

“Leaking Jesus” series

Week 3: Judea
October 11, 2026

Acts 1:1 In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach 2 until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. 3 After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. 4 On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. 5 For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” 6 Then they gathered around him and asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” 7 He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Introduction

- How many of you are familiar with the story of David Livingstone? He was born into a poor family in 1813 and had to work long hours in a cotton factory as a youth, but still found time to study such that he was able to eventually get a degree in medicine.
- As a follower of Jesus, he wondered about his purpose in life until he heard Robert Moffat, a missionary, talk about the lost people of Africa. "I have sometimes seen, in the morning sun, the smoke of a thousand villages where no missionary has ever been."
- Those words inspired Livingstone to become a medical missionary and explorer, traveling throughout Africa to share about Jesus. He explored vast sections of the continent for decades, traveling 10's of thousands of miles in an era when this was extremely difficult and hazardous, seeing things no white person had ever seen before.
- His wife died of fever traveling with him. He suffered animal attacks, shipwrecks, sickness and all kinds of troubles, yet he pioneered the work of sharing Jesus with this continent and had amazing influence by the time he died at age 60.
- Or perhaps you're familiar with Anjeze Gonxhe, born in 1910 in Albania. This woman was the youngest in her family and despite a difficult upbringing, was so profoundly impacted by stories of missionaries, that by age 18, she joined an abbey in Ireland to learn English. At age 36 she heard a call from God to help the poor and two years later, she began missionary work with the poorest of the poor in India. For the next four decades, this woman, known now as Mother Teresa, served the least of these in some of the most difficult places on earth, sharing the love of Jesus with them until her death at 87 years old.
- How do you respond to stories like this?
- What do you think? Do you marvel at their faith? Do you consider the implications of how many people came to Jesus because of their work? Do you dismiss it as something cool that someone else did but doesn't really apply to you in your setting and with your gifting?
- How do you feel? Does it inspire you? Does it get you fired up? Or perhaps it overwhelms you? Maybe even make you feel guilty because you aren't even in the same ballpark?
- When we brainstormed this series, of “Leaking Jesus” to others, and honestly, every time we talk about the idea of telling people about Jesus, it takes me back in time to how I responded to this topic in my life.
- I grew up hearing the missionaries who came to our church. They would usually come from places like Africa or South America and show pictures of people living in huts with few possessions in other worldly landscapes. They would bring spears, clothes and cooking utensils to show us how the people lived.

- They would tell stories of medicine men, spiritual encounters, 12 hour trips across rugged terrain and of strange languages, bugs and animals.
- They would share about how people were coming to know God and it was all very exotic and exciting. In fact, it was many of those stories that built a picture in my head about what some of these places looked like and when my family got to take a trip to the Amazon rainforest in 2007, all those stories came to mind as we traveled on a rustic boat down the Amazon river to our village type accommodations.
- But as much as I loved the stories, they made me uncomfortable. Because the missionary presentation always, always ended with the challenge to tell others about Jesus. To be a witness. To be a missionary, either over there or where I lived.
- And what I came to conclude was that I loved the “idea” of evangelism but was not always thrilled with actually making it a part of my life. I would wonder what was wrong with me because I was supposed to do this as a good question, but if I’m honest, I was awkward and reluctant to share my faith and relationship with Jesus with others.
- I wonder for how many of us this describes our experience?
- Mike did a fantastic job of setting up this series. He walked us through Acts 1:8 and took it from theoretical to the practical. That we are to be people who live by giving our yes to Jesus and following him such that as we do through life, wherever we are, and leak Jesus onto every person we come in contact with.
- Then last week, James also did an amazing job of showing us what this could look like in our Jerusalem. That it is about connecting with people where we live, work, go to school, play and live like we love and care for people, building relationships that bear the weight of the good news of Jesus.
- Today, I want to examine the idea of sharing Jesus in our Judea, and to face head on this often reluctance we can feel to be witnesses for Jesus.

Main Sermon Text

Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

- There are two primary accounts of what Jesus said before he left earth as his marching orders for his followers. I don’t know if you have ever seen the differences between the two.
- One is this passage in Acts and the other is found in Matthew. You remember it.

