



TIME OF GRACE®

It's Time to Get Going

Study Notes

Summary

Jesus' mission for his followers was clear—Go and be my witnesses in all the earth. Then and now, what matters the most is the message of Jesus, the Savior, who is coming back soon.

- **Acts 1:6-11:** 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.” ⁹ After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. ¹⁰ They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. ¹¹ “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”
- Urgent Truth: Jesus will _____.
- Remember: _____ >

Points to Ponder

1. In the last month, how often did you invite people to church to hear about Jesus? How often did you tell them about Jesus yourself? If you did, what gave you the courage? If you didn't, what prevented you?
2. Jesus described everyone's future as either “eternal punishment” or “eternal life” (Matthew 25:46). How do Jesus' words impact you as you think about your personal relationships?
3. Read Revelation 7:9-17 and imagine the pure joy of being with God forever.

4. Pray for three people you know who don't go to church and/or don't believe in Jesus. Ask God for the courage to share the message with them in the upcoming months.

Homework for Next Week

Read Genesis chapters 1-3.

Time of Grace Ministry
It's Time to Get Going
Acts 1:6-11
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After a soccer game, I was at my teammate's apartment and he was throwing in a frozen pizza for us to eat and I noticed right there on his fridge this Muslim prayer calendar. And I asked him, "Hey, what's this?" And he explained it to me and then he said this really curious thing. He said, "But Mike, I really never pray." A good conversation to talk about spiritual things, right? If you were standing in front of that fridge in that moment, what would you have said?

And yet, when God gives me the chance to have the conversation where this could happen, I often don't say the right words and sometimes, I don't say many words at all.

And that's why today I want to put a little bit of urgency in your heart. If you have a lot in common with me and you get nervous and you're not sure if the timing is right, today I want Jesus to slightly nudge you - maybe strongly kick you - so that you find the courage and the boldness to talk to people about Jesus because if you do, we can't guarantee that they'll come, but if they do their lives might be changed forever.

That's why today, I want to read just a few verses from the book of Acts; the story of the early Christian church. Here we're going to find the last conversation that Jesus had with his closest friends before he returned to heaven where he told them not just to gather and group and grow and give; he told them to go and share the good news. So if you have a Bible with you or you want to follow along on the screen, we're going to be in Acts 1 and let's start today with verse six.

"Then they," that's the apostles; Jesus friends, "gathered around him," that's Jesus, "and they asked him 'Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?'" Any of you parents ever taken a road trip with your kids and you're trying to make it to Michigan from Wisconsin and you get to like maybe Menasha, definitely Fond du Lac, and what do the kids say in the back? "Now? Are we there yet? Is this the time? Is this time?" And you just want to turn the wheel really fast. That's what these apostles were saying. They weren't little six year olds in the back of the van; they were grown men with beards and calloused hands but they had this burning question they couldn't wait for Jesus to answer: "Is now the time that you restore the kingdom?"

Now to grasp why that was such a good question, you have to define that phrase, "restore the kingdom." I'm guessing you know what the word restore means, right? It means to fix something; to bring it back to its original condition. If you like working on cars, you might get a really good deal on some like 1960's muscle car but you have to restore it, right? You have to fix

it so it's back to its original power and purpose. Any of you live in a home that's more than 50 years old? Yeah, a couple of you? The first people who lived in that home thought it was beautiful and spotless but you? It might be a fixer upper, the roof is leaking, there's stuff in the basement, and so you have to restore an old home and when you do, it's breathtaking. And so the question the apostles asked Jesus time and time again was, "Jesus, are you going to restore the kingdom?" They weren't worried about Jesus fixing some car or some home; they wanted him to fix the kingdom. When they all looked around at the land of Israel, when they looked at their fellow Israelites, when they thought about the world, they realized that something had been broken. And now here's Jesus - he died on the cross to prove that he cares, he rose from the dead to prove that he's God and he always can - and so they want to know, "Jesus, are you going to fix it? Life here is hard and we know that you care about us, we know that you can fix it, so are you going to push that button right now and restore our kingdom?"

