

All that Jesus Began to Do and Teach

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[0 : 00] You can turn in your Bibles to the book of Acts, Acts chapter 1.

Acts chapter 1, we're going to be reading from verse 1 all the way through to verse 11. Listen to these words. In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen.

After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of 40 days and spoke about the kingdom of God.

On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command, Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.

Then they gathered around him and asked him, Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel? And he said to them, it is not for you to know the times or dates the father has set by his own authority, but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.

[1 : 42] After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them.

Men of Galilee, they said, why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus who has been taken from you into heaven will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.

This is the word of the Lord. Let's pray. Let's ask for God's help as we study this. Gracious God, we come as needy people this morning.

Needing to be filled up with the sustenance that comes from your word. And so it's our prayer that you would meet us in this time of worship. That you by your spirit would take the truth of scripture and embed it in our hearts.

Help us to see you clearly. Help us to see your son clearly. Help us to see ourselves in light of the truth of scripture clearly. And help us to be changed by what we see.

[2 : 47] We ask this for Christ's sake and by the power of the spirit. Amen. So I know many of you have been waiting for us to start this series because we kind of mentioned that we're going to start the series.

And it's been delayed a little bit here and there. But we are now finally starting what I think is going to be a very, very long trek. The great trek through the book of Acts. I'm not putting an end date on this series.

Some of you might move on to other churches and that by the time I finish this series. Who knows? But we start the book of Acts this morning. Acts chapter 1. Those first 11 verses. Now one of the questions I want to start with is a question.

Well how do you name a book? How do you give a title to a piece of writing? Do you kind of look at the main theme of that book? And then come up with a name that sort of summarizes that main theme?

Or do you take a striking feature from the book or the piece of writing like the main character? Or the place, the setting where the book takes place and then name the book after that? The book of Acts originally didn't have a name.

[3 : 48] As most of our New Testament books. It's actually the second part of a two volume work on the history of Christian beginnings. Part one being the Gospel of Luke.

Luke. And it's written by Luke who wrote the Gospel of Luke. Who as far as we can tell. And you'll see this later on in the book. Was a companion of the Apostle Paul. A Gentile, not a Jew. A physician perhaps. An ancient physician. And he writes it to a person you would have seen there in the reading. To a person by the name of Theophilus. And what we get to see if we go back to the first volume.

To Luke's Gospel. You can see some of his aims in writing these two volumes. Luke chapter 1 verse 1 to 4. He says this. He says. Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us.

Just as they were handed down to us by those who were from the first. By those who from the first were eyewitnesses. And servants of the word. With this in mind.

[4 : 45] Since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning. I too decided to write an orderly account for you. Most excellent Theophilus. So that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

So he seems to be trying to make a case. For the Christian religion. To his friend Theophilus. Whoever Theophilus is. By providing an overview of Jesus' life and ministry in part 1.

And that's the Gospel of Luke. Luke. And then in part 2. The growth of the church. And that's what we have here in the book of Acts. So how do you give a name then to the second volume?

What do you call it? The earliest names that we actually have. If you go back in history. And you read some of the early church fathers. The earliest names we have are. The memorandum of Luke. Obviously because Luke wrote it.

The Acts of the Apostles. Because it largely covers the life of the Apostle Peter first up. And then the Apostle Paul later on. We get obviously the shortened version of Acts from that.

[5 : 47] Some have suggested. No wait. We shouldn't actually call it the Acts of the Apostles. Because if you look. It's really all about the Spirit of God moving through the Apostles. So we should call it the Acts of the Holy Spirit.

Some have said. No. That's great. Apostle Spirit. It's all there. We agree. But it's really about the growth of the church. It's about how the church gets bigger and bigger and bigger. And grows. And how more churches are planted in different regions. And so we should really give it some sort of name around that.

The growth of the early church. And I think all of those are appropriate. And so just kind of shortening it to Acts. Leaves you a space to fill in the blank of what you think the book's really about there.

But I think there's an even better name for the book. And I think it's in verse 1. Look down at verse 1. Luke says.

In my former book Theophilus. I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach. Until the day he was taken up to heaven. After giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the Apostles he had chosen.