Matthew 28:18 Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

- It is a clear command. Go and make disciples of all nations. We are to make disciples. We are to do this wherever we go around the world. It includes baptizing people into the life of Jesus, and teaching people to obey Jesus, to follow him, to live like him. The promise attached to it is that we have the power and presence of Jesus to make this all possible.

But when I look at Acts 1:8, it reads far less like a command and more like a promise.

Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

- “You will receive power”
- “You will be my witnesses”
- It sounds like something that will happen as you follow Jesus. Yet it seems like this doesn’t characterize all of those who follow Jesus. And that’s because it’s a promise with a condition. A promise that God will absolutely keep, but it is contingent on something.

I. He is a God of offense, not defense.

Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

- Mike talked a little about this in week 1.
- Jesus gives four spheres of witnessing in his statement.
- First is Jerusalem. This is what James unpacked last week. It is the place where the disciples immediately were. It's where they were hanging out after Jesus resurrection. It's where they lived. It was what they were most familiar with.
- Jerusalem is where we live. Our immediate relationships.
- Second is Judea. Judea was the nation of Israel. It extended outside Jerusalem to those in their nation. It is the people who were like them (other Jews) who needed to hear about Jesus. Jesus wanted his followers to go beyond their own little spheres to the wider range of people. For us, this is Sussex county (which Mike shared how almost 200,000 people like us do not know Jesus) and our state.
- Third is Samaria. This seems redundant since Samaria is in the region of Judea. But the people in Samaria were generally despised by Jews. They were not pure Jews. They were descendants of Jews intermarrying with other races. Their heritage was suspect and their worship patterns were considered inferior. They were nothing like the Jews. Which was exactly Jesus' point. We are to witness to the amazing person of Jesus to people who might be close by who are nothing like us. People with different economic classes, different ethnicities, those who we might be uncomfortable around. Scott M is going to unpack this more deeply next week.
- Finally is the ends of the earth. This is everyone else. Those beyond our immediate influence. Those that are far away. This is what we usually think about with international workers and other countries.
- Do you notice the pattern?
- First, it is a witness that is expanding in its scope. The good news of Jesus is supposed to grow. It is supposed to invade the kingdom of Satan and bring light and good news. It is a conquering picture. Of advancing against the gates of hell itself.
- Second, it is a gospel for all people and nations. The good news of Jesus is good news for everyone, everywhere at every time. We never have to be timid. We never have to apologize. When we leak Jesus, we are not timidly walking about and when we are bumped we say "sorry" and keep the amount of Jesus that leaks out to a minimum.
- We are on the offensives. We are on the side of the almighty powerful God.
- Third, this takes intentional effort. We don't reach people as witnesses by accident.
- Our Judea, Sussex County, our state, will only be saturated with the gospel through the efforts of the church. The Spirit is at work. Each of us individually impacts our Jerusalem, but we must collaborate to reach Judea. This is why we are pursuing church planting.
- It's why we have a residency with Eli and SarahAnne. It's why we want to grow our residency. To equip more people. Because we are to be witnesses all over our Judea.
- You have a role in this. To pray and pray earnestly. To support this with your resources. And do ask God if he wants you to go.
- We are part of God's army, designed to do battle with the enemy of all humanity, to see people come to Jesus. We WILL be his witnesses.
- This all sounds grand, but this is only going to happen if two things occur. First:

II. We will witness when we share God's heart.

- If being a witness for God is only about obedience, then we will always fall short.
- If telling others about Jesus is something that feels like a command that we have to obey but is a little like taking bad tasting medicine, we will never accomplish what God intended us to accomplish.
- That's because God's desire for his people to be his witnesses is a passionate desire.
- Jesus' command to make disciples is not a command given from logic. It is given from passion.
- Consider what he told people about his mission on earth.

Luke 19:10 "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

- The whole reason he left glory, the comforts of his Father, and allowed himself to be cruelly killed by his own creation, was his passionate, all-in love for humanity. It is his heart.
- Later in that same chapter, as Jesus came to Jerusalem at the end of his earthly life, we read:

Luke 19:41 As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it.

