

Acts 1:8-11 We are witnesses for Christ! Mission Festival – Monday September 24, 2018

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Our Lord Jesus Christ assures you that God's grace and peace are yours now and forever. Amen.

When people are about to go on a journey for a long time, you may pay special attention to their words. Jesus closing words to His disciples are written in Acts 1:8-11 for our special attention.

These are your powerful words heavenly Father. Help us live as your people and witnesses. Your Word is truth!

Dear Christian friends,

If you were to hear the story of the life of Christ for the first time, you would be amazed! The Son of God took on a human nature, was born in humble circumstances, lived a flawless life, died an innocent death, rose from death, and ascended to heaven where, as God and man in one person, He rules over all things. What is most incredible is that Christ did not do this for Himself. He did it to declare to all people that heaven's doors are open through Him and those who believe in Him will be saved from a terrible judgment! What wonderful love to provide salvation for all! But, many people don't realize what they're missing. That is why Jesus gave His disciples a mission and it is still our mission today. We should want as many people as possible to hear of Christ before He comes as Judge of all. God encourages that

We are witnesses for Christ!

We're privileged to be His witnesses. Jesus precisely chose His disciples. They were not professional speakers, but just everyday people. It's been said, Christ could have chosen His angels to tell the world about Him. But, He chose people to witness; the people that He saved by His death. He said, "*You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth*"(v.8). The disciples immediately began to speak about the great things that Jesus had done.

We have not been eye witnesses like them. We didn't see Jesus do miracles, die on the cross, be raised from death, or ascend to heaven. How can we be witnesses? As He promised, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit first to His disciples. He had them write down exactly what God wanted them to say about Jesus, so that we have God's Word which is the saving truth. We also thank God that He helps us speak to others. Have you ever tried to describe something, like a football game to a person who has never seen a football game? It would be hard to put all the actions and reasons for the actions into words the person can understand. Thank God that the Holy Spirit not only gave us His Word, but His power to help people understand. It should be easier to speak to people we know. We share common experiences and needs and can speak their language. Yet, it may also be the most difficult to speak to friends, classmates, family, or co-workers about Jesus. They know our weaknesses and sins. They know that we don't always live with perfect words or loving actions.

But, we can use that very point. We have experienced the peace that only God's forgiveness can give. We can freely say that what we did not deserve, eternal life, God gave to us as a free gift. The debt of sin we could never pay, Jesus paid for us with His own life. Every time we worship, we are witnessing that Jesus has saved us and that His promises are true.

But our work is not limited to people nearby. Jesus also said to go to "*Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*"(v.8) When the Jews began to persecute believers for their faith in Jesus, many fled from their homes. Acts states, "*Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.*" (Acts 8:4) But they didn't reach all areas in their moves. Many areas of the world still did not know our loving God. So, God called missionaries like Paul and the other Apostles to bring God's Word to distant lands. Paul received support and had the prayers of Christians in established congregations. We give offerings to the ELS world missions. Also, there is a new [Mission News](#) that arrived. It shows the Christian evangelism work being done in India and describes how one of our visiting pastors had 29 baptisms in just one area! We also showed support yesterday

as an ELS seminary student preached. He has a Christian family still living in Syria in the midst of civil war. We took a freewill offering so that he could help Christians in Syria. Wouldn't it be great someday when we are heaven to have people from foreign nations thank us for supporting missionaries who bring the good news of Christ? We can also pray. Jesus prayed daily that His work be completed. The early church in the book of Acts was always praying for God's help and blessing. And even Jesus promised to pray for us in heaven. We, too, can pray to God with confidence for those witnessing.

Our Savior urges us to witness without delay. As Jesus ascended, two angels appeared and told the disciples, *"Why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen Him go into heaven."* (v.11) Time is important for all of us. There are important things to get done not just for family or work, but with God's work: for people to hear and believe in Jesus. The disciples didn't know how long they would live. And they believed that Jesus could return in glory at any moment to end the world. So, they immediately went back to Jerusalem and spoke about Jesus that day.

The devil will try to distract us with things that have no lasting value. He wants us to forget about the lost souls in the world and to forget the stark difference between being slaves to the devil and those who are the children of God. We know where we are going after we die. Jesus has gone before us and has prepared a place for us! So let's remember our priorities. All of us have had people who helped us to understand the Bible and we are thankful for them. We too can feel good when we help others to understand Christ's work of love. We are sharing God's Word which will bring eternal life in Christ to all who believe!

Second, Christ will help us witness. Jesus trained His disciples before He sent them out to speak. They didn't need to come up with their own words. He gave them the message. We have also been blessed with the message of Christ. The first disciples had the Old Testament and Jesus' own words to explain God's purpose and plan. We have God's entire Word to show the full picture of what Christ has accomplished!

Today, too many people want to be "spiritual" but not really connected to God through His truth. Their kind of spirituality allows them do whatever they want to do now, but it won't make them right with God. Only God's Word tells us that His Son became one of us to give up His life as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. People make sacrifices every day by feeding the hungry, helping hurricane victims or doing other good things. And they aren't Christians! How much more we can respond with thanks for the loving sacrifice Christ made for us! He suffered complete humility by His death on a cross. But God raised Him from death to assure us that Christ's death won our victory. How motivated we should be to tell this good news of love!

Jesus is now in the glory of heaven. There is no limit to what He can do as our Savior. Earlier when He commanded His disciples to make disciples by baptizing and teaching He assured them: *"I am with you always"* (Matthew 28:20). We should picture Him standing beside us as we speak to others. We want all to be ready for His return at the end of the world. The Bible states to believers, *"When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory"* (Colossians 3:4). This is the good news that Jesus called us to believe and to proclaim because it is precious news for all.

So, today we celebrate mission festival and how we can speak of the great things Jesus has done for us! How can we not support with our prayers and offerings the mission efforts taking place around the world! We pray that Jesus would give us and all believers the same boldness as the early disciples to speak of Christ and His saving work for all. Amen.