

12 July 2020 Mission Sunday

*Sermon: Rev. Mark Ord, BMS
World Mission Director of training
and hospitality*

Reading: Acts 1.1-8 & 2.1-4

Hello My name is Mark and I work with BMS world mission, and I am delighted to reflect on the bible with you today.

The book of Acts is all about newness. It's about Jesus in his life, death and resurrection just getting started, just warming up. You see the cross is not the end of the story and neither is the resurrection. Luke says I wrote my gospel account to tell you about everything that Jesus began to do in his life, death and resurrection, right upto the ascension. Acts is the second part.

One of the best lines in the film Jaws is when they are going out to catch the shark and Brodie gets his first sight of that huge fish and he says to the captain: 'We're gonna need a bigger boat.' Well that's what Luke is getting at here, if I'm going to tell you about Jesus properly, we are gonna need a bigger story because it doesn't stop there at the gospel. The life, the teachings, the miracles, the welcome, the parties, not even the cross and the resurrection. The story is bigger than that. And in fact, the story itself is just getting going. It's gonna need a bigger cast, and it's gonna be set on a bigger stage.

It is surprising then, that this newness of Jesus' resurrection life sweeping up new actors, reaching to new places starts by running straight into a wait. Wait in Jerusalem. Now we know about waiting at present. We know about how life can be stalled and so perhaps we understand something of the frustration of this protracted hiccup in the story. We discover in that little detail, that resurrection life is often slow. And that is because it is staged and it is growing in the old. It hasn't yet overturned everything. Resurrection life is situated here where we are including our lockdown. This is made plainer when we realise that Jesus with the cross behind him; fresh from the tomb, has assembled the same old cast with the same old mind set.

So we see Jesus at table in that familiar picture of Jesus working with the disciples, bearing with them,

teaching them, opening them up to the new: the gift of the spirit and the witness to the ends of the earth. And the old is seen in the disciples question about Israel and the kingdom and how a patch; our power, the new is going to break all of that. It is set to burst all the boundaries, to grow until the ends of the earth are renewed in Jesus. And this comes as a commission and as a promise: You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth.

In our own lockdown, in our own waiting, that big vision is still a gospel thing. It is still the scope of newness in Jesus; the ends of the earth. We may be understandably caught up with organising the local, sorting out services and serving our local community. Our world might feel like it is shrinking, but it is not and neither is Jesus' commission.

Here we watch a video about the work of Baptist world mission. This represents part of our – all of us – response to Jesus' call. It's part of how we participate in what Jesus began doing fresh from the tomb.

BMS video (text from video)

The world is united by an enemy. A virus that is stealing lives and spreading fear.

Mozambique – closed schools
Thailand – Empty streets
Nepal – shuttered shops
UK – Queuing for food
Afganistan – empty streets

For years to come, we will be remembered for how we responded. For staying home and protecting our communities and also for loving our global neighbours.

UK- Clapping for the NHS
Chad & Nepal – screening for health
Sri Lanka – Handing out food packages
Mozambique – sewing face masks

We will be remembered for praying, for giving, to help them respond

Thailand – Food deliveries
Nepal – hand washing & improvised PPE

In Afganistan, Nepal, Mozambique, Chad, Albania and across the globe, for feeding the hungry, for counselling the sick, for providing protective equipment on the

frontlines, for helping to stop the spread. Remembered for being united together, remembered for standing in solidarity together. The world is helping and we can help. BMS world mission is responding to the coronavirus pandemic. We're helping to coordinate the global Baptist response and we're doing it now in the name of Jesus. You can be a part of it, you can stand in solidarity with people around the world, fighting coronavirus and feeling its effects. You can look back on this time knowing you did everything in your power to help. You can respond today.

and the time when God will renew not just 12 disciples in a closed room, not just a church that is floundering in a new situation. God will renew heaven and earth. That is the task that Jesus began when he widened the stage and chose the cast and we are all part of that world-wide cast now, caught up even now in the drama. Amen.

Around the world we are all engaging with this pandemic and we are all facing uncertain future as we move out of it. And perhaps it is strange for us to be caught up so much in that uncertainty. So maybe the second part of the text will straighten our vision, because for all the emphasis on the old that is creaking and the waiting which is frustrating, there is something genuinely new here.

Wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit; the gift of God. Wait to become witnesses in your city. To become witnesses among your friends, your enemies and right out into the unknown of the wider world. And sat in the room meeting with Jesus hearing of the Spirit, I wonder how much planning the disciples got up to? Particularly after the ascension of Jesus. Sat with a task and very limited resources, what were they doing? What were they discussing?

Was there a flipchart in the corner, some diagrams, some scenario planning? Can you imagine them? There are 12 of us, 'how are we gonna get this job done?' 'Who can speak a foreign language?' 'Whose got relatives overseas that we might stay with?' And then bam: the room starts to shake. Wind blows, the fire descends, words are given. The world is on their doorstep. Growth starts in ways that had never made it onto the flipchart, never been mentioned in the vision document.

The future may look precarious and feel unsettling. It is not so for God. The future is God's natural habit and as we walk into it, God will give God's resources. We have to do our planning and thinking but is not the main thing because the world is not a closed in place. It is going somewhere, it is going home to God. More it is being led home to God, this is the work of the Spirit. The gospel moves outwards to the ends of the earth so that we can all know that creation is moving forward to the place