

THE CONNECTION

# AWAKENING

FATH COMMUNITY

**- WEEK 3 -**

## **REBELLIONS ARE BUILT ON HOPE**

### **CHECK-IN**

How are you? Where have you seen God working in your life in the last week? And... today, we're going to talk a little geography. So... where's the farthest place you've traveled to? Have you made it around the world in 80 days? Or are you a homebody and anything outside a 30-mile radius is simply uncalled for?

### **OPENING PRAYER**

God of Our Call, give us the courage to go to all the word, serving as witnesses to the incredible love you've poured out on us.

### **INTRODUCTION**

This is the final week of our series, **Awakening**, where we have been talking about the power of the Holy Spirit, and how it can

awaken within us a passion for sharing the good news of Jesus Christ, and inviting others into this amazing faith community. And because we kicked this series off on May the 4<sup>th</sup>, also known as Star Wars Day, we've been having a little fun finding parallels in a galaxy far, far away to help us understand this idea. And the allusions have been more appropriate than you might think: *A small band of rebels, seeking to fight evil and injustice, sets about changing the world, with the help of a mystical force.* This description could apply to the early apostles just as easily as it could Luke, Han, and Leia. But here's the thing, and why we're doing this... it applies to us, as well. Jesus gave his followers a commission, and we are heirs of that call to a similar rebellion.

**Review Question: Last time, we talked about reclaiming the word “witness,” and sharing our faith with others. Were you able to do that this past week? Why or why not? What prevents you from doing so? What would encourage you to reach out and tell someone about the difference your faith has made in your life?**

## **SCRIPTURE**

We've been using the same Scripture each week, breaking it down into parts to better understand the commission Jesus gave to his followers, and to us. You might have it memorized by now. If not, that's okay... no judgment. Let's read it again...

## **Read Acts, chapter 1, verses 4 through 8.**

Week 1, we dove into the first sentence.

**<sup>8</sup> But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you.**

This sentence reminded us that, just as the Holy Spirit empowered the disciples to change the world, that same Spirit can awaken within us a fire to show others God's love, and to invite them to join a faith community that will lift them up and welcome them in. And we committed a little heresy, equating The Force from Star Wars with the Holy Spirit... the Holy Spirit is God's presence on Earth, moving in and through us, and empowering us to do amazing things. (quite Force-like, no?) Then, we moved to the second part of the verse... Episode II, if you will...

**And you will be my witnesses...**

Jesus first says, "You will receive power from the Holy Spirit." But, to do what? Well, he answers that in the very next phrase... to be Christ's *witnesses*. These disciples had seen the incredible things Christ had done. And so, we talked about how to reclaim the word, "witness." It doesn't mean coercion or proselytizing, but rather, telling someone what difference your faith has made in your life. This week, we move on to the final part of the Scripture.

**...telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”**

We’ve covered *how* we’ll accomplish this commission: through the power of the Force, err, the Holy Spirit. We’ve talked about *what* we’re called to do: to be witnesses to what we’ve seen. Well, today, we’ll finish with the final part of our Trilogy... the *who*: Jerusalem, Jude’s, Samaria, and the Ends of the Earth.

**Question 1: What do you know of these places Christ was sending his followers? If you were listening to Jesus tell you this, what would these words have meant to you? How would you have felt listening to this command?**

## **REFLECTION**

Jesus gave his followers the *how* (through the Spirit) and the *what* (to witness) of this commission, and now he tells them *to whom* they were to witness. And Jesus never does anything on accident, so he chose these four places intentionally. So, what do Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the Ends of the Earth mean? Well, let’s look at an example from a galaxy far, far away to help us understand. A current masterpiece in the Star Wars universe is the episodic series, *Andor*. Without spoiling it for you, this series chronicles (in very realistic and practical fashion,) how a rebellion against an evil empire might actually occur. Like many of the heroes who join the Rebellion, Cassian Andor’s journey

begins in his home of Ferrix, as his own people are misguided by the Empire. From there, The Rebellion spreads to regions where entire planets are being oppressed. Then, whole races of outcast and pushed-aside cultures join the fight. Finally, the whole galaxy rises up against the evil Empire. (Feel free to catch up on the 9 Skywalker Saga films, 3 Stand alone films, 6 live action tv series, 9 animated series, and 4 Lego series, to get the whole story.)

But does that progression look familiar? It's the exact progression of how Jesus predicts the rebellion on which he is sending his followers will take place. He's saying, "Your fight against evil will begin right here in the heart of the Hebrew world, Jerusalem, with all of your fellow countrymen who have been so misguided. It will then branch out to all of Judea, to those who are being oppressed by the Roman Empire and persecuted for their beliefs. It will then spread even to Samaria, to those who are ostracized for being different, the outcast and enemies. And finally, through the power of Holy Spirit, you will witness to the Ends of the Earth, to 'the other,' the ones who don't look or act or believe like you. And you will show ALL of these people how much I love them... Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the Ends of the Earth."

