

ACTS 1:1-11

[PRELIMINARY REMARKS]

- At Cedar Springs, we don't want to settle for dry, dusty, lifeless Christianity.
 - We believe there's a God in heaven, he loves us, and he's at work in world.
 - So we want to go deeper with him—deeper as believers, deeper as a church.
- That's why we're opening the book of Acts—the story of the church at its best.
 - Acts is a sequel: **V1: In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach.**
 - The **first book** is the gospel of Luke—where he tells us **all that Jesus began to do and teach.**
 - Now Luke writes Acts to tell his friend Theophilus—and all of us—what Jesus did **next**—through the power of the Holy Spirit working in his church.
- Each week we'll see: 1) A mark/characteristic of the early church; 2) How these things can be true of us; and 3) How they can be true of our church.

[Transition]: Today, we start at the beginning—where Jesus starts—and see that Jesus wants us to be a **missional church**. But first, let's **pray**.

[INTRODUCTION]

- What is the mission of your life?¹
 - Do you know?
 - What do you want to happen in and through your life?
 - When you reach the end, will you have lived the life you want?
 - Are you on mission?
- It's an important question!
 - **With missional clarity**, we can accomplish almost anything:
 - In 1962, JFK made America's mission crystal clear: *"We choose to go to the moon. We choose to go to the moon in this decade, not because it is easy, but because it is hard."*
 - Soon NASA's engineers, astronauts, and the public imagination went into overdrive—every effort, every decision, every test flight, was measured against this mission.
 - And, in 1969, Neil Armstrong did it—he stepped onto the moon, and the mission was complete.
 - **Without missional clarity**, it's hard to accomplish anything: *"If you aim at nothing,"* as the saying goes, *"you'll hit it every time."*
- So what about your life? What's the mission?

[Transition]: In this passage, Jesus invites you into his...

- That's a big claim—that the Bible tells you what your life can and should be about!
- So don't take it from me—let's look at the text! Considering: 1) The mission of Jesus, and 2) How he invites us to be part of it.

[WHAT WAS THE MISSION OF JESUS?]

- **[Individual]:** Most Xns would say, "Jesus came to die on the cross for my sins."
 - That is a beautiful truth.
 - He'll save anyone today—without condition or exception.
 - Doesn't matter who you are or what you've done—Jesus will save you if you come to him.
 - But that answer, while not incorrect, is **incomplete**. WHY? Bc *his mission is bigger than that*.
 - Notice how this answer is shaped by the culture we live in.
 - It defines the mission of Jesus in highly individualistic terms—reducing it to what it means for me.
- **[National]:** The disciples had a slightly bigger answer.
 - We see it in **V6** where they ask: **Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?**²
 - For them, the mission wasn't about one person—but it was about one nation.
 - They mistakenly thought Jesus had come to bring political freedom.
 - After years of Roman oppression, they thought Jesus would usher in a new day.
 - Where Israel would be politically independent, economically prosperous, and militarily strong.
 - People make the same mistake today, thinking God shows political preference for Israel, America, or their own nation.
 - The truth is, he does not—he loves these nations like he loves all the nations of the earth...
 - But he didn't send Jesus to grant political power to anyone—*the mission is bigger than that*.
- **[Cosmic]:** According to Jesus, the mission isn't individual or national—it's bigger: it's massive, it's global, it's cosmic.

[Transition]: We know this from our text bc, once again, we find Jesus talking about **the kingdom of God**.

Might be familiar with this phrase—or might not—either way, important for us to realize that Jesus talked about KoG all the time.

- It's the very **first thing** he spoke about.
 - **Mk 1:15**—the very first words Jesus says in this gospel...
 - **The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand.**
- It's what he spent **his life** proclaiming:
 - **Lk 8:1**—gives us a summary of his ministry...
 - **He went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God.**
- And it's the very **last thing** he spoke about as well:
 - Here in **Acts 1:3**—Jesus has 40 days after his resurrection to impress upon his disciples those things that matter most—so he appears to them...
 - **Speaking about the kingdom of God.**

What is the kingdom of God?