[6 : 45] Now he's referring back obviously. To the Gospel of Luke. All that Jesus began to do and teach. But if you think about it. The big implication then. Is that this book that he's writing.

This second volume. This book of Acts. Is about the continuation. Of all that Jesus began to do and teach. So the work of the Spirit.

The work of the Apostles. The growth and the spread of the Word of God. The growth and the spread of the Church. It's all a continuation of all that Jesus began to do and teach.

And so I've always kind of liked that as a title. All that Jesus began to do and teach. Because it has a way of drawing you in then. As the Christian reader reading the book of Acts.

It draws you into the story. And into direct continuity with Christ and his work on earth. You are now a participant in the story. You are now a continuation of even the Gospel of Luke.

[7 : 43] Of everything that Jesus was doing back there. And so we're going to be in this book for a long time. As I said. And today what I want to do. I just want to introduce the sort of core conviction.

That drives the expansion of God's Church. This thing that you are a part of. And my hope is that. As you see this core conviction. You yourself will be motivated.

And driven to play your part. In the extension of God's work. As Jesus continues to do and to teach through you. Three things I want you to see this morning.

Number one. There is an incredible true story to be seen here. There is a supernatural power. And there is a simple testimony. An incredible true story.

A supernatural power. And a simple testimony. My hope in all of this. Is that you don't just read the book of Acts. And go. Oh that's a really nice thing to see. How the early Christians did things. But you see. Hey this is driving me on.

[8 : 42] Into how I participate in God's Church today. So here's the first one. Incredible true story. Have a look again at verse one. Luke says. In my former book. Theophilus. I wrote about all that Jesus began to do.

And to teach. Until the day he was taken up to heaven. After giving instructions through the Holy Spirit. To the apostles he had chosen. You actually see both those things. The acts of the apostles. And the acts of the spirit.

Are there in the first two verses. After his suffering. He presented himself to them. And gave many convincing proofs. That he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of 40 days. And spoke about the kingdom of God.

Now one critical thing. That Luke mentions right up front. Is that after Jesus' suffering. And by that he means. His death on the cross. Jesus presented himself. To his early followers. And he says. They gave them.

Many convincing proofs. That he was alive. It's like he's underlining. That fact. That after his death. On the cross. Jesus actually. In the flesh.

[9 : 39] Rose from the dead. He miraculously came alive again. That's the incredible. True story. Of Christianity. That Jesus Christ. The son of God.

Died. And rose again. Not in a spiritual sense. But in a historical sense. As in. It actually. It actually happened. I mean. You kind of take that for granted. The very fact.

That he's teaching these people. After his death. On the cross. Means that he must be alive. Right. But Luke wants to underline it. He's like. I don't want you to take it for granted. I want you to actually see. This is not me.

Saying that in some sort of spiritual way. The disciples carried on. The teaching of Jesus. After his death. No. Jesus actually came alive again. And continued to teach his disciples.

You might be into theater. And go down to a place like Maynardville. To watch one of their Shakespeare plays there. And as you see. The actors perform the play. And they did it with a whole other skill.

[10 : 36] And you really enjoy it. Because you like Shakespeare. Because you could actually understand. What Shakespeare was talking about. Maybe you go with a friend. And you sit next to your friend. And you say. When I watch these shakes. These plays. Shakespeare really comes alive for me.

Now you mean. Figuratively. Right. At that point. You don't. You don't mean. That Shakespeare has come back from his death. In the 17th century. And stood next to you. Luke wants to make sure. You're not thinking that way. When you read his account. You're not thinking figuratively. When he talks about Jesus resurrection. This is not a figurative rising from the dead. It's rising from the dead. With convincing proofs.

That's why he adds that phrase. So the Christian story. Is one of. Incredible. Incredible hope. That there is life.

After death. That death is not the end. Christian faith. Is not a faith of blind optimism. Optimism. The famous Anglican theologian.

[11 : 34] J.R. Packer. Puts it this way. He says. He says. Optimism hopes for the best. Without any guarantee. Of its arriving. And is often no more than whistling. In the dark. Christian hope.

By contrast. Is faith. Looking ahead. To the fulfillment. Of the promises of God. As when the Anglican burial service. Inters the corpse. In sure and certain hope. Of the resurrection.