I bet you ask questions like that, too. Maybe in your prayers you don't use the phrase "restore the kingdom" but I bet you ask Jesus that same question: Jesus, could you fix this today? Something's not right in my life, it's not what you intended, it's worn down and it's broken and I know you care about me. If you gave up your life on the cross when I was just your enemy, you must love me with no strings attached. And if you're the Son of God and you're going to rise from the dead, I know that you can do anything - you spoke and the universe came into existence - so this is nothing for you. So Jesus, please, is today the day? I'm grieving, I really miss him, and it's not getting easier and that's all it would take for you and my pain would be over. I'm so anxious; I don't want to leave the house. I'm so depressed; I'm not sure if I want to keep living. God, mental health is nothing. You could do this and my suffering would be over. My relationship with my kids, with my girlfriend, with my husband, God, it's not what you intended it to be; it's not love and respect and unity and your Holy Spirit is so powerful. Like, it wouldn't take you 15 minutes out of your schedule, God. Would you fix it? Would you restore this?

Now you know why the apostles kept asking that question time and time again: They wanted life to be better. They wanted their suffering to end. They believed that God could and so they asked him, "Now, Jesus?" And here's Jesus' answer, verse seven. "Jesus said to them, 'It's not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. 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.'" Is now the time? Well, guys, here's the good news: God's got a time. Suffering will not have the last word. Struggle will not have the last word. Grief and death and sin will not have the last word. God, with his divine authority, has set the day and the time. It's on his calendar, it's going to happen, but that's not your business. I don't want you to sit there moping, praying, waiting for God to end the world and fix your problems because this is your mission: Go. You'll receive power, the Holy Spirit, and I need you to be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. In other words - and this is fascinating to me - Jesus was saying to his closest friends, "I'm going to let you keep suffering because I want people to be happy forever."

I thought that the other day when a young woman from our church family told me the tragedy that she had been through. She's a fairly new Christian and I can't tell you too much about it for confidentiality reasons but she asked that question so many of us ask: Why would this happen?

If God is love and God is power, why would this happen? And thankfully, in that moment, I remembered that she was a new Christian; just a couple years in. And so I asked her this, I said, "What would have happened if five years ago there was another young woman just like you who had been through a tragedy just like this and she had prayed the exact same words just as you are - what if Jesus would have pushed the button, ended the world, and ended her suffering? If he would have done it, what would have happened to you?" And she realized that a heavenly Father whose heart is full of love was willing to let that young woman suffer and endure and hold on in hope because he was patiently waiting to restore her relationship with God.

Have you ever thought about it? Like whatever you're going through - you've got a chemo appointment, you just went through a breakup, you're battling depression - the only reason God lets it go a single day more is because of him or her or them. God's not waiting so we can gather another Sunday and wrap up a sermon series. He's not holding off on Judgment Day just so you can finally read the Bible cover to cover and grow. He's not waiting for us to give any amount of money. The only reason that God doesn't end all of his people's suffering right now is because he loves the people who are not yet his people. Like your co-worker, my teammate, the people you care about, your kids who walked away - God cares about them so deeply that he says to all his suffering children, "I know. I know. I've got a day when I'm going to end it. First, we've got to get them. We've got to let them know that there is eternal life that never ends through faith in Jesus."

Now if you're here today and you're not a Christian or if you're watching online or on TV and you're not a Christian, think about that for a second. God's love for you is so insane that he will let his own sons and daughters suffer for your sake. Like you might think because there's so much suffering in the world, what's the point of being a Christian? You're actually the reason; that God is holding his children close, he's listening to their prayers, drying away their tears with his promises because he wants you to watch this or to come here and to believe and only then, when he has you, will he end his people's suffering forever. How shocking to think about the patience and love of God.

That's what Jesus told his friends and then he gave them a shove to make sure they would do it. Look at the last verses of our text today, starting at verse nine. "After Jesus said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going when suddenly, two men dressed in white stood beside them. 'Men of Galilee,' they said, 'why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.'" I love trying to picture that conversation. Can you imagine if I was just talking - pretend I'm Jesus and you're the apostles - and in the middle of the conversation, I just start floating up? I was trying to picture like a Chinese lantern or like a bottle rocket; I don't know how he went. But I know the guys are standing there staring until two angels show up and they say, "Hey! Hey, John, yeah, eyes down here. Yeah, he's gone, he's coming back, so you got to go." "No more staring; time to start sharing. Jesus is coming back soon." And that message was so powerful to these men, they believed it and they did it.

