



Week 1 – Jerusalem

Check-in...

How are you? Where have you seen Christ working in your life in the last week? And... what's your preferred way to communicate through technology? Do you go old school, actually using your phone for phone calls? Or are you a messenger, preferring to have 17 text conversations going at once?

Opening Prayer...

God our Creator, give us the courage to tell others about your love.

Introduction...

A few months ago, we were neck deep in a series called, "Stinger," where we were looking at Easter's "post-credits" scenes... stories of Jesus's followers encountering Christ after his death and resurrection, changing their lives forever. The last of these "stingers" was what we

call the Great Commission, Jesus sending these apostles out into the world. We noted then that this story could be a series of its own. Well, this is that series. Today and for the next 4 weeks, we'll look at the Commission we find in the book of Acts, and explore how, just like the disciples were, we too are sent to tell others about Jesus.

Set up: It's often helpful to reflect on how we were affected by someone in order to see the importance of then paying that forward. So, if we are to spend the next 4 weeks looking at telling others about Jesus, let's start by reflecting on who told us about first. Who was instrumental in connecting you to Christ? Who first told you about God's love? Share the story.

Scripture...

Luke begins Acts by reminding us of his first "movie," all about Jesus... his life, his teachings, his miracles, but mostly that Jesus died and rose again, and he proved that to be true by appearing to his disciples over these last 40 days. He's been preparing them, teaching them, empowering them. And why? Well, we're about to find out. Jesus is sitting with his followers for the last time, and so, he gives them what will be *the* foundation for their ministry, and what will be the foundation for us, for this series, and for our ministry, as well. He says,

Read Acts, Chapter 1, verse 8.

And then Jesus was taken up into the clouds, and the disciples were left alone. If you've been around the church world for very long, you've probably heard of The Great Commission. But the scripture referred to by that term is usually the one we find in Matthew's version of Jesus's life. This is Luke's version of that same story, and the "Great Commission" he provides offers a different and intriguing perspective on how we are called to tell others about Jesus.

Question 1: Talk about this scene. What catches your attention about this story? If you were one of Jesus's followers, how would you have felt in that moment? What would this phrase have meant to you as Jesus's final instructions before leaving you for good?

Reflection...

Jesus knew something that we are relearning in our time: an instruction without a "why" falls on deaf ears. That is, A leader *can* get results with his or her followers simply obeying instructions because they were told to. It's the "I gave you a command, soldier" approach. But if a leader can give a *why* that instills passion, excitement, and drive... if a leader can rally people around a purpose, the results go through the roof. You can have begrudging "yes" men and women, or you can have passionate followers. And the difference... is the why. Jesus had spent the last 3 years, and especially the last 40 days, giving his followers a *why* that would motivate them to commit the rest of their lives to living out this commission. The why? Each one of these disciples was *personally changed* by their

encounter with the risen Christ. Each one of them came to Jesus lost and broken, hurting and suffering, in need of love, in need of affirmation, healing, and purpose. And each one found their life in Christ. This is also what motivates *us* to go out and live this commission. We come to Christ with our brokenness. We are drawn to our Savior through our pain and suffering. And Jesus welcomes us in, with loving, open arms.

Question 2: There is a repertoire of half-a-dozen questions or so that show up regularly in our reflection guides. This isn't because we can't come up with new questions... this is because these questions are important to return to every so often in order to remind ourselves of our purpose, or value, or source of hope. Here's another... what is your "why"? That is, what has Christ done for you? The disciples knew their lives were changed and what Christ had done for them, and it empowered them to live out this commission. What difference does your relationship with Christ make in your life? Knowing this can help you live this commission.

Now, it's one thing to know *why* we are motivated to do something. It's another to actually then go do it. So, the next step is to figure out *how* to do that thing. Lucky for us, Jesus tells his disciples... it's simple. "Tell others about me." (v. 8) Easy, right? Well, no. Because if it were easy, every Christian would be doing it. So, for the rest of this series, that's what we'll discuss... the *how* of The Great Commission. Reread the end of verse 8... Jesus gives the disciples four geographic locations they were to tell others about him: Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and

the Ends of the Earth. Now, as much fun as it would be to organize a church-wide Holy Land trip to go live this out literally... Jesus gives us these locations as a metaphor for our “spheres of influence.” The first sphere of influence for the disciples was...

Jerusalem

For these men and women, Jerusalem had become home base, their “headquarters,” the place they were most familiar with. And so, when Jesus says, “you will be my witnesses, telling others about me... in Jerusalem,” he’s saying, your first priority is your closest, nearest, most intimate sphere of influence. That is, your *own home*. For some, that means your family... partner, children, and closest relationships. For others, maybe that’s just your significant other or closest friend group. For all of us, it means ourselves. (Perhaps our greatest influence should be reminding ourselves of our relationship with Christ.) Jesus commissioned his disciples to witness to their home. How will you witness to yours?

Question 3: Part 1) What is your “Jerusalem”? Who is included in your innermost sphere of influence, to which you are called to witness?

Part 2) How can you tell others about Jesus in this sphere? Is it doing a devotion with the kids every night? Could you pray with your partner before bed or read a chapter of the Bible together? Is it spending alone time in prayer or offering a hurting sibling an invitation to worship? Dive deep... this is important.

Closing...

On Sunday, Pastor Mike gave us 3 practical ideas for witness in our Jerusalems. First, he said, show up. Come to worship. It's easy to do something else on a Sunday, but at the very least, check in online. The Spirit moves so strongly when we worship together as a community. Second, take it home with you. Pick a devotional to do by yourself or with the family. Pray together as a couple or alone. You'll be surprised the change and growth you'll see. Finally, make faith a priority. If you have a family, there's no greater influence you'll have than raising children up with a foundation of faith, so that when they are older, they can explore a relationship with Christ for themselves. If you're a couple, the depth of the relationship changes when you pray together, worship together, find faith together. And if you're a single, your deepest worth comes from your connection to Christ. Make faith a priority.

What is your Jerusalem? What is your innermost sphere of influence? Jesus calls us to witness in our home base. Whether that's yourself, your partner, or your family, make faith a priority. Start there. And in the coming weeks, we'll talk about taking the message out to the world. Jesus gave his disciples, and us, a Commission. We will be his witnesses, telling others about him, in *our* Jerusalem.

Take some time to share prayer requests or celebrations.

Close in prayer.