- **Ray Cortese** describes it this way: *"The gospel of the kingdom is that the ruling power of God has come into the world to set things right."*³
- **N.T. Wright** says the KoG is what it looks like when God is running the show.⁴
- **Jesus:** **Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven (Mt 6:10).**
 - Wherever God's will is done, on earth as it is in heaven...
 - There you have kingdom of God.

And for Jesus, that's the mission—to establish the kingdom of God.

- So much bigger than one person or one nation—it's everything!
- He came to make God's will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
 - Yes, to save us from our sins.
 - But also to wipe away tears, conquer death, bring an end to all mourning, and crying, and pain.
 - To make all things new, so that there is no more disease or divorce or poverty or injustice or oppression or violence or war.
 - To make his blessings flow far as the curse is found—so marriages are made whole, and kids have parents, and the sick are healed.
 - To restore the entire creation to the flourishing God intended.
 - To make everything as it always should have been forever.
 - To make God's will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

[Illustrate]:

- This week our church got a call from a **single mom**.
 - Her ex-husband is behind on child support, and she was about to have her water shut off.
 - She's got a baby, a third grader, and a ninth grader, living in an apartment just a couple miles from here.
 - The utility company told us that \$150 would keep the water running. So we paid the bill and helped her make a plan for the future.
 - We also invited her to church—she said she wants to come, because she wants her kids to know Jesus.

That's the KoG—God's will being done, on earth as it is in heaven.

- Another friend of ours is a **homeless**—he's been living in his car.
 - Earlier this year, with some encouragement and help, he applied to truck-driving school.
 - We covered some gas, helped with a hotel while he recovered from surgery, and kept cheering him on.
 - This week, he texted one of our staff members to say he just graduated and got his CDL license.
 - He's now set up for steady work in service to others.

That's the KoG—God's will being done, on earth as it is in heaven.

- Another friend has been in Nashville, going through an **intensive drug rehab** program.
 - This week he graduated.
 - He's clean, he's got a job with the city driving a shuttle bus, and he's even got his own apartment.
 - You know what he asked for as a graduation gift? Not money, not clothes, not stuff—but a Study Bible.

That's the KoG—God's will being done, on earth as it is in heaven.

[Summary]: When a single mom has water, and a homeless man finds work, and a drug addict walks free—and they all hear the message of gospel hope that can give them eternal life in Jesus—that's the KoG. It's things as they should be.

And Jesus can establish that kind of kingdom—bc he is the king.

- You know that's what the ascension is all about?
 - In **V9** Jesus is lifted up and ascends to heaven.
 - Never used to understand this...
 - Just figured it's how he left—pretty cool exit strategy.
 - But the ascension isn't just a party trick...
- Jesus ascends to sit on the throne of heaven.
 - Like when the Queen died, Charles ascended to the throne.
 - So Jesus died but came alive again to ascend to his own throne.
 - All authority on heaven and earth belong to him...
 - He is above all rule and power and dominion...
 - All things are under his feet...
 - His name is above every name.
 - He is in charge, he is in control, he is on the throne...
 - And bc he is the king, he can establish his kingdom—God's will can be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

[Transition]: If that's the mission, let's ask...

[HOW ARE WE PART OF IT?]

The simple answer is that the king of the kingdom has commissioned us—he has sent us to carry on his mission.

- Do you see what Jesus says in **V8**?
 - In the ancient world, how did you know when there was a new king?
 - Didn't have cable news. Didn't have social media.
 - Instead, they'd send messengers—or witnesses—to tell the world.
 - That's what Jesus does here—**V8**: I'm the king of the kingdom and I'm ascending to the throne...
 - **But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.**
 - More on that in the next few weeks!
 - Key point for now is that Jesus empowers us to do what he asks us to do—doesn't leave it up to us!
 - He's saying, "I'm going to empower you"—to do what?
 - **you will be my witnesses**—where?
 - **in Jerusalem**—starting where you are in your own community...
 - **and in all Judea and Samaria**—extending to the surrounding regions, many of whom you don't even like...
 - **and to the end of the earth**—this isn't about one individual, and it isn't about one nation, it's about reaching all the nations of the earth.

