

# Crosswalk: How To Live As Followers Of Jesus Christ

*I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.*  
(Romans 12:1 ESV)

*I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*  
(Ephesians 4:1-3 ESV)

Go  
July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2018  
Acts 1:6-11  
Rev. Paul Carter

## Introduction:

Good morning. I want to invite you to open your Bibles this morning to Acts 1:6-11; that's on page 909 in your pew Bible. I mentioned that last week that we are starting something new. We spent 18 months doing theology proper. We were talking about who Jesus is and what he accomplished in terms of our salvation.

Now we are trying to answer the question: So what?

Now that we know who Jesus is and what he has done to secure our redemption what should we do in response? That is the focus of this series that we are now 2 weeks into. Last week we spoke about what I think is the most obvious response. When people figure out who Jesus is and what he has done for our salvation they tend to fall down in awe and worship. That's what the women did at the Mark 16. They were in awe. They were trembling. They were afraid. The empty tomb convinced them that Jesus was God and that he had condescended to die for their sins – that truth OVERWHELMED them and that truth should overwhelm us.

The FIRST response of people who GET THIS ought to be grateful, respectful, reverential awe and worship. The SECOND response ought to be evangelism. First you fall down and worship

then you get up and you go out and you tell everyone you know the Good News that Jesus Christ is Lord.

There are only two necessary songs in the Christian hymnbook. The first one is “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross” and the second is “Go Tell It On The Mountain”. Everything else is variation on the theme.

People who get this WORSHIP and people who get this GO. And it is to that theme that we turn our attention today. Hear now the Word of the Lord beginning at verse 6 of Acts 1.

So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” 7 He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” 9 And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. 10 And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, 11 and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.” (Acts 1:6–11 ESV)

This is the Word of the Lord, thanks be to God!

My outline this morning is not very complicated. I want to share a few thoughts on GOING from this text and also from the Book of Acts as a whole.

### **A Few Thoughts On Going:**

The first thing I think I want to say is this:

#### **1. You have to gather before you can go**

That’s the first thing the text says:

when they had come together ... (Acts 1:6 ESV)

Jesus spent 40 days with the disciples after the resurrection and before his ascension. He spent 40 days teaching them BEFORE he gave them the Great Commission – have you ever thought about that? Jesus spent 40 days making sure that the disciples were on a firm footing before he sent

them out as hunters and fishers of men. That's very interesting. And look at what he taught them – Luke gave us an interesting snapshot in the last chapter of his Gospel. He tells us that Jesus said:

These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” 45 Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, 46 and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, 47 and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things. (Luke 24:44–48 ESV)

Now in Acts 1 Luke tells us either more about that same gathering or he tells us about another, similar gathering in the same time period. Either way what we see is that these gatherings were focused on helping the disciples understand the Scriptures – specifically, helping the disciples understand how everything written in the Old Testament LANDS ON – IS FULFILLED IN – the person and work of Jesus Christ. They needed to understand that if they were going to have anything of value to share with the lost people of the world.

Jesus doesn't send them out to share encouraging thoughts.

He doesn't send them out to provide useful tips on how to be successful in life.

He doesn't send them out armed with marriage counsel, political theory or meaningless cultural platitudes.

He trains them in biblical exegesis – more than that – he trains them in Old Testament exegesis.

He teaches them how to read the whole Bible as Christian Scripture.

He teaches them how to understand how all the promises of God – originally made to ethnic Israel – are now yes and amen in Christ and available to be shared with all people who put their faith in him.

That's what he teaches them when they gather together on the other side of the empty tomb.

Before he sends them out.

I think there are at least 2 implications that we need to notice here.

First of all I think it would be fair to say that **good gathering facilitates good going**. When we gather together – if we do what we should – if we speak about how all the Bible points to Jesus Christ and how he is the proper focus and climax of the Scriptures – Old Testament and New – if we do that when we gather then you will do a better job of going to your friends and loved ones with the life changing Gospel of Jesus Christ. **Good gatherings facilitate good goings**. That's the first and most obvious implication of this text.

But I think one more point can be made here. I think that we as a church should be cautious about contributing to someone's GOING if they have not participated regularly and faithfully in our GATHERING. Do you see what I mean here? Sometimes missionaries want a church to support them in their GOING but they have never been a part of our gathering – or anyone else's gathering. They don't understand the value. They are "doers" by personality and they don't see the necessity of sitting in tribe and hearing the Word of the Lord together.

They just want to go.

And I think that we should be wise enough to say no. Because until we have gathered together we don't know what they will be saying when they go out on our behalf. What do they believe? Do they have it right? Because it takes some time to get it right.

Look at the text we just read.

Luke has narrated for us one of these gatherings that took place in the 40 days after the resurrection and before the ascension and he has told us one of the questions that was asked by the disciples during that time period. Somebody asked this (P.S. You know it was Peter, but the text doesn't say so we won't speculate, but SOMEBODY asked this).

"Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6 ESV)

Wow! That's a terrible question. You know how nice pastors say that there are no bad questions?

