



Series: Church in the Community

Lesson 1: A New Mandate

Message by Pastor Andrew Kulasingham 5th July 2020

Scripture Reading: Acts 1:1-11

We launch into a new series this morning. For the next three months we will be looking at the first 9 chapters of the book of Acts. We begin today by looking at Acts 1:1-11 – A New Mandate.

As a leadership, we feel the Lord directing us to recast a new vision for the church .
Vision 2020 & Beyond: Moving from “Church On Sunday” to “Church In The Community”.

We will be asking some pertinent questions. How do we transition from a mindset that “Church is on Sunday” to the concept “Church is everyday”? How do we transition from “church as an assembling together of God’s people on a particular day” to “church as a dispersion of God’s people everyday, everywhere”? How do we transition from the idea that our congregation is the number of people seated here today, to an understanding that our church community is 140,000 people the population of our beautiful city Tauranga? How do we move from “church on Sunday” to “church in the community”?

It is our prayer and hope that as we reflect and study the church of Acts we will gain some knowledge and understanding on how our mothers and fathers of the first century did church. This week’s message looks at the birth of the early church in acts 1:1-11 and how our mandate is to re-present Christ not as a church on Sunday but as a church in the community.

Let’s read Acts 1:1-6

Verse 3 glosses over events that have transpired in the last forty days with a passing remark that Jesus “presented Himself alive after His suffering”.

Acts 1:3 (NKJV) to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

The reality is the disciples had just gone through the most traumatic times of their lives, watching the suffering and death of Jesus. Then to experience such elation to see Him resurrected and spend forty days with Him. Nothing will ever be the same again. And yet some things never change.

Make Israel great again

Acts 1:6 (NKJV) Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”

After spending three and a half years immersed in the day to day life with Jesus, hearing words of eternal life. Then experiencing the events of the past forty days, being taught all about the Kingdom of God, you would expect them to have a new perspective in life. But old habits die hard. The shock effect had worn out after forty days and they return to what they have been conditioned to believe – God belongs to Israel. God’s plan and purpose is to make Israel the greatest nation in the world. “Will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” they ask him. It sounds like they had adorned red caps, in a Donald Trump rally chanting “Make Israel great again”.

We are all like that. After encountering God that first time, an experience so wild and life changing, we were ready to give up everything for Jesus. Then the novelty wears off after a while and we return back to our own agenda again. Our prayer life begins to change. “Make Andrew great Lord”. “Make me the centre of your plan”.

Who’s in charge here?

Joshua was quickly educated about this in Joshua 5:13-14.

Joshua 5:13-14 (NKJV) And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, a Man stood opposite him with His sword drawn in His hand. And Joshua went to Him and said to Him, “Are You for us or for our adversaries?” So He said, “No, but as Commander of the army of the Lord I have now come.” And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped, and said to Him, “What does my Lord say to His servant?”

Whose side are You? “Are You for us or for our adversaries?” He asked. The response was emphatic – “I am Commander of the army of the Lord.” Joshua was quick to realise the appropriate response when in the midst of God - “What do you want your servant to do?”

God is not here to serve my agenda. He isn’t here to serve yours either. He has his own Agenda. Our only response is to choose to be part of it in service to Him.

John 12:26 (NKJV) If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.

HOW MUCH OF OUR AGENDA DOMINATES OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD?

A new Era – Divine authority restored

Acts 1:7 (NKJV) And He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.

The first thing the disciples were reminded of as they stepped into this new “post resurrection” era was that God has stamped His authority in His universe.

- Death and sin have been defeated

1 Corinthians 15:55-57 (NKJV) “O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?” The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

- The devil has been disempowered

Colossians 2:15 (NKJV) Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

Having stamped His authority over death, sin and the very source of all evil, God now requires total submission for His redemption plan to be completed in us.

It is not for you to know

“It is not for you to know times or seasons”

They say knowledge is power. The unknown is not a comfortable place to be as it requires us to surrender control. It requires complete trust. The disciples had to learn to be comfortable in not knowing. Not knowing requires us to surrender control.

GOD’S PLAN FOR OUR LIVES REQUIRES COMPLETE AND TOTAL SUBMISSION

In the book of Jeremiah God asks the people of Israel a similar question. Who’s in charge here?

Jeremiah 18:6 (NKJV) “O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter?” says the Lord. “Look, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel!

Am I or am I not the potter? Are you or are you not the clay? If we want to be part of God’s redemption plan, we need to be comfortable with God as the architect of our lives. In the post resurrection era I am not the master of my fate, I am not the captain of my soul. God is.

It is for Him to know you

Total submission is an intimacy issue. The only way we enter into an open and transparent relationship with God is through true trust and submission to His will and purpose for us.