To eternal life. Through our Lord Jesus Christ. Optimism is a wish. Without warrant. Christian hope. Is a certainty. Guaranteed by God himself. Optimism reflects. Ignorance.

As to whether good things. Will ever actually come. Christian hope. Expresses knowledge. That every day. Of his life. And every moment. Beyond it. The believer can say. With truth. On the basis of God's. Own commitment.

That the best is yet to come. Now you might read that. And say. Well. What is that commitment. On God's part. What is the guarantee. That he gives. God's commitment. To us.

[12 : 27] Is the historic. Resurrection. Of Jesus Christ. That's it. The historical. Resurrection. Is an unbelievable. Statement. From God.

To us. It's a statement. Declaring that. Everything. That God. Set out to achieve. Through the life. And death. Of Jesus. Has in fact. Been accomplished. So Christ. Went to the cross. To pay for the sin. Of humanity. To undo brokenness. To triumph over death. To triumph over the devil. The resurrection. Is the confirmation. Well it actually. All worked. He actually did. And achieved. All those things. The resurrection. Is the confirmation. That as the. The poet. John Dunn says. One short sleep past. We wake eternally. And death. Shall be no more. Death. Thou shalt die. And so that true story. Has very very. Real. Personal. Ramifications. For you. For me.

[13:23] For everybody else. It means. There's resurrection. For you. It means. There's resurrection. For this world. It means.

That when God says. I am making. All things new. He's really actually. Going to pull it off. And we know it. Because we've already seen. The foretaste of it. A dead man. Walking around. Teaching his disciples. His resurrection. In history. Means. Death. Is not the end. Of. Your history. C.S. Lewis understood this.

The great Christian writer. When his wife. Joy Davidman. Passed away. He wrote a poem. That became the epitaph. For her grave. Goes like this. Here the whole world. Stars. Water. Air. And field. And forest. As they were. Reflected in a single mind. Like cast off clothes. Was left behind. In ashes yet. With hopes.

[14:19] That she. Reborn from holy poverty. In Lenten land. In Lenten lands. Hereafter may. Resume them. On her Easter day. So he stands there.

Over his. Wife. Who has passed. And he says. There's going to be an Easter day. For her. There's going to be an Easter day. For her. And why is there going to be an Easter day.

For her. Because there's already been an Easter day. The Easter day. With Jesus Christ. Now friends. If that is the incredible true story. That Christianity offers.

And if it's true. Then I want you to answer this question. Honestly. In your own heart. This morning. What could be a better story than that? What could be a better story than that?

What could be a better story than Jesus is alive? One man has beaten death. One man has lived. Died. And risen again. That changes absolutely everything about our lives. It has to.

[15:17] Think about this. What kind of world do we live in? We live in a world of tragedy and brokenness. We live in a world of evil. We live in a world of injustice. We live in a world of corruption. Through kind of just very surface level basic observation.

The world doesn't appear to hold out much. In the way of hope. Richard Dawkins. This famous atheist. Wrote this once.

It's a pretty brutal honest assessment of the world. As he looks at it. And as I think a surface level of the world looks. But he said. The total amount of suffering per year in the natural world. Is beyond all decent contemplation.

During the minute it takes me to compose this sentence. Thousands of animals are being eaten alive. Others are running for their lives. Whimpering with fear. Others are being slowly devoured from within. By rasping parasites.

Thousands of all kinds are dying of starvation. Thirst and disease. In a universe of blind physical forces. And genetic replication. Some people are going to get hurt. Other people are going to get lucky.

[16:16] And you won't find any rhyme or reason in it. Nor any justice. The universe we observe. Has precisely the properties we should expect. If there is at bottom. No design. No purpose.

No evil. And no good. Nothing but blind. Pitiless indifference. DNA neither knows nor cares. DNA just is. And we dance to its music. On a kind of surface observation.

The universe gives us no reason to think there is any objective hope. Martin Luther King Jr. was famous for saying. Let us realize the arc of the moral universe is long.

But it bends towards justice. Now it's a really nice thought. For all of us in this broken world. To be optimistic. That things are going to get better.