Well honest pastors will tell you when you ask a stupid question and this is a remarkably stupid question. John Calvin says here:

“There are as many errors in this question as words.”<sup>1</sup>

That’s a fair assessment.

This is a disastrous question.

This is the question that the crowds were asking back in John 6 – how can the disciples be asking this question in Acts 1? This is not good. They are still thinking that ISRAEL is the focus of God’s saving work in the world. They think that ISRAEL is the climax of the Bible instead of Christ. That’s a huge problem. Can you imagine if Jesus had sent them out as missionaries before he got that problem straightened out? That would have been a disaster.

But no.

He didn’t do that. He gathered with them. He taught them. He showed them. He corrected them. And only then did he send them out.

And I think there is a lesson in that for us.

We shouldn’t invest in someone’s GOING until they have invested in our GATHERING. Until they’ve put in the time to sit with us under the Word and to work with us through the text we should not be investing in their going anywhere; because they would almost certainly be doing more harm than good.

Now of course I want to qualify that by saying that they don’t necessarily have to have GATHERED HERE in this church but they need to have GATHERED SOMEWHERE IN SOME CHURCH that we know and trust. We need to know that you have put in the time. We need to know that you have asked stupid questions and have received patient correction. We need

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<sup>1</sup> John Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentaries (Complete)*, trans. John King, Accordance electronic ed. (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1847), paragraph 74993.

to know that before we send you anywhere. You have to gather with the people of God before you go out to reach and teach the lost. I think that just makes sense.

The second thing I think we would want to say is related to that. I think we would want to say that:

## **2. Going starts at home**

Look at what Jesus says. He says:

“you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (Acts 1:8 ESV)

You are going to start local and go global – that’s what Jesus says and it makes a ton of sense. And that’s how the story goes. In Acts 2 the Holy Spirit falls on the church and Peter preaches to people gathered in Jerusalem. Literally he preaches to the people right outside the house that he was staying in.

He just went outside.

He went down the stairs, out the door and into the public square. That’s where it began for the Apostle Peter and that’s where it ought to begin for each of us.

All of us **MUST GO** and all of us ought to follow the example of Peter. We should go down the stairs, out the front door and into the public square. Some will be sent further, but everyone ought to start there. Because all of us are sent first to our immediate sphere of influence. We are sent to our kids, our neighbours, our co-workers and our extended family.

There is no guesswork in that.

It took a message from the Holy Spirit and the consensus of the church in Antioch in Acts 13 to send Paul and Barnabas half way around the world – but it doesn’t take any of that to get you down the stairs, out the door and into the public square. If you are a disciple of Jesus Christ, if you are filled with the Holy Spirit then you are called to that. You might be called to more but

you are not called to less.

So again very practically I think this means a couple of things. First of all, it means we are all missionaries to some extent or another. You are AT THE LEAST a missionary to your kids, your neighbours, your co-workers and your extended family.

Let me repeat that list.

You are AT THE LEAST a missionary to your kids, your neighbours, your co-workers and your extended family.

You don't have to pray about whether or not you are sent to those people. You are. Since God is Sovereign you can assume that he has chosen your immediate mission field with care and intentionality. He gave you a certain set of kids, he put you in a certain neighbourhood. He gave you a certain job. He has given you certain relatives. None of that was an accident. All of that is your mission field.

So get at it.

Get into it!

Go into THAT WORLD and make disciples.

The second implication here I think is that if you feel called to go FURTHER than that you should seek to prove yourself first within your immediate context. Show yourself faithful as a missionary to your family, to your city and to your friends and then ask us to send you overseas. Don't think that you are going to start evangelizing over there – you need to start here. Peter began with the people right outside his door and you need to do the same; I need to the same. GOING needs to start at HOME.

The third thing I think we can say here is that:

### **3. Sending is a type of going**

I'm getting that from the Book of Acts as a whole but particularly from Acts 13:1-3. Just flip over to that quickly. Let me read that to you:

Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. 2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." 3 Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off. (Acts 13:1-3 ESV)

Notice here again that the call to GO came to some people who were GATHERED – I don't think you can make that point often enough – but here I want you to see that not ALL of those gathered were called to GO on this particular mission trip. The Holy Spirit did not say: "Every single member of the church needs to go" – he didn't say that, he said:

"Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul" (Acts 13:2 ESV)

Two people from that church went out on behalf of the whole. I think we have to see that. The Book of Acts seems to be saying that we are ALL called to Jerusalem – we are all called to GO to our friends, family, neighbours and co-workers – but we are not all called to GO physically to the ends of the earth. Some are. And so we as churches send SOME on behalf of us ALL.

Are you seeing that?

Sending is a type of going.

So every Christian needs to GO in two different ways. You need to go personally to your own immediate sphere of influence and you need to go COLLECTIVELY by SENDING representative MEMBERS of your church to every tribe, tongue and nation on planet earth.

That seems to be what the text is saying.

To pull that off we're going to need a couple of things from you. We're going to need you to give and we are going to need you to pray.

