

**Theme: The Goodness of Christ.**

Fellowship@10 Sunday 17 May,2026

Today, we heard a reading from Acts chapter 1 verses 6 to 14. It tells the story of Jesus appearing to the disciples shortly before he ascends to be with his Father in Heaven. My focus today will be on Acts 1 verse 8 where we read these words *“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.”*

We find the disciples returning to Jerusalem from the Mt of Olives. These frightened, lost group of men, are accompanied by Mary, the mother of Jesus, and Jesus’ brothers as they find their way back to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives. An easy afternoon walk. The disciples are quiet, lost in their own thoughts as they approach the main entrance gate leading into Jerusalem.

There are no crowds to welcome them, no donkey tied up beside the gate. The crowds of people surrounding the disciples are gone. No one passing by recognizes them. All is quiet as people come and go about their daily life. The Roman soldiers weren’t interested as the disciples walked through the gate. Life has returned to normal as the disciples cautiously enter the city. At the first side street they turn and work their way to the house of a friend with an upper room.

Reaching this now familiar house; a gentle knock on the front door brings Jesus’ friend, the owner of the upper room, to the door. He opens the door, “have you seen Jesus?” he asks as he steps aside to allow the disciples and their friends to enter his house. There is a brief welcome to the disciples as they enter the house. “Go up the stairs,” said their friend. The upper room is as you left it some time ago.” The disciples walk up the stairs. they pause as they enter the upper room.

This place has so many memories. Jesus washing the feet of the disciples. The act of betrayal by Judas Iscariot. The Passover meal when Jesus served the bread and wine. Peter sat down on a cushion beside a low table. He looked around the room. The memories come flooding back. Now, on their own this motley assortment of men, handpicked by Jesus, were back, uncertain, unsure. Their leader and friend Jesus was nailed to a cross, taunted by the crowds, his garments sold, his friends scattered.

Then, the shock. There was a report of an empty tomb where Jesus had been laid to rest. His body is now missing. A large stone guarding the entrance moved to one side. Reports began to circulate, Jesus was up and about. He had appeared to a woman. He had been talking to friends about the Kingdom of God, while staying a while with them. There were many questions. The disciples; amazed, unsure, just happy to be in the presence, while unsure of their future as they waited.

In Acts chapter 1, verse 4 we read these words, *“While staying with them Jesus ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the father.”*

The disciples were content to pause. Life had begun to settle down. Disciples wandered in and out of the Upper Room. Jesus would appear, spend time with them, and leave. The tension, the anxiety, the uncertainty hung heavily in the Upper Room. The common question amongst the disciples was, “Where to from here?” Amongst the disciples, the questions around the death of Jesus and his resurrection had eased. Jesus was still around, appearing from time to time; in different places. Life returned to a sense of normality.

Jesus the teacher came and sat with his disciples. Talking with them as they moved around keeping a low profile. Then, one morning Jesus came to the Upper Room. He sat quietly talking while he waited for some of the disciples to return. The murmur of small talk filled the room. Small groups chatted in a relaxed atmosphere in the Upper Room. Then, Jesus asked the disciples to find a comfortable place to sit. When all was quiet, he began to talk to the disciples. Then he said to them. ***“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you: And you will be my witness in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*** Acts chapter 1 verse 8

Then, as the disciples watched, Jesus was lifted up in a cloud. The promise made by Jesus to the disciples, ***“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you”*** was dramatic, unexpected, difficult to imagine and potentially a life-changing experience.

Something special happened at that moment. The ministry of Jesus, the son of God, would be handed over to the disciples, based on the words of their friend Jesus, who had just left them. The ascension of Jesus; this handover to the disciples, gathered in the Upper Room, changes the disciple narrative forever.

It opens the role of a disciple to you and me through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Given the track record of the disciples, when Jesus needed them most, they had failed him, left him, and denied they ever knew him. Their track record in supporting Jesus in his moments of despair, not all that special. Let me remind you. They lived with Jesus for three years. They walked with him, talked with him, watched him heal the blind, straightened crippled legs. They listened to every sermon he ever preached, well, maybe, maybe not, called a Roman tax collector his friend. His closest friend Peter, when challenged, said he never knew Jesus, not once, but three times. They were not brave men when threatened, they chose to disappear.

It is difficult to understand the impact of this gift of the Holy Spirit from God the father. There is something special about this promise, this moment in the Upper Room. God in Jesus, will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. The world represented by the disciples, is the gift that creates the spark, that lights a small smoldering fire in the life of the disciples. Of you and me. That is why we are here today, in this place.

So, what is about to change. The call by Jesus to each of the disciples, brought together a small group, his followers. They lived together, went everywhere together. They saw Jesus perform miracles. But nothing changed in them. They watched the turmoil and the pain of the cross. But nothing changed in them. They experienced the mystery of the resurrection. It did not change them. **It was the coming of the Holy Spirit that changed them.**

Not now, but in a while, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. It is a tipping point for these lost disciples. It fundamentally changes the disciples, who they see themselves as: their relationship with Jesus; and God the father, and who they are to become.

It is a profound moment where lost hope emerges. When God, through Jesus, hands over his purpose in the world to his disciples, you and me. It was always a promise from God the father to God the son. It is no longer an end, but a new beginning. All enabled through a promise from God, which is ours to take hold of.

Paul, in Galatians 2: Verse 20 said, *“It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me, and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”*

These are remarkable words from a man we knew as Saul, now Paul the apostle. The one present, who encouraged a wild crowd who went searching for stones to hasten the death of Stephen, an early Christian martyr.

The ascension invites us to encounter the living, ascended Christ in the present. It invites us to encounter the living Risen Christ now, in our world today. Each one of us has a role to play as a disciple of the one called Jesus. The promise of God to the disciples has a condition attached. You will be my witness to the ends of the earth. In my community, my workplace, my sporting club, my aged care home, my faith community, wherever and whenever to the ends of the world.

This is our mission. Each one of us, as a community of faith. Never locked away, in an Upper Room. At the very least, let our actions reflect our knowledge of, and love for our risen Lord.

I have three chairs arranged in a row, in front of the lectern. One chair represents God our father/mother. One chair represents, Jesus the son. There is a third chair. It is vacant, but shortly it will represent the Holy Spirit. God the father, God the son and God the Holy Spirit. But sadly, we must wait a short time for the Holy Spirit to take up this chair.

Amen