But I'm not sure that surface observation of the world. Gives us any sort of observable hope that it's true. We need something in this world.

[17:16] In history. Concrete. Tangible. Something that then calls out to us. And it says. Yes.

Yes. The arc of the moral universe ultimately will bend towards justice. And here's the proof of that. Here's the down payment. We need nothing less than the resurrection of Jesus in history. Because if we've got that. Well then we've got a firm anchor for hope. That takes hope out of the category of wishful thinking.

To secure future. Incredible Christian story says. You have that. You have that very thing. The sure hope of the forgiveness of sins.

The defeating of death. The resurrection of the body. And the renewal of really this entire cosmos. When Christ comes back and establishes the new heavens and the new earth. Now friends. That is a good.

[18:14] Good. Good story. It's a really good story. It's a story that needs to be shared. Don't you think? It's a story you don't.

You don't keep to yourself. You don't discover this. And then go off and stay by yourself. And tell nobody about it. It's too good. To keep to yourself.

And so if you are a Christian this morning. If you have repented of your sin. And trusted in Christ. And his forgiveness. His death and his resurrection. You say that's my story.

I want to believe in that. Then I would push you to say. Well share this. Tell this to people. Let this good news out. Don't keep it to yourself.

Because you have an incredible, incredible story in your possession. Share it with people. That's the first thing I want you to see. Second is a supernatural power.

[19:14] Look at these disciples with their resurrected Jesus. In verse 4. On one occasion while he was eating with them.

He gave them this command. Do not leave Jerusalem. But wait for the gift my father promised. Which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water. But in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.

Now you've got to imagine. Visualize these disciples. Carrying around this incredible true story.

They are the first witnesses of it. And so they're carrying around this incredible true story.

They have Jesus. Who they thought was dead. Now walking with them. Talking with them.

Teaching them. Surely. They want to go out into the streets. And share this truth.

Like you guys have got to see what we have just seen. And what we have just experienced. But if you read the gospels. They don't initially do that. Instead their initial response is one of fear.

[20:15] For the most part. They kind of just hang around together. In the upper room. All huddled together. With the doors locked. For fear that the people who nailed Jesus to the cross. Are going to come and find them. And do something to them.

They fear how they'll be received. By the general population. If they go out and they start saying. Hey Jesus is alive. And so Jesus. What he does is he promises them a way to overcome their fear. He promises them the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit living in them. And the change in the book of Acts is really, really, really quite remarkable. So the disciples go from being super timid. Lacking in confidence. Withdrawn. To being bold and outgoing. And near fearless in the way that they go out into the rest of the world. And share the gospel of Jesus Christ. The difference that moves them from that timidity to that boldness.

Is the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. God's Spirit present in them. And to put it really, really simply. In the New Testament. The New Testament basically teaches that all Christians who trust in Jesus Christ.

[21:16] For salvation. Are indwelt by the presence of God's Holy Spirit. There's no such thing as a Christian who does not have God's Spirit inside of them. That is God lives in you as a believer by his Spirit.

That is a supernatural occurrence. You can't put somebody in a lab. And kind of determine through empirical study whether or not they have the Spirit. It's a supernatural occurrence.

And it is absolutely key to sharing your faith in the growth of the gospel. In the growth of the church. Think about it this way. Even if you don't believe in Christianity.

You have to, I think, agree. That if Jesus did rise from the dead. If he did defeat sin and death.

Through his death and resurrection. Like Christians claim. Then, if that's true.

Then it is the most earth-shattering piece of truth we have in this universe. It is the best story we could possibly tell each other. I know you guys have got lots of good stories about what happened this weekend. But those stories all pale in significance next to the story.

[22 : 13] We share a lot of stories, right? That's what makes up so much of the dialogue of when we get together. Like if you don't have stories to share. You don't often have a lot to talk about when you get into a social situation.

But we share stories. We tell stories about things that have happened in this world. Or things that have happened to us. And the better the story is. The more profound it is. The bigger the impact it has on us.

The more we tell that to other people. Some stories are so big. So kind of world-shaping. That we can remember where we were. And what we were doing.

