

## Reflecting on God's Word

Reading: Acts 1:1-11 (NT page 1092)

Reader: Mike Batley

### Background to the reading

In the Gospel of Luke chapter one, the Gospel writer makes mention of a certain Theophilus to whom he addresses his Gospel. Now in Acts chapter one the same author refers again to Theophilus and his previous account of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. There is no doubt that it is the same author who wrote both accounts. Theophilus would have been the patron, or sponsor of the work, to whom Luke formally dedicates it, as it was the custom.

Luke then typically refreshes the memory of his readers by going over the major details of what happened after Jesus' crucifixion. He says that over a period of forty days Jesus appeared to his disciples and others, convincing everyone that He was resurrected. Then he emphasizes that Jesus instructed them not to leave Jerusalem but to wait on the gift His father promised, the gift of His Holy Spirit. Jesus also told them that they will become His witnesses over all the earth.

Then Jesus ascended to heaven. [In Greek stories, various heroes ascended to heaven, usually by dying and becoming gods. For Luke, however, the ascension is only a confirmation of Jesus' status at the resurrection,](#) a coronation of the king who was both human and divine all along. Jewish accounts of Elijah (from the Old Testament) and others (from later traditions) taken up to heaven show that Jewish readers would understand the ascension.

Moses had passed on his work to Joshua, Elijah to Elisha, and [rabbis](#) and philosophers to their disciples. This model of succession created occasional "succession narratives" that described the passing on of a teacher's call. Jesus' ascension

immediately after the commission of 1:8 leaves believers as his successors, responsible for the job of world evangelization, until his return in the same glorified body.

Luke concludes this account by telling us that all of a sudden two angels appeared to his disciples, reminding them – instead of looking at the sky to go and do what Jesus have commanded them.

What is the message of Luke?

The ascension of Jesus is not a farewell but the beginning of a new expectation of hope for His return. Jesus was truly God and He came to establish not an earthly kingdom but a heavenly kingdom for all his believers. His disciples had to wait in Jerusalem with the hope of receiving the gift of God's Holy Spirit.

## **MP 13                      All hail the power of Jesus' name**

### **Sermon**

The text verse for the sermon is 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."

I do not think it is very easy to wait and I am sure we will all agree that waiting patiently in a long row is quite a challenge which brings me to a story I read this week.

"A group of travellers were being made to wait on their airplane, which was late due to another flight being cancelled. The crowd looked horrible and impatient as the time went on and on. Finally an angry passenger pushed his way to the front of the line, slammed his ticket down and said, "I must be on this flight now and I must be in first class". The flight attendant, trying to be nice said, "Sir, we will get to you as soon as possible, but you

must wait in line like everyone else". He quickly said, "Ma'am, do you have any idea who I am?"

Without hesitation, she smiled, picked up her intercom microphone and said, "We have a passenger here at the gate WHO DOES NOT KNOW WHO HE IS. If anyone can help him find his identity, please come to gate 17."

I think it sums up how we often feel when we have to wait. Waiting on God to act or to intervene is even harder. Waiting for Him to answer a much needed prayer, waiting on Him to react when we are sitting next to a bed of someone very ill, waiting for answers when someone very close to us die, waiting for Him to help us with a difficult decision or choice...

How did the disciples coped with this waiting? Well when we read the following verses it seemed that they took to heart what the angel said. Instead of looking at the sky and speculating about Jesus' ascension, they became busy with the command Jesus gave them. They prayed, studied the Scriptures and they chose another disciple to replace Judas.

How do wait on God?

Do we get easily impatient with God? Do we react by giving up our faith, our hope and our love? Do we walk away from Him? Or do we follow in the footsteps of His disciples who found themselves in a hostile environment where their people, the Jewish leaders delivered their leader to be crucified? It could not have been easy for them to stay in Jerusalem and I am sure if they had a choice they would have ran to the hills of Galilee to get away from the Jewish leadership as far as possible. Their lives were in danger. Their names would have been linked to rebels or revolutionaries of the Roman Empire. Their families would have shunned them. But instead of speculating and dwelling in the past, they grabbed the opportunity by the moment and started preparing themselves for what was to come.

I am sure the practical guidelines of the disciples can be ours too while we wait on God to act, to intervene, to help.

Waiting for God doesn't mean sitting around doing nothing... it means doing what we can, while we can, as best we can...while always being careful to not outrun the decisions of God.

- We too can spend the time praying, instead of speculating.
- We too can spend the time reading His word, while we sit next to the bed of someone that is ill.
- We too can pray and read from His word when we are bereaved and engulfed in tears, bitterness and sorrow.
- We too can be church despite all the challenges we face. We can organise ourselves on how to proclaim God's loving forgiveness, redemption and salvation to all people.
- We too can use every moment and every opportunity to reach out to people that is in need of spiritual and pastoral care, people that is ill, bereaved or alone,
- We too can do something about the spiritual poverty that is a given in or communities
- We too can change the course of history by introducing God to all those around us who thinks of Him as a Santa Clause who only exists during Christmas time, or replace Him with an easter chocolate bunny.
- We too can tell others of God's kingdom where we will see God face to face in a new existence and where according to Revelations we will not know anyone except God, where no one else would matter except God, where there will be no more sorrow or tears or hardship but just the ever-present light of God.
- We too can caution ourselves and others to be patient – God knows our hearts, he knows our expectations, He also knows what we need and not what we want.

May our reading help us to have more patience while we are waiting on God... Look around you, we are all sitting in the waiting room of God, and it is custom for us all to read a magazine while we are waiting, there is a bible close by to read, there is a friend at hand to hold on to, there is silent moment to pray....

Amen

**Responding to God's word**

Our offerings are given for the ministry and mission of the church while we sing **MP 1000 "King of kings, majesty"**.

Prayer of thanksgiving: Cicely Abraham

**MP 881**  
**high**

**Lord I lift Your name on**

**Benediction Receive the blessing of God and go in peace:**

Look forward in hope

To the coming of the Kingdom and be patient while waiting on God..

And the blessing of God almighty,

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

Will be with you -

Now and for evermore

**Sung Amen**