If you're taking notes today, write this down. It's the same urgency that God is giving us. That Jesus will come back. We don't know when, I couldn't tell you the time or the date the Father has set by his authority but he will come back in the same way that he left. One day, the skies will open up and every angel will be surrounded around Jesus the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. His people's suffering will end and Jesus will come back.

So the other day, I was trying to think of what I would call this message. I don't know if this helps you at all but every time when I'm working on a sermon I try to come up with like a phrase or a word or a sentence that even if you forget all the other things I say when I'm rambling on up here that at least you'll remember this; like small enough to fit inside your heart and you'll remember it at breakfast tomorrow morning. So I'm sitting at my computer trying to think like how would I summarize all of this up in a single phrase? I had an idea so I started typing, "Go and do greater things." You get it? Like greater things like the series? And go - do you like it? No, you're looking at me with blank expressions. Yeah, I didn't like it either so I highlight it and delete it and I was thinking about this text again so I wrote from, "Staring to sharing." Clever? Cheesy? Yeah, I don't like it either so I highlighted that one, I deleted it. I'm staring and I can't figure out what to call this message and that's when I didn't think of today's theme; I heard it. Tick, tock, tick, tock, tick, tock - my office clock - tick, tock, tick, tock. And I thought about the angel's words: "He's coming back." You don't have eternity to do it. It's going to happen on the day the Father says.

Which is why I brought this for you today. This is a 10 minute sand timer I picked up from Amazon, which means from this very moment, I have 10 minutes until I say amen. Normally, when I'm up here talking to you, I can get away with murder. If church isn't done in an hour, an hour five, or an hour 10, or an hour 20, yeah, you're fine. I mean, you're all checking your watches when I ramble on but I can keep talking. So if I want to put in an extra story or another passage or, "Oh yeah, there's one more thing," I can. But not today. Today, when the last grain of sand ends, I'm going to say amen, which means if there's something important I need to say to you, I don't have all day. Which means we could chit chat about the game and about the changing season but that's one less second I have to talk to you about the things that matter most, which is like every relationship you have.

Maybe you could visualize that above the heads of your co-workers this week, or your kids, or your siblings, like we don't know how much time is left but here's what the truth is: We don't have all day. A time is going to come when Jesus returns or they take their last breath and time will be up and there's no doing this with life - tick, tock, every second goes, tick, tock, tick, tock, and we're closer, tick, tock, and there's no rewind button, tick, tock, tick, tock, this isn't Netflix, tick, tock, it's life, tick, tock, tick, tock.

And here's not what I'm telling you. I'm not saying because eternity is at stake you should sprint out of church today, you should turn off this program on TV, you should go find anyone that you know that maybe doesn't go to church or trust in Jesus, shake them and not let go: "Do you believe in Jesus? Do you repent of your sins?" That would not be smart. In fact, the Bible itself says you shouldn't do that. Colossians 4 says "Be wise in the way you act towards people who aren't Christians." If you're not a Christian here or you're kind of new to our church, you'd

probably say the same thing, right? It's much more effective when someone listens to you, when they hear your story, when they invest, when they're honest, when they're humble, when they earn the right to be heard, when you build a bridge and then you cross over it with the good news of Jesus. So be wise and remember this. Because when a person's last grain of sand falls, one of two things can happen and there's no third option. What happens in that moment is forever. Jesus said it's eternal. Either a person will be sadder than they have ever been and it will never end or they will experience a happiness they didn't even know existed and it will never end.

This is something we don't say enough in church these days and I think I know what happened. Two generations ago, you know, when you came to church, there was a really intimidating guy in a robe and he would pound on the pulpit and threaten you with fire and brimstone and it was so off-putting and like guilt-inducing that churches have swung way to the side of love and God is good and he's accepting, which he is. And Jesus said that hell is a real place. And Jesus said that heaven is like a small village and hell is a metropolis. And Jesus said that if you are holding onto anything the moment you die besides his cross, you can't possibly be with God. And so if you or someone you know is holding on to some sin, some way of life that they don't want to change, if you think you can hold onto time the way you want it or right and wrong as you define it, if you think that for some guy, some girl, some career, some budget, you're going to cling to that and not give it to Jesus in repentance? Here's what happens: Your last grain of sand falls, you see the face of God, and he says, "Your will be done. You wanted to hold onto that, you didn't want me? Okay. I'll give you just what you want." And for the first time in all your existence, you'll find out what it's like to not have God and there will be no laughter, no joy, no friendship, no comfort, no safety. It will all be gone for the sake of that. For some people, that is their own goodness. You think, "I don't need the cross of Christ, the blood of Christ; I don't need to believe in Christ. I'm a decent person." If you hold on to your own resume of goodness, God's going to fill in the blanks. And so there are times in love, before it's too late, we have to tell people, don't; don't throw away forever. I know you like your life and you're comfortable doing this right now but that is going to end and it's going to end fast. Don't throw away forever. Don't throw away God for something that's just good. Don't throw away eternity for something that's so short-term. Don't let it be true of you that your short-term pleasure ended up being your long-term pain. When the time comes, there's no second chance. There's no karma, no reincarnation, there's no purgatory; there's just God and his judgment.