When we first heard about that. And it dominates discussion for days afterwards. So, for example. I remember where I was. What I was doing when 9-11 happened. I remember it was South African time.

It was an afternoon. And so I remember actually sitting in the lounge of my house in Durban. And watching that second plane hit the building. I then remember that we played soccer that afternoon. I think Graham might have been playing soccer with me.

[23 : 07] That afternoon. He would have been a teenager back then. And that's all we talked about. We were playing soccer. But we were just talking about what is happening overseas. Like, are terrorists coming? What's happening?

That's all we talked about. I remember that day. Because the news was so big. Around that day. Big stories are shared. Profound stories are talked about. That's how news works.

Good news and bad news. We tell stories. We're storytelling people. And so the question then for the Christian is, well, if you are a Christian, why don't you tell the story of the resurrected Lord kind of all the time to every single person you encounter?

Yesterday morning, I had a really slow start. So I was still sitting in my pajamas when Jehovah's Witnesses came to the gate during the doorbell. And I was in no state to try and have a conversation with them.

So I just politely thanked them and said, no thanks. But they tend to go around and knock on everybody's door and tell the story of their particular brand of faith. Why don't we do that? Why don't Christians do that all the time and even more than that?

[24 : 11] Like all the time. I think we're the same as the disciples initially were. It's fear. Fear of what people will think of us if we tell that story.

Fear of losing or spoiling relationships. And listen, you can do this in an obnoxious way and spoil the relationship that has nothing to do with the goodness of the story and everything to do with you just not being a nice person.

But fear of losing or spoiling relationships if we repeatedly tell that story. Fear of being thought of as being a little bit backwards and unsophisticated if we repeatedly tell a story about a man who rose from the dead.

Fear of losing social or cultural or even in some contexts economic capital if we repeatedly tell the story. Fear. Fear. Fear. And that fear I think betrays something.

It betrays that there are stories or experiences that we regard more deeply than the story of the risen Lord. Than the experience of knowing forgiveness in the risen Lord Jesus Christ.

[25 : 16] There are other narratives if you like. Other narratives that are more important to us than the resurrection narrative. More dear to our hearts than the resurrection narrative. The narrative of acceptance by your peers.

Or the narrative of social and cultural credibility. Or the narrative of being perceived as sophisticated and having intellectual prowess. Your fears, your fears you have when it comes to sharing the story, tend to show you that there is something that is more important to you.

There's a story that is more important to you. That kind of has you looking good in front of your friends and your family. That's more important to you than the resurrection story. Now I've already shown you my age once by talking about 9-11.

But let me show you my age again by referring to The Matrix. Even if you're a young person, you should have at some point seen the movie The Matrix. Because it's this kind of foundational movie in cinematic history.

So you need to see it. But in The Matrix you've got this kind of classic scene where Morpheus, Lawrence Fishburne, the actor, stands before Neo, Keanu Reeves. And he puts out his hands.

[26 : 20] He's got his black glasses on. He's got two pulls. A red pull and a blue pull. One will kind of keep Neo sucked into the computer matrix. One will enlighten him and bring him out. Depending on which one he chooses.

But I want you to imagine yourself being in a matrix kind of a situation. Lawrence Fishburne is there with his dark glasses and his leather. And he's got his palms out for you. And he's got a red pull and he's got a blue pull.

Now you're in a completely neutral environment. Away from the view of your peers, your friends, your family, your colleagues. Nobody can see you. Nobody can see the decision you're going to make now. And he says if you take the blue pull, here's what you get.

If you take the blue pull, you get social acclaim and acceptance by your friends and your peers. You get status, maybe even prestige and status and success in this life. You get all of that and high measures of it.

But you live this entire life in a world that is dogged by the reality of death. With no hope of any sort of ultimate victory over death, decay, injustice or pain. Take the blue pull and that's your reality.

[27 : 22] Take the red pull and maybe you won't always get the social acclaim that you desire. Maybe sometimes you'll be rejected by your friends and prestige and success are not guaranteed.

In fact, they're even put in jeopardy on this side. But this life, this life will be lived in a world where death will ultimately die. Where there is a sure hope of a better future.

