

44-01-04-The Global Imperative

Great Commission, missions, evangelism, Holy Spirit, Pentecost

Acts 1:8

God empowers the Church for outreach that is beyond ourselves.

INTRODUCTION:

–People’s last words are *memorable* [A famous leader Mike Yaconelli, at a youth convention, 6 days before his death, said, “*If I died right this minute, I would be able to say, ‘God, what a ride! What a ride!’*” He knew the power of Pentecost!]

–Christ’s last words before His ascension, are also memorable– Acts 1:8,

“*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 was talking about Pentecost and the power of witnessing, which

He had *already* talked about before His death in all 4 Gospels:

Mat 28:18-20, Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” – Mark 16:15-16, He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. – Luke 24:46-48, He told them, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. – John 20:21,

Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”

–“*Why 4 Gospels?*” He didn’t want us to miss the point! In fact, Acts 1:8 is a repeat of His point just before returning to Heaven (text).

–But He didn’t say, “Go!” without Pentecost. He sent the *Holy Spirit* to pour God’s viewpoint into our hearts to flush out any self-centeredness that holds us back from His *Global Imperative*. **HOM.idea.**

I. God Empowers Us with a New Identity (“witnesses”)

A. *Witnesses are not pulpit experts, expounding doctrine, but Good News reporters—reporting our personal Gospel stories.*

1. We don’t have to go to *Bible college* or *seminary*. (But we *do* have to be students in the school of life. Everyone qualifies!).
2. We don’t have to have *all the answers* (about *life* or *the Bible*), but we *do* have to *remember what God teaches us in our lives.*)
3. As *witnesses*, our message is not our opinions, but our first-hand experiences of God’s love through Christ and the Holy Spirit.

- B. *Witnesses* are not *teachers of theology*, but *tellers of true stories*.
1. Theological explanations don't always work anyway. [Paul Little failed to convince a young sceptic, after entirely answering all his questions... The young man's real reason was "I don't *want to change my life-style*."]]
 2. *Some of us* may study God's Word to explain it better, BUT God wants *all of us* to tell what He has done in our lives [It's often said: "*We're the only Bible some will ever read*."] So, we should be open Bibles.]
- C. *Witnesses* don't have to be *polished public speakers*, but, to be effective, they do have to speak up at the *appropriate time*!
1. Sometimes silence can be sin [There was a news story of a witness who finally came forward after an innocent man spent years in prison for a crime he didn't commit—the woman lived with guilt, until she finally spoke up.]
 2. The Holy Spirit may be prompting us to *speak up*, because it's a person's last opportunity to hear. [Carpe diem: "seize the day."]]

TRANS: What hinders us from telling our story of faith? Fear of what people will think? Lack of confidence? God empowers the Church for outreach that is beyond our fears, beyond our hesitations. Every obstacle or excuse can be overcome by Holy Spirit empowerment.

II. God Empowers Us for a New Activity ("Go...")

- A. *Missions* [from a Latin word, sent] implies new situations, unfamiliar territory. (That's how God sent Jesus— Mark 1:38, Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." Jesus obeyed His Father, then said, "Follow Me.")
- B. In our new activity of going, we need to have *Christ's attitude*—
1. Seeing people as Jesus did— Phil 2:4-5, Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.
 2. Seeing this world as He saw it— John 4:35, Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. (If we're still alive, it's harvest time!)
- C. We don't "go" independently, trusting in our practiced techniques:
1. We witness as ambassador for Christ, by having Him *with us* (His command to "Go" has His promise of "I am with you always...").
 2. By the Holy Spirit, Jesus doesn't just "go" with us but is in us. [Mike Yaconelli told of 40-y/o Daryl Jenkins, afraid of joining his church group for convalescent-hospital visitation. He finally went, kept going back, and befriended 91-y/o Mr. Leak, who told his daughter, before slipping into a

coma, "*Say good-bye to Jesus for me*."] (We're not just 'the only Bible some will ever read.' We're the only Jesus some will ever see! So we need to have open hearts, for His light to shine out of us.)

TRANS: How do we become freed-up from a self-focus in order to "go" outside our comfort zones? By Holy Spirit empowerment! **God empowers His Church for outreach that is beyond ourselves.**

III. God Empowers Us with a New Perspective ("into all the world")—v.8b, ...you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

- A. "*Jerusalem*"—that's right where we live. (You are Christ's *witness* for those across the hall, in the dining room, at social gatherings.)
- B. "*Judea and Samaria*"—that's our local area, our State, even our country. (UPS still works; we can *talk* or *text* on smart phones; our *emails* let us "go" to people without leaving home.)
- C. "*to the ends of the earth*" is global outreach, and here, too, Jesus wants to empower us for outreach that is beyond ourselves:
 1. If we can't go in body, we can grow in concern (through mission newsletters, articles in Christian magazines or on the Internet).
 2. As we grow in concern, we can also "go" by giving and praying:
 - a. We can take on a missions project to *pray for* and *give to*;
 - b. We can take on a missionary to *pray for* and *write to*.

CONCLUSION:

—**Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, empowers the Church for outreach that is beyond ourselves.** Beyond our *old self-concept* into our *new Kingdom identity* as "*witnesses*." Beyond our *old behavior patterns* into *new activities based on Christ's own attitude: "going."*

—Pentecost means *Jesus is not done yet!* Through the Holy Spirit, He empowers us to have His eyes, lifting up our eyes on harvest fields full of people who need the Gospel. *Many* are right in front of us. *Others* are within our reach through *prayer* and *giving*.

—Remember His mandate— Acts 1:8, "...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." But let's also remember His promise to be *with us* as His Father was *with Him*— John 20:21, Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, **I am sending you.**"