

“The Journey of Easter - Power”

Scripture: Acts 1:8; 2:1-4

Graphics: road, milestones, power, being filled

Big Truth: The journey of Easter is a journey of death, new life, waiting, releasing, and being given new power. We often think that the journey is about the destination, but it's not. The journey changes us along the way. If we're intentional about the milestones and knowing more about Jesus on the journey of faith, His death, resurrection, adjusting, letting go, and the Spirit all transform us into the faithful disciples we are called to be. This Lent, we will spend time in a process of death, rebirth, and being filled with His power. Then, at Holy Week, we will be ready for Him to Rise in us!

Focus Question: What do I need to start doing for Jesus because of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in me?

1. Introduction

- A. Well, this is it! This is the last message in this Journey of Easter series. Next week is Palm Sunday and we enter into another amazing Holy Week!
- B. As we come to the end of this Lenten season, I pray that we've all been able to take time to reflect on where God wants to grow us as followers of Jesus.
 - i. What have you let die?
 - ii. What have you allowed to be reborn?
 - iii. What have you adjusted because of Jesus?
 - iv. What are you letting go in order to embrace the next thing God wants you to do to grow as a disciple?
- C. We've been to Jesus' Cross, Jesus' empty tomb, the Road to Emmaus, and Jesus' Ascension.
- D. Today, we're going to finally get to the day of Pentecost, when God sent the Holy Spirit onto the disciples gathered in Jerusalem and the Church was born.
- E. The amazing thing about the day of Pentecost is that the disciples were physically the same prior to that day as they were after that day. They had the same DNA, the same hair color, the same external circumstances.
- F. And YET, after they experienced the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, sent to them by God for the mission to save the world, **everything changed.**
- G. They may have been the same women and men, but they had a brand new POWER in them that changed what they did, how they did it, and why.
- H. So, the question for us today is: **What do I need to start doing for Jesus because of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in me?**
- I. Again, this is a reflection question and not something that you may have an answer to right away? But as we saw last week, if God is asking you to let go

of something that He's done - that was good and got you to where you are today - He WILL lead you to what He knows will grow you next!

- J. In Acts 1:8, we read Jesus' final words to the disciples that had gathered in Jerusalem, after the Resurrection. Jesus said, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."
- K. At that moment, nothing had changed for the disciples, except they had to let go of the physical presence of Jesus. They were the same as they were 5 minutes earlier - same eye color, same tastes, same bank account.
- L. Yet Jesus made a promise and that promise came true on the day of Pentecost. Let's pray and then read Acts 2 to get a sense of how that all went down.
- M. PRAY! (Jesus, You are Lord...)**
- N. Turn with me in your Bibles to Acts 2...starting in verse 1...

2. Scripture

A. READ Acts 2:1-4

- B. The key word in this scripture passage comes in verse 2 when Luke writes, "And SUDDENLY..."
- C. Now, we know the disciples were waiting, just as Jesus asked them. They were doing housework, maybe, office work, their trades. We know they were praying and worshipping. They were also hiding and fearful that what happened to Jesus might just happen to them.
- D. In verse 1, we read that they were all together in one place. They were chillin' at the crib (sorry...couldn't resist).
- E. And SUDDENLY...BAM!
- F. When's the last time you had a SUDDENLY moment? My brother-in-law just had a suddenly moment on the highway driving home to CT last weekend. Snow was heavy and SUDDENLY, there were stopped cars in front of them. He swerved and spun and fishtailed, thankfully able to navigate the impromptu slalom course on I-90.
- G. I remember a time when I was peacefully driving down the road behind a small car and SUDDENLY that car went across the double yellow line, into the other lane, into the ditch, flipped over, and came to a stop on its roof. SUDDENLY, my trip to my Mom's became a 911 call and a stop to see how I could help.
- H. None of the basic things about my brother- and sister-in-law or me changed when the SUDDENLY moment occurred. Yet, lives were altered in the blink of an eye...and we had to respond to it.
- I. On the day of Pentecost, "...SUDDENLY from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house...divided tongues, as of

fire, appeared...they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit gave them ability.”

- J. Nothing changed about the physical place where they were. Nothing changed in their DNA or even their external circumstances. The disciples were still where they were and who they were.
- K. Yet, **SUDDENLY**, everything was different and they could do things they had never done before...and, honestly, didn't probably fully understand.
- L. And as wild and crazy as it was to be able to speak in some other language, and have people from those places be able to understand what they were saying, it was what came **NEXT** that was the Kingdom-shaking, missional, Holy Spirit-powered response.
- M. Here's a brief trip through the first few chapters of Acts...when the brand new church began to respond to the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Remember, these were the same women and men who were there at the Cross and the empty tomb...on the Road to Emmaus and at Jesus' Ascension. But, **SOMETHING** profound had changed...they embraced it and were doing new things in a new way for a new purpose!
 - i. In Acts 2:37, they started to make more converts to The Way of Jesus... thousands of converts...in **ONE DAY!**
 - ii. They performed signs and wonders in Acts 2:43...things they could not do before!
 - iii. They were able to perform miraculous healings in Acts 3:1 and Acts 5:12.
 - iv. The disciples that were there on that Pentecost became powerful witnesses to both Jews and Gentiles. (Acts 3:11)
 - v. They prayed for more and more boldness in Acts 3:23, so that they could stand in front of hostile crowds and win people to Christ.
 - vi. And, lest we think that all they did was fun and easy, they also experienced more and more persecution starting in Acts 5:17.
- N. Not much had changed about them...they were still them.
- O. Yet, because of the Holy Spirit who now filled them, they talked about Jesus, they healed people in Jesus' name, they evangelized people (which just means they shared the good news and invited them to believe it), and they were bold and got some pushback.
- P. And it didn't stop in the Book of Acts. The Apostle Paul was transformed from a persecutor of the early church to being its most powerful evangelist... simply because he had an encounter with the risen Christ and was filled with the Holy Spirit. He was the same **PERSON**...yet everything he did and said was different.

