

What does it mean to truly live as a witness for Jesus in the everyday moments of our lives? Acts chapter 1 takes us on a journey through the final instructions Jesus gave before His ascension, and the message is as urgent and alive today as it was for those first disciples standing on the Mount of Olives. We explore the concept of soteriology, the study of salvation, and discover that being born again is not just a theological idea but a living reality, described vividly through the image of new wineskins. Just as old wineskins cannot hold new wine without bursting, a heart unchanged by grace cannot contain the fullness of the new covenant. The call to be filled with the Holy Spirit before going out as witnesses is not optional, it is the very foundation of an effective and fruitful faith. We are challenged to examine ourselves honestly: are we new wineskins, ready to hold everything God wants to pour into us? This is a message about identity, transformation, and the kind of life that quietly but powerfully draws others toward Jesus.

Title: Be a Witness: Living as New Wineskins in Anticipation of Christ's Return

Sermon Summary: Drawing from Acts chapter 1, this sermon explores the foundational call of the early church and applies it to believers today. The pastor walks through themes of soteriology and eschatology, examining Christ's ascension, the promise of the Holy Spirit, and the command to be witnesses to the ends of the earth. Central to the message is the contrast between old and new wineskins, illustrating the necessity of being born again to hold the new covenant. The sermon calls believers to live as Spirit-filled witnesses, to maintain a posture of anticipation for Christ's return, and to never take the presence of Jesus for granted. Just as the disciples were commissioned after witnessing the ascension, so too are modern believers chosen and sent to testify to the resurrection.

Key Points:

- Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Luke recorded the story of the early church so that every friend of God would read it, remember it, and replicate it -- the church is called to be an Acts church, one defined by action and outward witness
- Luke's passion was to preserve an accurate account of Jesus, and believers today share that same responsibility when witnessing to others
- Jesus gave clear and ordered directions: be filled with the Holy Spirit first, then go and be witnesses -- one cannot precede the other
- Believers are called to be witnesses everywhere, at all times, always prepared to give a reason for the hope within them
- The ascension of Jesus confirms his identity as the Son of God and establishes the manner of his return -- he will come back the same way he left, in the clouds, though the day and hour remain known only to the Father
- Judas Iscariot serves as a sobering example of an old wineskin unable to hold the new covenant, underscoring the necessity of being born again and becoming a new creation in Christ
- Like Matthias, every believer has been chosen to join in apostolic witness, regardless of whether the world remembers their name

- Believers are challenged to cultivate fresh anticipation and excitement for the return of Christ, approaching it with the eagerness of a bridegroom awaiting his wedding day

#### Directly Cited

- Acts 1:1-26 (the primary text read and expounded throughout the sermon)
- Psalm 69:25 (quoted by Peter regarding Judas)
- Matthew 26:64 (Jesus before Pilate, speaking of the Son of Man coming on clouds)
- Mark 13:32 (no one knows the day or hour of Christ's return)
- Luke 5:37-38 (new wine and old wineskins)
- John 20:22 (Jesus breathes on the disciples and says "receive the Holy Spirit")
- 1 Peter 3:15 (always be prepared to give an answer for the hope within you)
- 2 Corinthians 5:17 (if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come)
- Ephesians 5:18 (do not be drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit)
- Romans 5:1 (justified by faith, we have peace with God)
- Hebrews 4:12 (the Word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword)

#### Alluded To Without Specific Reference

- John 3:3 (unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God)
- Luke 10:1-17 (the sending out of the seventy-two)
- Revelation 1:7 (every eye will see Christ at His return)
- 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 (the trumpet, the archangel's voice, and being caught up to meet the Lord in the air)
- Mark 16:18 (believers who drink deadly poison will not be harmed)

#### Stories:

- Steve Tucker, a traveling minister, felt prompted by God to give away his fully repaired Chevy Tahoe to someone in need. His wife independently received the same prompting. After obeying, Tucker was later given a Class A motorhome by another believer. The story illustrates the principle that when you give everything you have, even when it seems like nothing, God provides abundantly in return.

- The pastor recounted missing an opportunity to witness to a man who came to his door distributing political flyers, contrasting it with his wife's example of leading a door-to-door salesman through a conversation about Jesus and the Holy Spirit, illustrating the call to always be ready to witness.

- The pastor described watching his granddaughter and her fiancé in the weeks before their wedding, visibly consumed with excitement and anticipation for one another, and used their joy as a picture of how believers ought to anticipate the return of Christ as the expectant bridegroom.

- Ben, a member of the congregation, was referenced as a living testimony of transformation through new birth in Christ, with the pastor noting the visible and dramatic change in his life since coming to faith and marrying at the church.

Steve Tucker gave away his fully repaired Tahoe because he believed God was prompting him, and later received something far greater in return -- what fears or attachments make it difficult

for you to give sacrificially, and how might trusting God in those moments change your perspective on generosity?

The pastor described his life passion as painting an authentic picture of Jesus using words -- how would you articulate your own God-given passion, and in what ways are you currently living it out or falling short of it?

Acts 1:8 establishes a clear order: receive the power of the Holy Spirit first, then be a witness -- in what ways might believers today attempt to witness for Christ while neglecting the empowerment that makes that witness effective?

The pastor confessed that when a stranger came to his door, he missed an opportunity to share Jesus, while his wife led a salesman in prayer -- what practical habits or postures of heart could help believers stay consistently ready to give an answer for the hope within them as described in 1 Peter 3:15?

Judas is described as an old wineskin unable to hold the new covenant, and his end is presented as a vivid consequence of that spiritual reality -- what does it mean in your own life to be a new wineskin, and are there areas where you might still be clinging to old patterns that resist the work of the Spirit?

Jesus told his disciples in Acts 1:7 that the times and dates of his return are known only to the Father -- how should the reality that no one knows the day or hour shape the way you live each day, and does it create urgency, peace, or something else in you?

The disciples stood gazing into the sky after the ascension until angels redirected them back to their mission -- in what ways might believers today be so focused on waiting for Christ's return that they neglect the active witness he called them to before he left?

Matthias is chosen to replace Judas, yet he is never mentioned again in Scripture by name, with his legacy preserved only in tradition -- what does his story suggest about the value God places on faithful, unrecognized service, and how does that challenge the way you measure significance in your own calling?

The pastor challenged the congregation to examine whether familiarity with Jesus had led them to take him for granted, much as one might take a constant companion for granted -- what spiritual disciplines or practices help you maintain a sense of wonder and anticipation about your relationship with Christ?

The sermon closes with the image of Jesus as the expectant bridegroom and the church as those marked off days in anticipation of his return -- how does the metaphor of a bride and bridegroom change the way you think about your readiness for Christ's return, and what would it look like to live with that kind of eager, focused expectation?