Where one day decay and injustice and pain will all be reversed. If you take the red pill, that will be your reality. Now friends, free from external influence.

Nobody is able to see your decision. Just objectively looking at that, I can't imagine there not being 100 out of 100 people taking the red pill. On paper, it is an absolute no-brainer.

Struggle a little bit so you can live in a world where there is no death and decay. And yet our fears are so strong in this present life. Our alternative narratives about what we think we really need and want in this life are so strong that we will ignore the no-brainer time and time again.

[28 : 35] And pick the blue pill in the way that we live and engage in this world. It's interesting. About the kind of creatures we are. So the question is, how do you overcome your fears?

And the answer is, you don't overcome your fears. God, by His Holy Spirit, does. You need supernatural power. In the Matrix, Neo needed Morpheus and his friends to unplug him.

Apart from his own strength, there was nothing he could do. To pull himself out of that blue pill reality. He couldn't do it himself. You need the same thing. You need the Spirit of God to so move your heart from desiring these other stories as the ultimate thing in your life.

To supremely desiring the story of the resurrected Christ as the ultimate thing in your life. That's what you need. That's why Jesus says to His disciples, wait.

You think it's strange? They've got all this good news about Jesus. Why don't they just run out now?

A guy has died and risen again. Just run out and start proclaiming it everywhere. Jesus says, wait.

[29 : 52] Wait. You can't do this without the Spirit. You can't share your faith without the power of the Spirit pulsating through. You need the Spirit. And this is supernatural. See, friends, genuine evangelism.

Sharing your faith with other people. Genuine evangelism is not ultimately dependent upon your ability to be bold. Your ability to be charming and liked and respected. Your skill at articulating the faith.

Your ability to answer hard questions and objections. It's not actually ultimately dependent on anything you bring to the table. It's a supernatural work of God's Spirit. It is God's Spirit that moves people from death to life.

It's God's Spirit that took those 40 cowering disciples, fearing for their lives in the upper room, and turned them into a movement that dominated the ancient world so that in 250 years it was basically everywhere all over the known world.

It's God's Spirit. And it's God's Spirit that will so move you that you will then become effective in sharing your faith and continuing the work that Jesus began to do and to teach.

[31 : 02] And so, friends, I can think of no better thing than to do, to tap into that power than to get on your knees and to pray. That's how we engage with God's Spirit.

It's not like a genie where you rub a lamp and you ask for a couple of things. You get on your knees and you humble yourself and you pray and say, Lord, I love social acclaim more than I love the resurrected Jesus.

Switch those around in my heart, please. I love status and prestige more than I love the truth of the gospel. Switch those around in my heart, please. Pray and pray and pray and pray.

You're never going to overcome your fears if you don't give yourself to pray. You need the supernatural power of the Spirit if you are to effectively share your faith. Last thing, a simple testimony. Look down at verse 6.

Then they gathered around him and asked him, Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel? And he said to them, It is not for you to know the times or the dates the Father has set by his own authority, but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.

[32 : 15] If you follow the disciples in the gospel of Luke and you follow them in the other gospels, you'll know that they're often a little bit confused about what Jesus is exactly doing. And there's still a level of confusion here after Jesus' resurrection as to what exactly God's kingdom is, what Christ has come to achieve.

They're still thinking somewhat in the lines of restoring a nation state, where Jesus is thinking about restoring the entire world through the proclaiming of the gospel. They're thinking military and political intervention maybe still to achieve the kingdom.

Jesus is thinking something else entirely different. Something so simple actually, that it almost sounds a little bit ludicrous. Jesus is thinking that the thing that's going to change this world is witness.

The simple testimony of believers as to what God has done in Jesus Christ. It's pure simplicity. In other words, Jesus is almost standing there saying to these disciples who are ready now to mount up and march in and take over Jerusalem because they've found a dad and now he's alive.

I mean, that's pretty powerful. Jesus is saying to them, I don't want you to take up arms to change the world. I don't want you to move all your like-minded friends into positions of political power.

[33 : 29] I don't want you to strong arm anybody. I want you, I don't want you to curse anybody into joining this team. I simply want you to witness to me. Now this actually makes Christian evangelism through witness really different from any other type of religious or ideological proselytizing out there.