- Q. Peter, James, and John all wrote letters that would become part of the New Testament, evangelizing the Ancient Near East with the gospel of Jesus Christ, all through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.
- R. And it changed the world...and it changed all those who have put their faith and trust in Jesus.
- S. And it's changing US today 2,000+ years later. This ain't no LIE! Come, Holy Spirit, Come!

3. Application

- A. Take a moment to think about your life today. You and I are a combination of family circumstance, experiences, DNA, traits, personality, and many other factors. You're complex. You're different than anyone else. You like certain things and don't like other things...and someone you know is just the opposite.
- B. Yet when the Holy Spirit fills you and begins to empower you to do something for Jesus, there's a newness and desire to do that thing because the Spirit has filled you.
- C. Now, here's a caution: there are times when you and I are really good at blocking the prompting and work of the Holy Spirit. We find ourselves settled into the way we've done it and are comfortable with that. When God asks us to let go of something in order for the Holy Spirit to move us, use us, or grow us, we can make a million excuses. "Too busy. Not skilled. Too shy. Not ready." And on and on. Yet, there's no denying that the Holy Spirit is at work!
- D. That's when you're called to simply ask the question, "What do I need to start doing for Jesus because of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in me?"
- E. You've asked about letting some things die and be reborn. You've adjusted to the boulders and begun to let go of the things that might have worked in the past to grow you, but God is ready for the next step.
- F. NOW, during Lent 2023, is the time to ask, "What do I need to start doing for Jesus because I'm filled with the Holy Spirit?"
- G. If we're letting things die and be reborn, adjusted and let go, and we stay there, then the growth will be less than the Holy Spirit is capable to affect in you!
- H. And this question isn't just a reflection question. It's a PRAYER! It's a question that only Jesus can answer, as the Holy Spirit is at work in you.
- I. And, it's the Holy Spirit that will then empower you to do the next thing that will grow you as a disciple and use you to impact the world for Jesus.
- J. The first thing that God is asking you is to **Accept the Holy Spirit in the life you are in fact living right now.**
 - i. I suspect that each one of us would choose a few different circumstances about our lives right now.

- ii. We often verbalize these as wishes. “I wish I...and then we list off something that, if it were different, we think our life would be better, richer, healthier, etc.”
- iii. There’s nothing wrong with desiring to better yourself or work to change your circumstances - God often works for you in that.
- iv. Yet, in order to get to work for Jesus, the first step is to accept the Holy Spirit right into the midst of your current life...your current complicated, sometimes sinful, sometimes grieving, less-than-ideal life...the one that you are, in fact, living...not the one you WISH you were living.
- v. Jesus doesn’t ask any of us to get all cleaned up prior to being saved by grace through faith in Him. So, why would He want you to be a fully-sanctified follower of Jesus prior to empowering you to be used by God.
- vi. If you haven’t accepted the presence of the Holy Spirit into your life right where you are, then today is the day to begin allowing the Spirit to take the lead in your heart and life.

K. Second, live the new life you already have in Christ.

- i. The amazing thing about being a believer in Christ is that your everlasting life with God begins the moment you’re saved by grace through faith.
- ii. You don’t have to wait to start living into that new life. If you’re an accountant, then live your new life in Christ in every number you crunch (there’s more to being an accountant, obviously). If you’re a teacher, teach every lesson as a follower of Jesus as your primary identity. If you’re retired, then use every moment of retirement to keep finding ways to live your new life in Christ and give thanks for the days He wants to use for His glory.
- iii. You already have new life in Christ. Live like it in the power and presence of the Holy Spirit.

L. Then, ask Jesus, “What do you want me to start doing?”

- i. If you follow the biblical example of the disciples, doing that next missional thing may look like what you have been doing, but in a new way with renewed power. We all need a recharge and a renewed sense of purpose.
- ii. The disciples went from Jerusalem to Judea and Samaria, to the ends of the earth. Jesus was sending them, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to ALL people. To give the world the Good News.
- iii. The church of Jesus Christ in 2023 MUST (MUST) recapture our evangelistic fervor, or the church will continue to become irrelevant in the eyes of the unbelieving and secular world. God is calling each and every believer to allow the Spirit of Jesus to well up in you to share the Good

News that Jesus died and rose again and loves and forgives us. The disciples were witnesses to the world!

- iv. God may be calling you to healing ministry - emotional, physical, relational healing. To affect change in lives by speaking words of healing and grace.
- v. God is calling you to pray for boldness and opportunities to share your faith and serve others in Jesus' name.
- vi. God IS calling you to be ready for persecution. We don't like to be rejected or dismissed, but that's exactly what Jesus experienced. Why do we think we're any different or will experienced anything less?
- vii. The power of the Holy Spirit is what gives us the perseverance, and strength, and courage to answer God's call to ministry and discipleship.

M. What do you need to start doing for Jesus because of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in you...right now...right here?

4. Conclusion

- A. As you grow as a disciple of Jesus, the realities in your life don't automatically change. You are still you - same DNA, same car, same house, same job. What does change is that you are more and more filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, as on the day of Pentecost.
- B. The Journey of Easter is about growing...to die, be reborn, to adjust and let go...in order to start doing the next missional move, filled with the Holy Spirit.
- C. We are already living our new life in Christ. With the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, we are called to live our new life in a more powerful way for Him.
- D. Let's go, church! Easter's coming! And I can't wait! New life start today!
- E. Let's pray...