

Sermon by Justin Kennett
Meadowbrooke Church
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Jesus Rose, Now What?

Acts 1:1-11

Intro

Good morning! I'm so thankful to have you all here with us this morning. For those of you who don't know me, my name is Justin Kennett and I am an elder here at the church.

I know many of you know this already, but sadly today is my last Sunday at Meadowbrooke because God has called my wife and I back to California where Alyssa has started a wonderful job and God is using me for full-time ministry.

So if you just met me, sorry. I wish I had the chance to get to know you better. I wish I could've gotten time to get to know you better, but for those of you who have spent time investing in me, praying with me, praying for me, encouraging me and teaching me, I just want you to know how truly grateful I am. I couldn't have picked a better church to have grown in ministry with, and Meadowbrooke will forever play a huge role in my testimony.

When I share the story of what God has done in my life, this church will be one of those foundational chapters that sets the tone for the rest of the story. And for my own benefit, Meadowbrooke will forever be a chapter of my life that I leave bookmarked.

So when Keith asked me to preach today so he could head off to his conference, I couldn't have picked a more fitting way to say thank you than by standing up here for perhaps the last time to preach God's Word.

Now with that being said, lets open up with some prayer so we can set our hearts and eyes on God where they belong.

As we look to the text this week, we are going to be opening up our Bibles to the end of the book of Luke, Chapter 24 to be exact.

And as we are flipping through Luke, I want to reflect on last week because although it sounds obvious, Easter is the greatest holiday we get to celebrate and it's my personal favorite holiday. It is so much more than Easter egg hunts and chocolate. It's when we get to reflect and celebrate the greatest gift mankind has ever received: grace. Grace that is nothing short of amazing. It's the reason John Newton wrote the famous hymn amazing grace. Pastor Keith has talked about him several times before, but if you don't know John Newton's story, I highly encourage you to go and learn more about him.

But his words are worth reading and reflecting on this morning:

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now I'm found, was blind but now I see

Just the sound of the word "grace" is sweet to my ears. And to be completely honest, if there is only one thing that anyone takes away from the message this morning, I truly hope it is the word "grace," because grace is what saved a wretch like me.

'I once was lost, but now I am found.' And maybe you are feeling lost, but I want to highlight the fact that Jesus is who does the finding. You do not need to be good enough, He finds us while we are lost.

He didn't say "lost but then I found my way", no, you see John Newton understood that the Bible tells us grace alone saves us.

We see this directly from the Bible in Ephesians 2:8-9.

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a results of works, so that no one may boast."

So I say again

'Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now I'm found, was blind but now I see.'

If you have never seen, or heard, or felt grace, today is the day to accept the free gift of grace.

You see, this season is all about remembering that:

God loved us so much that He sent His one and only Son to earth to die for our sins so that if we place our faith in Jesus, we can be forgiven and spend eternity with Him.

Jesus lived the life we could never live and died the death we deserved in order that we may have the opportunity to be reconciled with our Father in Heaven.

No matter what you have done, and no matter what you will do, good or bad, you only need to believe in Jesus' death and resurrection to receive the grace of God that forgives all sins and heals all wounds.

Place your faith in Jesus, and Him alone, and allow the grace of God that transcends all understanding to take hold of your life and be renewed.

Amen?

So Jesus rose....now what?

Maybe there are some people in here that heard the gospel story for the first time recently but now you are asking the question, what comes next?

Yes! Jesus rose; but the Bible doesn't end there. In fact, for those familiar with their Bibles, the Gospels are located at the very beginning of the New Testament and God still had a lot of His Word left to give us.

The Gospels are the bridge from the Old Testament to the New. "Because Jesus did not come to abolish the law but rather to fulfill it." (Matt 5:17)

The Old Testament is foundational to our faith not only because of its divine and infallible teachings, but because it paves the way, prophecies, and most importantly, validates, Jesus as Christ.

It is the reason we can hear and read the story of Jesus' death and resurrection and believe it to be true. Because not only did it actually happen, but also it was pre-destined to happen since the beginning of time!

Jesus was always plan A.

He fulfilled every prophecy spoken about Him, lived the life we could never live and died the death we deserved, but before He breathed His last breath on the cross he proclaimed "te-te-les-tai" it is finished. And when He said those words, He

meant them. IT IS FINISHED. Jesus died for our sins and rose from the grave! He has fulfilled the law and the need for us to offer sacrifices to atone for our sin, but that is not where the story ends.

In Luke 24 we read that God sent angels who appeared first to the women of faith that went to his tomb to care for his body and what did they do? They sent them to tell others the good news. The first recipients of Jesus' great commission.

Then Jesus appeared to the 11 disciples and told them the same thing, we will get to that here shortly, but first, we notice in Luke 24:37 that the disciples were frightened and shocked to see Jesus in the flesh, risen from the grave.