**Question 3: Put yourself in the shoes of the disciples. Which of these 4 groups would have scared you the most? Would you have been comfortable with Jerusalem, your own**

**people? Or would knowing them have made it too difficult? What about the oppressed in Judea or the outcast in Samaria? Is that your cup o' tea? Or would you have responded, "get me as far from here as possible... I got the 'ends of the earth'!"**

Here's the thing...those layers, those concentric circles, are still relevant to us today. We don't live in Israel, with a literal Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, or Ends of the Earth, but if those places represent the misguided, the oppressed, the outcast, and the other... then we most definitely still have those people in our lives. And so, we can still ask ourselves these four questions.

Who is your Jerusalem? Who are those closest to you, who might be a little lost, like their fellow Israelites were to the disciples. They had the good news of the Christ, the Messiah, at their fingertips, and their own country-men & -women were unwilling to hear it. Who in your inner circle is still held back from the incredible life God has in mind for them because of some standard they feel they have to live up to? Who is your Jerusalem?

Let's move out a circle, who is your Judea? Who are those in your life being taken advantage of, who maybe can't fight for themselves? Who are the ones, like the Judeans of Jesus's time, who are being victimized or oppressed, whose rights are being

taken away, who need to hear that you're on their side? Who in your world has been hurt or burnt by the church, someone who needs to hear that God isn't bad, that church doesn't have to be toxic, that they can find affirmation and love and a relationship with God again? Who is your Judea?

Let's move out again... who is your Samaria? To the disciples, the Samaritans were enemies and outcasts. Who in your life has been outcast? Maybe they look different or believe different or act different? Maybe they don't fit society's norm. Who is someone in your life who the world has rejected or pushed aside? Who in your life is struggling and needs to hear that they are simply enough... to whom Jesus says, you are my masterpiece, and you are loved. Who is your Samaria?

And finally, who is your End of the Earth? For the disciples, this meant the literal Ends of the Earth... other religions, others races and creeds. Who would you consider *other* in your world? This might include someone from a different political party, a different social class or geographic location. Might be a Packers fan... who knows? You are to take the love of Christ that far, to the least lovable person you can imagine. That's how far God's love goes... to the Ends of the Earth.

**Question 4: To close our time together, we're going to revisit each of those four areas, and ask God to lay someone on our hearts in each. Take a few moments to quiet your heart**

and mind, breathe deeply, and ask God to speak to you. Then answer these questions, taking a few moments of silence after each.

- 1) What is your Jerusalem? Who is someone in your life who is misguided, trying to fill their need for God with something other than faith, who needs to hear that they are enough?
- 2) Who is your Judea? Who is someone in your life who is needs to know that you're on their side?
- 3) Who is your Samaria, someone who has been outcast, maybe by the church, who needs to hear that they are loved?
- 4) Who is your "ends of the earth?" Who would you consider 'other,' someone you might consider completely unloveable?

If a name or two popped into your head, your homework is to reach out to them this week, and be a witness to what Christ has done in your life.

## **CLOSING**

There is someone God is calling you to take His love to... to be a witness to. So, consider those circles: Jerusalem = the misguided in your life, someone who doesn't think they're enough; Judea = the oppressed and suffering, someone who needs you to fight for them; Samaria = the outcast and downtrodden, someone who needs to hear that they are loved and accepted; and the Ends of the Earth, the other... someone



as far from you as the ends of the Earth. You are called to take his love there. So, answer Jesus's commission to be his witness through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Now, to close the series, we've gotten 1) *how* to do it – you will achieve great things through the power of the Holy Spirit.

We've explored 2) *what* to do – you will be Christ's witnesses.

And today, we looked at 3) *who* we are called to... the misguided, the outcast, the oppressed, and the other. But to put a nice tidy Star Wars-like bow on the series, let's finish with the *why*. One of the best Star Wars quotes in recent memory is said by Cassian Andor. When pressed on why they're continuing to fight against insurmountable odds, he responds, "Rebellions are built on hope." The four groups that Jesus mentioned, that's what each of them is looking for... hope. There is a world out there that is hurting, that is suffering, that is beat down and broken, worn down and left out, overlooked and oppressed, and they just want a taste of hope. So, if we're going to rise up and rebel against the evil we see in this world, it has to be through spreading hope... hope that there's a brighter day coming, hope that there are still good people in the world willing to open their arms, hope that there's a better life both in this world and the next, hope that the mess they're experiencing will one day end, hope that the struggles of this life don't have the final say.

We have a God who has the final say. We have a savior who loves us just as we are. We have a Holy Spirit that lives and breathes within us, giving us the power to make a difference. And we have a hope that surpasses and endures over any evil empire. Rebellions are built on hope. “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere, in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and even to the Ends of the Earth.” May we be such a rebellion. And may the Spirit be with you.

**Take some time to share prayer requests or celebrations  
and close in prayer.**