

Word + Wait + Witness = The Church's Mission
Acts 1:6-14 (Yr A)

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It could be said that "Are we there yet?" is a universal question. We want to know when things are going to happen because we want to be prepared.

The first disciples wanted to know when Jesus was planning on restoring the kingdom to Israel. Three years of on-the-job training with the human/divine Jesus, and 40 days of intensive review with the Resurrected Christ did not provide the answer they wanted to hear. They received it from Jesus, but did not like it, so they asked the question again. *[If this pattern sounds familiar to you, pause the video and think about your prayer life. Have you ever repeated a request because you did not get the answer you wanted?]* I wonder how Jesus' answer made them feel. What is your reaction to, "It is not for you to know the times or seasons that God has set by His own authority" (v.7 CEB) especially when followed by, "Rather, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you..." (v.8 CEB)?

Possible and understandable reactions include, but are not limited to: (1) Don't we get the real answer now? We've heard this one before **{WORD}**; (2) If not us, then who *does* get to know; Times or seasons tell me it's not going to be any time soon. **{WAIT}** (3) Great! We'll be powerful! Why? What kind of power? "and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea

and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” {**WITNESS**} (v.8b CEB). Say what? Witness to the end of the earth?

Word + Wait + Witness = The Church’s Mission. These final *words* of Jesus sum up the church’s mission. In them Jesus commissions His disciples to continue His work until He returns one day to wrap it all up. The 3 W’s are our *instructions* to successfully complete our mission’s objective. All words conveniently compiled by THE Word into THE WORD – the Bible.

Before we can hope to be successful in spreading the gospel to the ends of the earth, we must be immersed in the Word, grounded in the Word, consumed by the Word. Luke summarized Jesus’ work at the end of his gospel: “**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, the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled**” (Lk 24:44 (CEB). Jesus used the Hebrew scriptures to place His ministry, death, and resurrection into context. BTW – after making this connection, Jesus “opened their minds to understand the scriptures” (Lk 24:45 CEB)!!

IF we love God, neighbor, and self, we keep Jesus’ command to love one another. IF we follow Jesus in announcing the presence of the Kingdom of God, we are eager students of Scripture. Like Jesus, we saturate ourselves with The Word which anchors our understanding of our mission.

Anchored in the WORD, we WAIT for the Holy Spirit. This is not something we humans enjoy. We may be too eager or excited to wait, choosing to rush forward without the Spirit's power. We may prefer waiting to getting busy. We might not be sure it's really the Spirit giving us power.

What Jesus reinforces to the disciples is that the work He's been engaged in is not easy. It is demanding. They cannot do their ministry on their own. They must have the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. No human is capable of fulfilling the church's mission on our own power.

Let's also remember that the waiting Jesus teaches is not passive. To wait upon the Spirit is *active waiting* – praying, staying immersed in the Word, actively seeking God's presence with hopeful anticipation. And, they were *together* – all the disciples waiting and praying and seeking the Holy Spirit together in one room. They sought a communal experience not an individual one. We'll read about it next week on The Day of Pentecost – when the Holy Spirit made a visible appearance.

With WORD and WAIT in place, disciples are ready for WITNESS. Once the Spirit has come and empowered them, then they will be witnesses to the ends of the earth.

Remember that in the 1st century world, new kings or emperors assumed their new authority as heralds blasted the news throughout the kingdom. This was good news because the

announcement of a new king gave hope to a restoration of order. Relate this to what we're discussing in Acts 1: Disciples ask when the new kingdom will begin, and Jesus says it's already here because the king has defeated his enemies (Jesus defeated sin and death), and yet, the new kingdom is not *completely* here. Disciples live in the in between-time of the kingdom already here and yet not fully here. WITNESS. Go and tell the world about the kingdom at hand.

To be a witness is to both proclaim and demonstrate Christ's lordship over one's life, telling stories of forgiveness and transformation, and sharing how God's grace has made us new. To witness as a follower of Jesus is to imitate Christ in one's lifestyle, actions, and sacrificial love for the world.

The Church's Mission: WORD, WAIT, WITNESS. Be in the WORD. Actively WAIT for and seek the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Follow Jesus by continuing His work – WITNESS to the ends of the world.

Sporadic Bible reading? Passively staring into the sky for Jesus to return? Keeping the gospel to oneself? Not according to Jesus! Jesus IS coming back one day, but until that day, Jesus is still working in us and through us. WITNESS!