But if you do open your hands, if you say God, I'm sorry. I messed it up; I thought about me instead of you. I'm sorry, God. And with those open hands, you cling to Jesus, you cling to his life and his death, his forgiveness and his mercy, do you know what happens? Happiness. Forever happiness. Like you think getting a raise makes you happy? You think holding a newborn makes you happy? You think good friends around the fire makes you happy? You think a championship trophy, a first place medal, makes you happy? You have no clue because when you see the face of God, everything will seem so small. And in that moment, you will start to realize that this isn't like a one-day VIP pass; that Jesus has given you eternal life with God. That's what that means; life with God and it never ever ends. It's not like this great vacation where you get to enjoy things for a week but then you get back on the plane and then it all comes flushing back, right? All the pressure, all the emails. No, it's just happiness after happiness and it will never end and you will get to be with God. Can you imagine? When your body will feel

good like it's never felt before and it will never change. When every relationship you have in the presence of God will be perfect - no awkwardness, no tension, no trying to forgive that person - there will just be perfect unity and that will never change. You will do life in the presence of God with other people and they will never get sick and you'll never have to plan a funeral. It will never change. There is just pure and perfect happiness and it never, ever, ever ends. Following Jesus might cost you a little but having Jesus gives you a lot. It gives you eternal life and this was the message that motivated those men.

If you're taking notes today, let me summarize it like this. I want you to remember when you leave today that eternity is greater. Are you sometimes nervous to talk about Jesus? Sure, but eternity is greater. Are you sometimes worried about what life would be like if you truly followed Jesus with all of your heart? Without a doubt, but eternity is greater. Might it cost you a friendship, might you not be the cool Christian on your block anymore? Probably, but eternity is greater.

A couple hours ago, I preached this message to another group of Christians and a 60 year old woman afterwards said, "Pastor, you know the thing you said? I'm going to get a tattoo that says that." I said, "Yes!" That is a great reminder so when you're nervous, right, and the hands are shaking? Maybe you could see that: "But eternity is greater." And maybe this message will be the one the Holy Spirit uses to change their eternity.

A couple weeks ago, I got my results back from my 23andMe test. Have you heard of that before? That's when you spit into a little plastic thing and they tell you your ancestry? Well, 23andMe used their like PhD-level advanced genetic testing to inform me that I'm white. Yeah, totally, completely Caucasian. Czech, German, a little bit of British and I thought, "Where did my ancestors hear that gospel?" My mom told me, her parents told her - where did it come from? It came from these guys who could have cared less about being cool. Instead, they cared about people like me finding Christ.

So about time for me to say, "Amen." But our mission is just about to begin because one day and it will never end. So brothers, sisters, you've got to go. But first, we've got to pray.

Dear Father in Heaven, thank you so much for your goodness to us. Eternal life doesn't have to wait; it starts right now for those who trust in you. To know that we are always loved, we are always accepted, we always have your approval. To think about every blessing that is ours through faith in Jesus, it's crazy, God, and it's our and it's a gift. Help us to remember how good the good news is and give us courage to share it. I thank you for Peter, James, and John, the men and women of the early church, who sacrificed so much because they cared about us and they were willing to persevere and endure so we could hear the gospel. Now give us that kind of faith. Help us to remember what's at stake and, more importantly, help us to remember that we don't have to do this by ourselves. Instead, the Holy Spirit will come upon us with power. Help us not to be afraid but instead to anticipate what you might do through that conversation as we go and share the good news of Christ. We ask it all in his name, Amen.