This January we are sending two people from this church to the ends of the earth. We are sending



Craig and Rene Brannan to Empengeni Province in South Africa. It won't be cheap and it won't be easy. Therefore we need you to give and we need you to pray. That is how you will GO to the nations. Most of us in this church will never set foot in Empengeni Province. But every single one of us has a roll to play in this project.

2 will go – but they will go on behalf of us as our REPRESENTATIVES. Paul and Barnabas were very clear that that's what they were doing.

Flip forward in your Bible to Acts 14:24-28. Paul and Barnabas went out on this trip – they took the Gospel in a big circle through the north-eastern region of the Mediteranean and then they came back and reported to the church as a whole. The text says:

Then they passed through Pisidia and came to Pamphylia. 25 And when they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia, 26 and from there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had fulfilled. 27 And when they arrived and gathered the church together, they declared all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. 28 And they remained no little time with the disciples. (Acts 14:24–28 ESV)

Do you see that? After the GOING there was a RE-GATHERING. They arrived and GATHERED the church together. By the way, notice that they were sent out by ONE church not 57 churches. One church supported these two people 100%. Some of you thought it was weird that we were doing that with the Brannans, but let me tell you something, we're not weird – we're doing what we see in the Bible – this idea that we had in the 20<sup>th</sup> century that missionaries should get support from 25 churches who each kick in \$2000 and then they have to spend 6 months going around reporting to people they barely know – THAT'S WHAT WAS WEIRD. This is just Biblical.

One church sent them out.

One church received them back.

And they remained no little time with the disciples in that place.

They were known there. They were celebrated and supported there because THEY were THEM. And that's how it should be. The two went out on behalf of the whole, because sending is a form

of going.

So we're in this together friends.

Fourth thing I want to say about going is that:

#### 4. Going is a work of the Spirit

You see that in the text we started with. Jesus said:

“you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (Acts 1:8 ESV)

Don't just charge out there firing blindly into the crowd – wait for the Spirit.

I love that!

Then you see the Spirit descend on the church and empower the disciples and they start to preach and 3000 people get saved and baptized on a single day.

Then you see in Acts 13 the Spirit directing a church to send two of their number – completely supported – on the first truly foreign mission trip in Christian history.

Then you see in Acts 16 the Spirit directing the Apostle Paul to cross over into Europe and of course you know the story – history would never be the same. Christianity jumped the curb and ceased being a local, regional, expression of Messianic Jewish faith. The church went truly international – and all of that, guided and directed and empowered by the Holy Spirit of God.

I love that phrase that we bump into in some version or another time and again in the Book of Acts:

And **the Lord added** to their number day by day those who were being saved. (Acts 2:47 ESV)

The disciples are doing stuff – absolutely – they are going. They are going into the marketplace,

they are going across cultures, they're going around the world – but it's the Lord who is doing it at the end of the day. It's the Lord who is building the house.

Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. (Psalms 127:1 ESV)

If you go in the flesh, then you are going to reap according to the flesh. But if you go in the Spirit then you are going to reap according to the Spirit. Thanks be to God!

## **Challenge:**

Now, in the time we have left I want to leave you with a challenge. The challenge flows very naturally out of our fourth and final point and it is simply this: I want you to pray and then I want you to go. It's a 2 part challenge and I want to explain each piece of it.

### **1. Pray for Spiritual support**

I want you to pray like they do in the Book of Acts. Turn to Acts 4. In Acts 4 the disciples discover the cost associated with going. They start going and preaching and they get arrested and they are threatened and warned that if they keep preaching it may cost them their lives. Do you remember what they did in response? The text says they prayed - the prayer starts in verse 24, we'll pick it up in verse 29. They said:

And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus." 31 And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness. (Acts 4:29–31 ESV)

I'm going to tell you this – I never feel MORE on solid ground when I am praying for healing than when I am praying for a healing in connection with my intention and desire to share the Gospel with someone. This is not a sermon on healing, so I'm not going to say more than that, but because it is a sermon on GOING and preaching with boldness to lost people I can't say less than that. Sometimes God will heal someone in advance and in support of your evangelistic efforts – did you know that? So tell lost people you are praying for them and then speak the word of God with boldness. That is a New Testament approved missionary strategy.

So pray like that for some lost person in your immediate sphere of influence in the next 48 hours. That's the challenge. Pray for Spiritual support! You need support inside you and you need support in the life of the person you are trying to reach. Ask God for that! Don't try and do this in the flesh. Going is a SPIRITUAL enterprise.

So pray like that. Tell some lost person in your circle of influence that you are praying for them like that.

That's the first part of my challenge.

And the second part is pretty obvious:

## **2. Speak the Word of God with boldness**

It's not enough to pray for people. You have to actually speak to them. The Apostle Paul says:

how are they to hear without someone preaching? (Romans 10:14 ESV)

faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. (Romans 10:17 ESV)

So pray. Yes! Pray and ask the Lord to do something in the life of a lost person in your circle. And then ask for an opportunity to speak. And then do it. Speak the Word of God with boldness because faith comes from hearing and hearing through the word of Christ.

I want you to do that.

I want you to pray and then I want you to speak, because this is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God, let's pray together.