

YOU WILL RECEIVE POWER

Acts 1:1-11 (Key Verse: 8)

“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.”

In today's passage we are going to learn what is the next step in our journey as Christian believers, who have received grace for the forgiveness of our sins through Jesus' suffering, death and resurrection. After Jesus' apostles experienced this grace, he gave them God's vision and plan for their life saying: *“You will receive power and you will be my witnesses.”* This is the same plan and vision that God has for us today. Therefore, we are going to learn what it means to receive power? How can we receive this power? And what this power is meant for? We are also going to learn what it means to be Jesus' witnesses. I pray that God may have mercy on us all to receive one word, and to have clear direction according to God's vision and purpose for our lives.

The passage today begins with the author referring to his former book, the gospel of Luke. In the gospel of Luke the author outlined the journey of Jesus, from his birth, his gospel ministry, the calling of his disciples, the healing of the sick, restoration of people's lives through his words, his suffering, death, and resurrection. And finally, his ascension to heaven after giving many instructions through the holy spirit to the apostles he had chosen. Now in today's passage the author goes on to take us through the details of Jesus' activities before his ascension. Jesus did not immediately ascend to heaven after his resurrection. What exactly did Jesus do before his ascension? Did he go to punish those who crucified him? No! What then did he do? Let us look at **verse 3**: *“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 forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.”*

Before ascending to the heavens, Jesus firstly presented himself to his apostles and gave them many convincing proofs that he is alive. Why did Jesus do this? Jesus gave them many convincing proofs that he is alive to show them that he has power, power over sin and death. That he has overcome the power of sin and death. Jesus gave them many convincing proofs to reveal to them, that just as he could raise himself from the dead, he also can raise them from the dead when they have faith in him. Jesus being alive shows that he has power over anything, and that nothing is impossible with him when we believe in him. Jesus gave them many convincing proofs that he is alive so that they may put their faith and trust in him. Today many people, are tormented by the power of sin and death, they do not know how to be free from the power of sin, some are trapped in so much guilt because of sin. But today we have good news, Jesus is alive, sin and death have no power anymore. Jesus is alive, he has conquered the power of sin and death. There is no need to be afraid, to be filled with shame and guilt, but all we need to do is come to Jesus in repentance and surrender our lives to his rule. Yes, it is that simple Jesus conquered it all.

Furthermore, Jesus appeared to his apostles over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. What does this mean? What is the kingdom of God, and why was it important for Jesus to speak to the disciples about it over a period of 40 days? Firstly, the kingdom of God is God's reign. Since the fall of Adam human beings have been subjected to the rule of darkness. Today many people are consumed by the idea of living as they please, many concepts such a YOLO (You only live once) are leading people to live without God. As people continue to live in this way, many fall into the power of sin and darkness, meaninglessness, anxieties, depression, wondering around not knowing what to do. People are left in this way because they are subjected to the kingdom of darkness, and left wondering around with no satisfaction because what their heart desire is the kingdom of God.

And so, Jesus spoke to his apostles about the kingdom of God that has come to restore the people, from their suffering and pains by leading and guiding in the way of the truth. In **Mark 1:15** Jesus said to the people: *"The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"* When Jesus came into the world, he healed many from their diseases, through his words he restored many people's lives, he restored the life of the Samaritan woman, he restored the man who was possessed by evil spirits and lived in the tombs in isolation. He restored them by granting them the kingdom of God, through the forgiveness of their sins and restoring their identity as children of God. Jesus spoke to the apostles, about the kingdom of God that people can experience today, right here, right now. When we accept Jesus as our King and Savior and come to him in repentance, we can experience the kingdom of God today and live a peaceful life free from the way of the kingdom of darkness.

Furthermore, Jesus spoke to the apostles about the kingdom of God which refers to eternal life in the kingdom of heaven. Jesus spoke to them about eternal life to plant the living hope in their hearts. In this world one cannot truly have hope in anything because everything is temporal. The past 3 years we had COVID-19 and it changed the world, jobs were lost and the way of working, living changed completely proving that nothing in this world is guaranteed. Without the hope of the kingdom of heaven we cannot truly have hope, but we will live with fear and anxieties worrying about many things. But glory to God for the gift of eternal life, in **1 Peter 1:3-4** it says: *"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, / and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you."*

Furthermore, during the forty days while Jesus was eating with the apostles, he gave them a command not to leave Jerusalem. Jesus was crucified in Jerusalem; and so after this happened apparently the Apostles decided to leave Jerusalem in fear of the Jewish authorities, also because they felt sense of failure in preaching the gospel in Jerusalem. So, staying in Jerusalem was somewhat dangerous and not ideal for them, actually when Jesus came to them, they were in hiding. But today Jesus said to them do not leave Jerusalem. Why would Jesus give them this command? Does he mean they should stay in Jerusalem and remain in hiding? In **Luke 24:47** it says: *"and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."* Jesus did not want the apostles to stay in hiding, but rather he wanted them to preach the gospel in Jerusalem, to preach the message of repentance and the forgiveness of sins starting in Jerusalem. Jesus wanted them to continue with Jesus' work in the very same place where he was crucified. This sounded like a very dangerous mission, for they could be next in line to be crucified. How can they do this?