Other religious groups or ideological groups trying to create followers. Because everybody's trying to get followers, right? I mean, it's election season right now. We are inundated with people trying to get followers right now. Everyone wants you to support their cause or join their team or vote them into power.

And here is how they sell their team. They say, my viewpoint is better than yours. What I am offering works better than what that other guy is offering.

My way of earning salvation is better than your way of earning salvation. Now, now that leaves you in a place where once you, once you pick a team or a cause or an ideology or a religion, you have to, I think you have to be somewhat judgmental of people who picked a different team, a different religion.

Because think about it. How did you pick your religion? You, in your ingenuity and in your sophistication, you in all your wisdom, you weighed up all the options and you said, well, this one is better.

[34 : 54] You picked it on the basis of your own ability to weigh up the facts and to weigh up the pros and the cons. Well, this, this team is better. What this guy's offering is better. And so you have to, I think, naturally, it's part of human nature. You have to, you have to judge those who don't pick it.

Because, well, you're not as smart as me. Because if you were as smart as me, you would have picked the same religion or the same ideology that I picked or the same political party that I picked. That's how all movements and religions grow in this world.

And that is why this world is so wracked with conflict and judgment. Because everybody's looking at everybody else saying, you're not as good as me because you didn't pick the right thing. What I'm doing to earn salvation is better than what you're doing to earn salvation.

But Christian evangelism is different, or at least it should be different. Because the way you sell Christianity is not by saying, well, here's a better product for you. If you just follow these five steps or these 10 rules, then your life will go better.

That's not how you sell the faith. You don't actually sell the faith at all. You simply witness. You bear witness. Think about a witness in a, in a, in a, in a courtroom, in a legal situation.

[36 : 03] If you've been called as a witness, it's not because you've done something. It's because you've seen something. You've seen something. Nothing you did, just something you saw. Basically, every other religion and ideology in this world is peddled by people who have done something, and they want you to do something to join their team.

Only Christianity comes along and says, bear witness to what somebody else has done, not what you do. See, friends, here's the reality.

I am not a Christian this morning, primarily because I think Christian ethics can solve all the world's problems. I do think that, but I'm not primarily a Christian because of that reason. I'm not primarily a Christian this morning because I think that living as a Christian is a better way to live.

I do think that, but that's not primarily why I'm a Christian. I'm not primarily a Christian because I find it a more coherently intellectual, intellectually coherent view of the world. I do think that, but that's not why I'm primarily a Christian.

I am primarily a Christian this morning because somebody witnessed to me. In fact, more than one person, many people over a long period of time witnessed to me, and in one version or another told me this.

[37 : 14] They said, hey, there is this man, and he is also God, and his name is Jesus. And 2,000 years ago, he started a movement. He got a team together.

He built a religion, and how did he do that? Well, he didn't coerce people. He didn't take up arms and overthrow people. He didn't inflict violence to make people submit to him.

No, actually, people took up arms against him. People inflicted violence on him, and he willingly submitted to their violence in the hope that they would see what he did on that cross, and that testimony would change the world.

Friends, Jesus Christ lived a life you could not live, and he died the death you should have died because of your sin. Our job as Christians is not to coerce anyone into believing that.

Our job is to witness and allow the Spirit to do his work. Look at how the passage ends. Verse 9, After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

[38 : 25] And they were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. Men of Galilee, they said, Why do you stand here looking into the sky? The same Jesus who has been taken from you into heaven will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.

I read that last time as I was praying the sermon as a rebuke to me. Because the good news of Jesus and the gospel and the resurrection is so clear. And more than that, God has given us his Spirit to help us to deal with our fears and our inadequacies and our weaknesses.

And so there you have this angel looking at these dumbstruck disciples saying, Why are you still looking at the sky with your mouth open? Get on with it. Get on with it.

And I read that. I was like, Stephen, get on with it, Stephen. We have this good news. We have this incredible story. We have the power of the Spirit. Let us get on with sharing this good news with all around us, with our friends, with our family, with everyone we come into contact in all sorts of different ways.

Not as obnoxious people, not as angry people, not as people trying to coerce others, but in the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to make this good news possible.