... we're set free from the box of shame.

And Jesus said to His followers: "This is to be preached to the nations, beginning at Jerusalem." This is the way it always is ... it starts right where we are. But it doesn't end there. We are responsible for the nations. So we must get beyond just believing the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, we must also be urgent about proclaiming repentance and forgiveness of sin. And we must get beyond just urgency about our circle and see the need of all the nations.

Notice that Jesus says...

Luke 24:48 - You are witnesses of these things.

He doesn't say, "You *ought to be* witnesses." He says, "You *are* witnesses." The question is will you be a silent witness or a vocal witness.

ILLUSTRATION – If you've ever been called to serve on a jury you know how this works. There are witnesses who are called to testify for the prosecution or the defense. A witness is just someone who tells what they have seen or heard. As witnesses, we are not the judge, and we are not the prosecuting attorney. We are simply to tell what we have seen and heard.

And we are witnesses of these things, not because we were there 2000 years ago, because we weren't. We are witnesses because we have the infallible record of Jesus' words, as well as His life, death and resurrection recorded for us in our NT. And we are witnesses because we have experienced the reality of the Risen Lord as He has come into our lives to make us new people.

We must not lose our sense of urgency of that we are to be about. But there's something else the disciples needed, and that we need:

3. A NEW ENERGY

Now the disciples were basically common men. How in the world could a group of common people ever hope to fulfill that kind of assignment Jesus just gave ... to announce repentance and forgiveness of sins to all the nations? It could only happen if they were energized with power outside of themselves ... "power from on high." They needed a new power source for their lives and for their ministries. And Jesus had already made plans for that.

Luke 24:49 - 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."

Just as God planned the crucifixion of Christ and the resurrection of Christ, He also planned the sending of the gift of the Holy Spirit. Jesus spoke of this before His death:

John 14:16 - And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—

John 14:17 - the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.

Note: This gift of the Spirit would certainly be for the apostles, but not just for the apostles. The fulfillment of this promise occurred to a group of about 120 who were gathered on the day of Pentecost, about seven weeks after the Resurrection. The gift of the Holy Spirit cannot be disconnected from the events of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection. It was a one-time experience for those first disciples; and it happens for us the moment we are saved. We are indwelt by the Holy Spirit at our salvation. But then we are also told to be filled with the Holy Spirit. So there is one gift of the Spirit, but countless fillings of the Spirit.

Jesus comes to literally dwell in us His Spirit when we are saved. The power of the Holy Spirit is the power of the resurrection of Jesus living in us. And we all need this power to live as we are to live.

Do you understand that just as sure as it was God's will for Christ to suffer and rise from the dead, that it was also God's will for repentance and forgiveness of sins to be preached in His name to everyone. And that it was also God's will that that mission would be empowered by the Holy Spirit. All of this comes in a package. We can't just say I want the Cross and the Resurrection, because I know I need that to be saved. No, the Cross and the Resurrection and the preaching of the message of repentance and forgiveness of sins in the power of the Holy Spirit all go together.

Witnessing and serving God is not something that we do *for* God; it's something that He does *through* us, if we are filled with the Holy Spirit. There is a great difference between a "sales talk" and a Spirit-empowered witness.

Luke picks this up again in Acts 1.

Acts 1:4 - 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 1:5 - For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

Acts 1:8 - 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."

The purpose of the giving of the Holy Spirit was not just to fire up our emotions in a worship service. We say, "I want to go to church so I can feel the Holy Spirit." Does the Holy Spirit shed God's love abroad in our hearts? Yes. Does the Holy Spirit enlighten us to understand truth? Yes. Does He help us to worship and pray? Yes. But the main purpose for the power of the Holy Spirit in us is to give us the energy to live the holy lives we are supposed to live, and to be the powerful witnesses we are supposed to be.

ILLUSTRATION – It's like sniffing gasoline fumes to get high. That's not the purpose of gasoline; it is fuel. And the ministry of the Holy Spirit is not just to make you feel good. The ministry of the Holy Spirit is fuel ... energy ... for the mission Jesus gave us.

Ephesians 5:18 - Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.

Let me give you two images that will hopefully help you to understand and experience the fullness of the Holy Spirit in your life ... the fullness that will produce the fruit of the Spirit, but also the powerful life of service and witness that Jesus commands of us.

IMAGE #1 – Breathing. When you breathe you exhale and you inhale. When you exhale you are getting rid of the carbon dioxide ... let's call it the "dirty air," though I know that technically that is not the case. And with your lungs emptied of that "dirty air" you now have room to inhale the "clean air" of oxygen. And this oxygen is the fuel our body needs to live.

And when it comes to the Holy Spirit, for our spirits to have room for the fullness of the Spirit to pervade our lives we have to first exhale the "dirty air" of sin, selfishness and self-sufficiency. Then we are free to inhale the "clean air" of the sweet Holy Spirit of Jesus.

And this is to be a continual thing for us as believers, not just a crisis event. It should come as naturally and consistently as breathing ... exhaling our sin, selfishness and self-sufficiency; inhaling the grace of God through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

IMAGE #2 – The next image actually comes from right here in our text.

Luke 24:49 - 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.”

Now Jesus said, “Stay in the city.” Why? They were to wait before God. And that doesn’t just mean sitting around like you’re sitting in traffic waiting for the light to change. We know that that time was spent in prayer and seeking the Lord together.

And they were to do this “until you have been clothed with power from on high.” Literally until you “put on yourselves power from on high as a garment.”

ILLUSTRATION – It’s like we get up every morning and we put on Jesus, like I’m putting on this cloak. He covers our sin, but then He also lives His life out through us. We are clothed with His righteousness and with His power. When you get up in the morning, be clothed with power from on high. When you walk in the classroom, be clothed with power from on high. When you get up to sing, be clothed with power from on high. When you get up to preach, be clothed with power from on high. When you walk into the board meeting, be clothed with power from on high. When you go to the doctor’s office, be clothed with power from on high.