In **verse 4b-5** Jesus said to his apostles: *"but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. 5 For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."* Jesus told the apostles about the promised gift from the father, the Holy Spirit. The apostles got excited thinking that Jesus was talking about the restoration of the kingdom of Israel from Roman rule. However, this was not what Jesus talking about he told them that God's promises concerning Israel's restoration would be fulfilled according to God's timetable. What then was Jesus talking about here? Let us look at the **key verse 8**: *"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."* Jesus wanted to draw the apostle's attention to something more important, he wanted to draw their attention to God's vision for their lives and the world.

Today as well, after receiving much grace from the conference, receiving convincing proofs that Jesus is alive, receiving the assurance that we are God's precious possession. Jesus wants to draw our attention to God's vision for our lives, Jesus wants to give us direction on what to do next. The key verse says that God's vision is that we may be Jesus' witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the world. But what does it mean to be witnesses of Jesus? To be witnesses of Jesus, means to go out into the world and share the gospel that Jesus is alive, that he has risen, that he has power over sin and death, that when we believe in him, we can be restored into legitimate Sons and daughters of God. To be witnesses of Jesus means, we go out and preach the message of the kingdom of God, that right here, right now we can live in the kingdom of God and experience it. That we no longer have to be ruled by the kingdom of darkness, but can come to the kingdom of Jesus, to be led and guided by him to the way of light. To be witnesses of Jesus means we go out and testify on the kingdom of God, the promised paradise that we will experience in eternity, the living hope.

This is the vision that God had for the apostles, to preach this message starting in Jerusalem. But how could this be carried out in Jerusalem, such a dangerous place with rebellious attitude towards the gospel of Jesus? Indeed, with men's effort, power, and ability this is not possible. How can they carry this out then? In the key verse it says: *"you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you"* The reason Jesus spoke about the promise of the of the Holy Spirit was not for the restoration of Israel's kingdom. But rather, the promise of the Holy Spirit was to grant us power to fulfill God's vision, to be witnesses of Jesus. But what kind of power is this?

When Jesus was talking to the disciples, they were in hiding and filled with sense of failure and fear of the Jewish leaders. But when the Holy Spirit comes upon them, they will receive power to boldly go out into the city of Jerusalem to preach the gospel. They will receive power to genuinely love the Jewish leaders and the people who rejected Jesus and led him to crucifixion. They will have power preach the gospel to all nations and reveal Jesus and change people's hearts to follow Jesus and receive salvation. They will receive power to reveal the the gift of eternal life to all people, power to enable the people to experience the kingdom of God right here, right now. When the Holy Spirit comes upon the apostles, they will receive power that transcends through the physical and spiritual realms.

After the conference we might wonder how to move forward, what are our next steps. We also might be filled with a sense of fear in our hearts, on how to relate and tell our friends and family that we have received Jesus, that we have decided to follow Jesus and live as his disciples. We might be filled with some fear to share the gospel on campus, especially because students on campus are very smart and can ask many questions, we are not able to answer. We also might be worried that we have been to the conference, saw how others are so passionate about Jesus, and yet our hearts are still hardened and to receive Jesus. The good news is, we do not have to worry, because we have the promise of the Holy Spirit, which will grant us power to overcome. God's vision and purpose in our lives and the world is a matter of power, on our own we cannot fulfill. We need the Holy Spirit, and the good news is that God has promised that Holy Spirit will come upon us and we will receive power.

Nowadays I have been concerned about how to relate to campus students, somehow, I am starting to feel the generation gap, also because of Covid-19 I have not interacted with many campus students. So, I worried sometimes that students will find me weird, or I will do something that will drive them away. However today, I am assured that preaching the gospel on campus, is a matter of power. That if I rely on the Holy Spirit, I will receive power to preach the gospel and help students

turn to God and repent from their sins. I have learnt that if I rely on the Holy Spirit, I can live life with a clear direction and hope according to God's vision and purpose.

Conclusion

Through today's passage we have been given a clear direction on what to do after receiving and accepting the message of Jesus Christ suffering, death, and resurrection from the conference. We have learnt that God's vision and purpose for our lives is to be witnesses of Jesus Christ, to proclaim the gospel that Jesus is alive, and the kingdom of God that is upon us. This is how God wants to bless us and grant us joy on daily basis going forward. Through the passage we have learnt that on our own we cannot carry out this vision that God has for us, but rather we need the Holy Spirit which God has promised and faithfully granted. When the Holy Spirit comes upon us, we will receive power, power to love one another, just as Jesus loved undeserving sinners, power to be brave, courageous, and bold to proclaim the gospel of Jesus even in the midst of opposition, power to challenge sin. Power to purify our hearts to live according to God's will and purpose.

I have always been amazed especially by Korean UBF missionaries, who even though they had many limitations such as culture and language barriers could joyfully preach the gospel and raise many God-fearing campus students in Africa, Europe, and America. From this passage I have learnt that it is because they had received power from the Holy Spirit. Indeed, living according to God's vision is a matter of power. I therefore pray that we may all meditate on God's vision for our lives, pray and rely on the Holy Spirit to grant us power so that we can have a clear direction and live a life with meaning and purpose.