

Today we will preach together to our own ears and hearts and minds

And we will ask Jesus

Lord, is this the time

When you will restore the kingdom

Your rule over our lives

Your lordship over our hearts

Lord, is this the time

When you will bathe us with your Spirit

And set us free for loving service to your world

When you will recreate the Church

To be obedient to your commands

And responsive to your powerful love

Come Holy Spirit

Spirit of the crucified and risen Jesus

Clothe us with power

The power of Christ's love

"Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?"

He replied, "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set 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, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Another prediction of the end of the world

Has come and gone

One elderly man spent a fortune on the prediction

It is not for you to know

It is not yours, but God's

Not only will we be

Unable to predict

It is not for us to predict

When we do predict, we take something that belongs to God

And try to make it ours

Only God knows the heart of the one who made the prediction

To me it sounds rebellious

To attempt to do

What God alone can do

It's still fun to joke about the end coming

It's fun to talk about never having to do the dishes again

No more taxes

No more political attack ads

Is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?

Jesus, you are the Messiah

That means you are the king of David's line

You are the ruler promised by God

How is this going to work?

When Jesus had been put on trial before Governor Pilate

The whole assembly accused him and demanded his death

They charged that his acts of treason were

Perverting Israel

Forbidding people to pay taxes

And claiming to be the Messiah

They demanded his death

And asked for the release of Barabbas

Who actually had defied the power of Rome

He actually had led an insurrection

They had the evidence they needed to convict him

They had no evidence for Jesus

Pilate gave in to their demands

Even though he wanted to free Jesus

Even though he knew Jesus was innocent of their charges (Luke 23:22)
But God was the One who proclaimed Jesus to be innocent
The innocent One suffered and died for the guilty
 For Barabbas
 For Pilate
 For Peter and Judas
 And for you and me
And the innocent One, who had carried our guilt and shame
 And lifted that burden with his body
 To the top of that cross
 Died for us
 And was proclaimed innocent
 On Easter morning
 When God raised him from death to life
So how are you going to be king?
 His disciples asked asked Jesus
 On this last opportunity to be with him
 This was his last teaching session with his students
Is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?
 Those who would attempt to predict the end of the world
 Also tend to point to 1948
 When Great Britain along with the help of other nations
 Made good on a promise made at the end of World War I
 To make a homeland for Jews
 They turned over power to a fledgling movement
 That had just fought for independence
 And the nation of Israel was reborn
But is this the restoration of the kingdom to Israel
That is the establishment of Jesus as king? As Messiah?
 Is **this** what Jesus died for?
 Is **this** what God raised him to do? (no)

May 15, 1948, is celebrated by Israelis as Independence Day
It is denounced by those who hate Israel
But it has nothing to do with the rulership of Christ
The lordship of Christ is not about geography
And a little piece of land in the Mediterranean area
The lordship of Jesus
Is what happens in your life and mine

Jesus answered the question about the restoring of the kingdom to Israel
By promising and describing
the work the Holy Spirit would do
through **them**

While Jesus was with them for forty days after his resurrection
He ordered them to stay in Jerusalem
He gave no commands for **the Roman emperor** to obey
He commanded only those who were willing to follow him
Stay in Jerusalem “for the promise of the Father” (1:4)
Jesus had been clearly teaching this promise
Clearly giving this promise
That God would give them the Holy Spirit
Jesus said, “for John baptized with water,
But you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit
Not many days from now” (1:5—right before today’s passage).

They couldn’t know until it happened
What it would be like to be baptized with the Holy Spirit
What they would be capable to doing
What opportunities would be given them
How the band of disciples
Would turn into the Church of Jesus
But Jesus said, wait for the promise