Matthew 7:21, 23 (NKJV) “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven... And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’

There is a big difference between the saying and the doing. It is the practice of what we say that determines true submission. In the passage above, Jesus clearly points that out. He speaks to those who “practiced lawlessness” and says to them “I never knew you”. Practising

lawlessness is another way of saying “I am a law unto myself”. There is a connection between submission and intimacy with God.

John 14:23 (NKJV) Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.

True intimacy with God is only experienced in a relationship of complete surrender and submission.

IS GOD TRULY LORD OF YOUR LIFE? IS HE MASTER OF YOUR FATE AND CAPTAIN OF YOUR SOUL?

Post resurrection brought about a new era where Divine authority has been restored. With a new era came a new mandate.

A new mandate – Power to represent Jesus everywhere

Acts 1:8 (NKJV) But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

The invitation to fully trust God’s times and seasons was followed with a promise. They were promised an encounter with the Holy Spirit and they were promised power that came with such an encounter. Jesus also tells them that the reason for the power was to be “witnesses to Me”. The disciples were promised power to enable them to complete the task before them.

There is only one task given to us as disciples of Jesus. To be witnesses to Him. In other words to re-present Jesus to world around us. Jerusalem (our immediate sphere of influence), Judea and Samaria (involves crossing physical and cultural boundaries to influence others) and to the end of the earth (requires personal sacrifice to extend such influence). The scope of the power is as far as humanly possible. The witnessing is done through the enabling of the Holy Spirit.

Able vs dependable

We tend to focus on our ability. Are we able? God’s focus is that we are dependable. Paul was aware that there was a connection between God’s enablement and man’s trustworthiness.

1 Timothy 1:12 (NKJV) And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry.

It wasn’t Paul’s past that qualified him or disqualified him to be a witness for Christ (see 1 Timothy 1:12-16). It was his faithfulness in using whatever he had, wherever he was, to present himself as a witness for Jesus Christ.

The parable of the talents reinforces this principle. In Matthew 25:14-30 we see that the three servants were given talents “each according to his own ability”. The two servants who multiplied their talents received the exact same commendation:

‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’ (vs 21 & 23)

It wasn't the multiplication they were commended for. They were commended and rewarded for their faithful use of their talents. Divine power causes the multiplication. Our faithfulness activates the multiplication.

DO WE FOCUS ON ABILITY RATHER THAN DEPENDABILITY? WILL WE BE COUNTED FAITHFUL IN OUR OBLIGATION TO BE A WITNESS TO CHRIST?

A new Era has ushered in a new mandate. The new mandate requires a new approach.

Acts 1:11 (NKJV) “Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.”

Sometimes it feels like the church has been hunkered down in safe bunkers for centuries, waiting for Jesus to return. We gather in our holy huddles, “gazing” above every Sunday, waiting and hoping we survive this ordeal called life on earth until Christ to returns. The disciples were quickly jolted to reality by the angels - “why do you stand gazing “. The new era brought about by the resurrection of Jesus, ushered in a new mandate. The mandate to be witnesses and re-present Jesus, required the disciples of Christ to embrace a new approach.

Temple vs tabernacle

The “great commission” of the church can be summed up in one word – GO. The church must be on the go. Unfortunately most of the time we are building temples of worship rather than being tabernacles of His presence. Paul emphasised this principal when he rebukes the Corinthians for their sexual behaviour.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (NKJV) Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

Paul speaks of every Christian as a temple of the Holy Spirit. He wasn't talking about a permanent fixture but was speaking of a moving, breathing community who tabernacle the presence of God. “therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit” - Our bodies (our daily interaction with others) and our spirit (our devotional life with God) cannot be separated. Our mandate to represent Christ is not as a church on Sunday but as a church in the community. We are to glorify God with our bodies. We are carriers of His presence, agents of change, transforming our world.

We often make that separation – our spirit is for Sunday, our bodies function the rest of the week. The Bible does not make such a dichotomy. Everyday we function with our body and our spirit. Everyday is physical, everyday is spiritual. Both our body and spirit – we are

the temple of the Holy Spirit. Not a building with a street address, but an organic temple – moving throughout the community carrying the presence of God.

OUR MANDATE TO REPRESENT CHRIST IS NOT AS A CHURCH ON SUNDAY BUT AS A CHURCH IN THE COMMUNITY. WE ARE CARRIERS OF HIS PRESENCE, AGENTS OF CHANGE, TRANSFORMING OUR WORLD.

CHRIST HAS RISEN - ITS A NEW ERA – GOD IS IN CHARGE - LET CHRIST TRULY BE LORD OF ALL YOUR LIFE

A NEW ERA HAS USHERED IN A NEW MANDATE – WE ARE TO BE WITNESSES TO JESUS CHRIST. AS HIS WITNESS, BE DEPENDABLE. HE WILL ENABLE.

A NEW ERA – A NEW MANDATE – REQUIRES A NEW APPROACH. DON'T BE A SUNDAY CHRISTIAN. CARRY HIS PRESENCE WHEREVER YOU GO.