And while it's understandable to me why they responded this way, Jesus asks them why they still did not understand when not only did He tell them this was destined to happen but it was also spoken and written long ago in prophecies and scripture.

Luke wraps up his Gospel the same way he starts the book of Acts, by discussing Jesus' ascension into Heaven

So let's open up Acts 1-11 and read through it together and so we can better understand what Jesus' last interaction was with his closest followers so that we can glean any wisdom and heed any commands from Jesus before He ascended into Heaven.

The Promise of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:1-11)

1 In the first book, (LUKE) O Theophilus (Friend / lover of God), I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, **2** until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. **3** He presented himself ALIVE to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

4 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; **5** for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

Jesus was telling them to wait for the Holy Spirit, the Helper, to enter their hearts before being sent out to tell the good news. This is really important, and I will explain why here shortly.

The Ascension

6 So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” **7** He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.

It is important we remember this, especially in times like today where the world seems to be in chaos. When the world is in shambles, we tend to be like Peter when Jesus called him out on the water. As long as he kept his eyes on Jesus, he was fine, but when he started to look down at the raging waters, he began to become overwhelmed with fear and could only think of drowning. We too need to make sure to fix our eyes on Jesus and what he commanded us, not fear the raging storm.

8 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.”

Notice the first word of verse 8 is BUT, a transition to say, INSTEAD of trying to focus on when Jesus will come again to restore peace and defeat the curse, spend your time spreading the good news to all we come in contact with before this event takes place. Jesus is calling us to spread the gospel, not dwell on the end times and when they will come.

To Jerusalem (your local community) Judea (the surrounding region) and Samaria (people radically and culturally different and opposed to them) and to all the ends of the earth!

As I mentioned at the beginning of this message, I am an elder here, but what you may not know is that I, along with Michael Nelson, oversee the Missions at Meadowbrooke. We have tried to be faithfully obedient to this command by Jesus as we support and have partnered with full time missionaries here locally, here in Cheyenne, the nearby greater region out in Colorado, other areas of America and to missionaries overseas in Italy, India, and Indonesia.

But what comes next here I want to make sure everyone in this room and listening online hears and pays attention to...

9 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. **10** And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, **11** and said, “Men of

Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”

It is my belief that the angel’s question to the disciples was two-fold. It was to encourage the disciples that Jesus had not left them stranded, that He will in fact come back to fulfill His promises.

But it was also to say, why are you standing around! Jesus has given you instructions to go back to Jerusalem, wait for the Holy Spirit, and then GO!

Jesus is asking us that same question...why do you stand looking at heaven? What are you waiting for? Are you expecting Jesus to do the work He has called us to do? Are you hoping maybe the Pastors and staff and Elders will do the work?

Or maybe you feel unqualified or inadequate to do God’s work

In Matthew’s Gospel, he concludes with Jesus’ Great Commission to all His followers. “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” (Matt 28:19-20a).

It is clear that we, as Christians, have been called to preach the gospel and live our lives as missionaries for Christ. However, we also see clearly in the Bible that not all are called to roles of preaching and teaching.

So how is God calling you? I think many in this room know the answer to this question and what makes the congregation so special is how uniquely we are all called to spread the good news of Jesus in our own way.

In this very room we have schoolteachers, members of the military, nurses, stay at home moms and dads, and we are all called to use the gifts that God has given us.

So why do we at times feel so inadequate?

Most likely because we forget to keep reading what Jesus said next. “And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matt 28:20b).

We forget that Jesus told His disciples to wait for the Holy Spirit for a reason! Because it is with HIM that we are made adequate.

It is only with the saving, cleansing and renewing GRACE of Jesus that we are set free of our fears, insecurities and anxiety.

Praise be to God I can get on stage today and speak God's Word NOT because of me but rather DESPITE me. Only by the Grace of Jesus I stand before you boldly proclaiming the good news of the Gospel!

Amen?

Following Jesus and obeying his commands may be far from a life of leisure in terms of a worldly perspective, but we have been given the greatest reassurance of all in that Jesus is with us!

So again I ask, how is God calling you in your own life today to be fulfilling the great commission?

How are you being called in your place of work?

How are you being called in your household?

As I end in prayer, if you have heard something in this message that has caused questions I encourage you to come talk with someone, myself included, or even better, the person who invited you or brought you

And if something in this message has given you something to think about, feel free to stick around and simply reflect on that.

We aren't in a rush here, stick around and pray, chat with one another, or better yet, chat with one another about how you can be praying for them and then stop and pray together.

Either way, we are so glad you came this morning. Although I am sad that today is my last day here, I hope that you decide to call Meadowbrooke your home church, because I can tell you that I sure am thankful I did.

Let's pray...