Wait

In just a few days

Don't be distracted by the power of Rome

Don't be distracted by what God is going to do with **nations**

Or **when** God is going to do it

But wait for what God is going to do **in you**

You will received power

When the Holy Spirit has come upon you

These are the same words given to Mary

When she would become the mother of Jesus

The Holy Spirit will come upon you

And you will be my witnesses

Not just in Israel

Not just in your neighborhood

But throughout the world

After speaking to them

Promising them

Directing them

When he was finished with all their instruction

He was lifted up

God took Jesus up into heaven

The clouds covered where he was going

While they were watching him leave

And even though they could not see him any longer

They were still watching

Still gazing

It was time to move on, but they could not

They were so used to having Jesus there with them

To ask him questions

To listen to his action plan

To rely on him to be the one to respond

To whatever challenge or opportunity
That presented itself
But he was no longer there
Just then, two men in white robes stood by them
Two men in dazzling white robes had been at the tomb also
To break the silence
To end the period of perplexity
To give the great news of the resurrection
And now again they were bringing great news
This separation would not be forever
Jesus would come back to us
In the same way he left

The two men in white broke the silence
They got the followers of Jesus to stop gazing into heaven
And to fix their attention on continuing the work of Jesus
And the disciples headed off to Jerusalem
To wait for the Holy Spirit
They were walking on their own
Jesus would still be with them
But they had to become the presence of Christ
The breath of Christ
had to be breathed into them
Like God breathed life into Adam
Christ was soon to be made present
Not just in one place
But now in each disciple
Each follower would become
The living power of Christ in the world

The disciples had been stuck gazing into heaven
Jesus was gone

And they could ask themselves

Now what do I do?

Karla & I had met at a conference when we were 16

It was a youth leadership conference at St. Olaf College

We kept in touch after that

But during our senior year in high school

I was going to a wedding at a country church

All by itself—no town near it

But it was in the neighborhood of Austin, where Karla lived

And I invited her to go with me

On the way back from the wedding

My friend Roger, Karla, and I were riding together

In my '63 Chevy II

When I ran out of gas—out in the country

And I wondered, now what do I do?

At least I wasn't alone

Then along came the pastor of that little church

And he offered to take Roger with him to get a can of gas

That left Karla and me all by ourselves in the car

on the side of the road

and she was starting to wonder

if all this had been set up

but we had a nice innocent conversation

and all was right with the world

it turned out better than I could have planned it

(and I didn't plan it!)

but as a 17 year-old

wondering what to do now

I was glad it wasn't all up to me

I was glad there were kind strangers

Who went out of their way to help me

Now I can't remember if I even paid the pastor
For the gas he brought

We find ourselves in situations

Where we have to be in charge

Where we have to make decisions about what to do next

That's what our parents and trying to prepare us for

To be able to decide what to do

When we're on our own

And have to face something that takes us by surprise

Something we really didn't plan would happen

And Jesus put his followers into that position

Now it was up to them to follow him

By leading

Striking out on their own

Carrying on the power of his present love

Into all corners of the earth

Paul Harvey, the well known radio broadcaster, once said,

"Too many Christians are no longer fishers of men
but keepers of the aquarium."

in other words,

we Christians can be more concerned about preserving the Church

than we are about touching the lives of other people,

more concerned about preserving our "religion"

than we are about helping people discover

the source of wholeness,

the fountain of living water that wells up to eternal life.¹

To be the Church

Is about Christ reaching out through us

¹ "Keepers of the Aquarium," Richard J. Fairchild, The Last Words of Jesus

To places Christ has not yet gone
To people who do not yet know him
Rather than playing it safe
And letting someone else do the work
It's about our becoming unstuck
Becoming leaders
Empowered leaders

In many children's stories

Inanimate toys, that just stare straight ahead
Are brought to life—like "Pinocchio" or "Toy Story"

The Church often gets stuck staring straight ahead

The Church is the Church, however,

When it is brought to life

God is acting

God is bathing us with the Spirit of Christ

God is breathing life into the Church

God is recreating the leadership of Jesus

In you and me

Now what do we do?

We wait to receive the Spirit

We expectantly wait to see what God will do through us

We pray

We gather together knowing that God is awakening us

You will be baptized with the Holy Spirit

Next week we will hear about what happened next

How the disciples and those who were with them

Received that power

And the Church was born

The new Israel came into being

Those whose lives were under the reign of Christ

For whom Jesus was Lord
For whom Jesus is Lord today. Amen.