- This is heart rending crying. The kind that happens when you are deeply hurt. He knew his own people had rejected him, were about to kill him, and that their judgment was at hand. It tore him up.
- My friends, God is deeply, emotionally passionate about lost people coming to him. It is not casual.
- And his followers caught that passion. Paul wrote something about his heart that honestly, I could never say.

Romans 9:1 I speak the truth in Christ – I am not lying, my conscience confirms it through the Holy Spirit – 2 I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. 3 For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people, those of my own race, 4 the people of Israel.

- He is saying that he so desperately wants his own fellow Jews to know Jesus that he is willing to be cut off from his own salvation for their sake. Wow!
- Too many times we hope others escape God's judgment, but as long as we are OK, we're fine.
- My friends, a lack of evangelism and witnessing is not a knowledge issue. It's a passion issue. It's not because we don't know enough or have all the answers. It's because we don't share God's heart.
- How do we get this? We can't manufacture it, but we can cooperate with God to receive it.
- First, be interruptible. James mentioned this last week. Let God interrupt your life with people. Be willing to adjust to him. When we do this, we allow ourselves to slow down, to see the people around us, not just as cogs in our daily machine, but as people that God is invested in.
- At district conference this week Dan Lawrence shared that "evangelism is joining the Holy Spirit in conversations that he has already started."
- Second, connect your world, your situation, your emotions, to God.
- If you have a child who has not following God. Consider how you feel about it. What you would do to see them come back. What you would give up to make this happen. That's how God feels about all lost people. Begin to see each person you encounter and attach that emotion to it.
- Third, pursue God's presence. Experience him. Let him change you. Repent. Confess. Pray. Read his word. Learn what matters to him and let him change your heart.

- If you do not share God's heart, we will never be motivated to be his witness, to plant a church, to make the sacrifices to see it happen. But if we share God's heart, nothing will stop us from being his witnesses. We WILL be his witnesses.

III. We will witness when we are Spirit empowered.

- Acts is a continuation of what the author, Luke, wrote in his early works. We call it the book of Luke. As he ended his account of the life of Jesus, Luke wrote:

Luke 24:46 He told them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, 47 and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things.

- Their knowledge of events, their witnessing of what had happened, their understanding of the Scriptures and prophecies, were not enough. If it was, he would have told them to get out there and make disciples. Instead, he told them to wait.

49 I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

- Luke then reiterated this in the beginning of his account of how the church grew.

Act 1:4 On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. 5 For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit. . . 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

- Jesus knew that reaching the world with the good news of Jesus was never going to happen through well designed programs, through evangelistic strategies, because of the talents and charisma of people. It was only going to happen by his Spirit.
- So his instructions were to wait for the Spirit before they did anything.
- When we are devoted to the presence of God and his Spirit, he will empower us to be his witnesses.
- It's why we have the college of prayer. It's why we have prayer on Sunday mornings. It's why we're going to pray in a couple of minutes.
- Because it is the power of the Spirit that makes it all possible.
- When we are devoted to the presence of God:
- He will change our heart for lost people. He will change and motivate us for them.
- He will give us boldness – we won't be able to help ourselves.
- He will empower our words and actions – he will direct and give us the words to say and things to do
- He will change the hearts of people we share Jesus with.
- When we are devoted to his Spirit, his promise is that these WILL happen. We will reach our Judea.
- But the converse is also true. If we are not devoted to the presence of Jesus, then all of our efforts will be in vain.

Conclusion

- If we are going to reach our Jerusalem and Judea, we need the Spirit of God.
- We follow a God who is on the offense, not defense.
- We will be his witnesses when we share his heart for lost people.
- We will be his witnesses when we are Spirit empowered.
- As Mike shared two weeks ago, we GET to be on mission with God.
- We get to make a difference. We get to change the course of the lives of other people.

- We get to introduce people to the one who can utterly overturn their lives for the good.
- We are playing offense, not defense.
- But to do this, we need to share the heart of Jesus. Do we see people the way God sees people? Does the lostness of those at school, in our jobs, in Sussex county, break our hearts the way it breaks his?
- We need to pray for the heart and power of God's Spirit to do this.