- Do you see what he's saying?
 - You are my witnesses—Go tell the world there's a new king.
 - That's the mission...
 - In the lives that we lead and the words that we speak...
 - Show the world that there's a new king and life in his kingdom is beautiful.

[Transition]: How do we do that?

- Let me make this as simple as I can by giving you one question...
- One question to consider this week so we can be a missional people/church.

[THE CLOSE]

What do you see on earth that is not as it is in heaven?

- **In your Jerusalem**—in your day-to-day life...
 - Are the places in your heart where God's will is not being done? Some unforgiveness, a habit, some sin?
 - Or with your family and friends? Is there sadness or disconnection or someone who doesn't know Christ?
 - Or in your work? What's broken—in your office, for your clients, or in your industry?

In your Jerusalem, be a witness: Make God's will be done—that's the kingdom!

- **Or in your Judea and Samaria**—your larger community...
 - Look for the single mom who needs water, the homeless man who needs work, the addict to drugs/work/porn who needs help...
 - Look especially for those you're tempted not to like...

In your Jerusalem/Samaria, be a witness: Make God's will be done—that's the kingdom!

- **Or to the ends of the earth**—the global mission we're all part of in this church...
 - Who's the partner you're praying for?
 - Where might he be calling you to take a trip?
 - How can you be more generous and give?

To the ends of the earth, be a witness: Make God's will be done—that's the kingdom!

When we do these things, we carry on the mission of Jesus... And don't forget—one day the mission will be complete.

- Right now, the kingdom of God and kingdom of the world overlap.
 - God is breaking into human history, and his will is being done...
 - But there are still many things that are ugly, sad, and broken.

- Theologians call this the *already and the not yet*...
 - The kingdom is *already* here, but it's *not yet* complete.
 - This makes sense of why we see some things that are unspeakably beautiful, and other things that are unspeakably sad.
- But one day it will not be so:
 - One day heaven and earth will join.
 - Remember Revelation? **The kingdom of the world will become the kingdom of our Lord... and he shall reign forever and ever (see Rev 11:15).**
- We've reminded of this in **V11** of our passage.
 - Jesus ascends to the throne, and the disciples just stand there staring off into the heavens.
 - So God sends a couple of angels, **V11: 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.**
- As Neil Armstrong stepped onto the surface of the moon—“*One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind*”—so Jesus will step back into this world as the returning king.
 - The king is coming back!
 - And when he does, every wrong will be made right, every tear will be wiped, and everything on earth will finally and forever be as they are in heaven.
- Until then, we ask: **What do I see on earth that is not as it is in heaven?**

[CONCLUSION]

- This week I walked into the gas station beside the church.
 - I've gotten to know the ladies who work there.
 - One of them stopped me and said she'd heard we have a ministry for people with special needs.
 - She has a grandson who'd she'd love to connect.
 - I told her YES! But then I asked where she'd heard about us.
 - It turns out one of our facilities staff had been over there on a smoke break, heard her story—and told her we could help.
 - That's it.
 - A simple conversation in a parking lot—and he's witnessing.
 - He's spreading the word—There's a king, and in his kingdom, you'll find help.
- **That's our mission.**
 - Let's not stand around staring up into the heavens.
 - Let's be the church at its best:

A missional community of witnesses to Christ.

RESOURCES AND ENDNOTES

Resources

This list contains some of the resources that were used to prepare this sermon series. Check them out if you want to dig a little deeper.

- John Calvin, *Commentary Upon the Acts of the Apostles*.
- Ray Cortese, *The Mission: Clarified, Mobilized, Empowered*.

Endnotes

¹ I owe this opening question to Ray Cortese, *The Mission: Clarified, Mobilized, Empowered*, accessed [here](#) 9/5/25.

² In his commentary on this verse, John Calvin writes, “There are as many errors in this question as words.” See John Calvin, *Commentary Upon the Acts of the Apostles*, 43.

³ See Cortese, *The Mission*.

⁴ This is a paraphrase of N. T. Wright’s teaching, not a direct quote. For more, see N. T. Wright, *What Would It Look Like If God Was In Charge?*, accessed [here](#) 9/5/25.