20261011 Kingdom and Mission (Summary of Acts)

Acts is the sequel to Luke's Gospel. In his first book, Luke records Jesus' redemptive work; in his second book, Acts, he shows how the Holy Spirit continues Jesus' work through believers. Over the past few months, we have had seven sermons in our Acts series. Today is the final sermon. We will look at the book as a whole, connect the messages we have heard, and consider the main points Luke intends to convey.

Imagine you and your family are assembling a thousand-piece jigsaw puzzle, but you cannot find the box lid with the full picture. You have pieced together a tree, a house, and a patch of sky, yet you still do not know how they fit together. Then your child finds the lid under the table. Everyone looks at it and says, "Oh, it's a village in a valley!" Once you see the whole picture, you can understand where each piece belongs and how they connect. Reading Acts can be like that. We remember Pentecost, Peter healing the lame man, Stephen's martyrdom, and Paul's missionary journeys. But when these stories come together, what picture do they form? The book's key verse, its beginning and ending, and the key words that recur throughout it give us important clues to understanding the whole picture.

The key verse of Acts is 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." As you read the whole book, you will also notice that "the Kingdom of God" appears at both its beginning and its end. At the beginning, Jesus' final teaching to his disciples before his ascension concerns "the Kingdom of God" (1:3). At the end, Paul is "proclaiming the Kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness" (28:31). In between, there are seven direct or indirect references to God's Kingdom. Through this literary structure, Luke shows us that the Kingdom of God provides an important context for the message of Acts. To understand its key verse, Acts 1:8, and the book as a whole, we need to read them in the context of God's Kingdom.

With this framework in mind, let us consider these questions together: When we share the gospel, who is the Jesus we invite people to believe in? How does believing in him change our lives? And how do we bear witness to him? Our topic today is "The Kingdom of God and Sharing the Gospel." We will explore three interwoven themes: God's Kingdom, the Holy Spirit's work, and our witness. The gospel is the good news of God's Kingdom and of Jesus, the King. The Holy Spirit renews our lives and empowers us to bear witness to his salvation.

I. The Kingdom

In the Bible, "the Kingdom of God" refers not to a territory, but to God's ruling action. The Old Testament often expresses this truth by saying, "The Lord reigns." This King is perfectly good. He does not force people into submission by violence or coercion but guides their hearts with righteousness and steadfast love. He frees them from fear, enabling them to willingly choose what is good and experience renewal in their lives.

For those of us living in democratic societies today, the idea of "a king reigning among us" may feel unfamiliar—even a little uncomfortable. Pastor Tim Keller once used a sports team analogy to illustrate the relationship between God's reign and His people. Under a good coach, the team follows a clear game plan, the players work together in harmony, and each performs at their best. Under a bad coach, the game plan is flawed, the players clash, and all their hard work achieves very little. Without a coach, each player does whatever they think is right. They no longer function as a team, and the game ends in disaster. The same is true of God's kingdom--God is the perfect King. When God reigns, His people are blessed, and they blossom.

The coming of God's Kingdom means that his promised final salvation is beginning to unfold: he will save his people, destroy evil, and renew all creation. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on his people is a

clear sign that this salvation has already arrived. All of this unfolds in Jesus Christ. God's Kingdom is God exercising his good and gracious rule. The gospel is the good news that God's Kingdom has come to us in Jesus. This reigning King is the very Savior who gave his life for us so that we could be forgiven. To be saved is to enter God's Kingdom and accept the King's authority over our lives.

The central message the disciples proclaimed in Acts is that Jesus is the King of God's Kingdom. In his first sermon following the Holy Spirit's outpouring at Pentecost, Peter declared, "God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. Exalted to the right hand of God, … he has poured out what you now see and hear" (2:32–33). He also quoted Psalm 110: "The Lord said to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet'" (2:34–35). This prophecy of the King's enthronement was fulfilled in Jesus. Peter concluded his sermon by saying, "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah" (2:36).

So what does God's Kingdom mean for us? It shapes both the message we share and the way we live. It's our message. It's our life. The gospel is the good news that God's Kingdom has come to us in Jesus. Jesus is the King—and our Savior, who gave His life for us so we could live. This King is the way, the truth, and the life. When He reigns in our lives, He teaches us how to live each day. As we learn to live out the beautiful life of His Kingdom, our lives bear witness to the good news we share with those who do not yet know Jesus.

But you may say, "I'm struggling. I'm not sure how to live this Kingdom life." That is why God has brought us into His church. The church is a community where Kingdom people live and grow together. Acts tells us that after coming to faith, the believers gathered and "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" (2:42). Together, they learned to live out their new life under the reign of King Jesus.

Coming to faith in Jesus, living the Kingdom life, and sharing the Kingdom gospel—all are the fruit of the Holy Spirit's work in us. This brings us to our second theme: the Holy Spirit's work.

II. The Spirit

Sharing the gospel is fundamentally the work of the Holy Spirit. Over the past three months, we have seen how the Spirit brings people to faith in Christ, gives them new life, builds and sustains the church, and leads believers to share the gospel. I would summarize the Spirit's work this way: "The Holy Spirit transforms our lives, making us more like Jesus, and empowering us to bear witness to Jesus."

Luke's Gospel and the Book of Acts show us the Holy Spirit at work in the disciples' lives. When Jesus was arrested, the disciples scattered and fled, and Peter even denied him three times. Yet after Pentecost, they boldly proclaimed that Jesus had risen. After preaching the gospel, Peter and John were arrested. Facing the religious leaders who had put Jesus to death, Peter declared that this man had been healed "by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead." When the rulers saw their courage and realized they were ordinary, uneducated men, they were astonished. Those who had once been afraid to acknowledge Jesus now stood courageously before the authorities, bearing witness to the gospel. They were courageous just like Jesus! The Holy Spirit had transformed them, making them more like Jesus. Their changed lives became a powerful witness.

In Luke 4:18–19, Jesus described his mission to proclaim the good news: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom

for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." He proclaimed the good news of the Kingdom; he set people free from bondage; and he revealed God's forgiveness and love. When we compare the accounts of Jesus' ministry in Luke with those of the disciples' ministry in Acts, we see many parallels. The disciples were doing the things Jesus had done.

Today, we will focus on how the Holy Spirit enables people to love and forgive as Jesus did. Acts 7 tells the story of Stephen's witness to the Lord and his martyrdom. As those filled with hatred stoned him to death, Stephen was filled with the Holy Spirit. He saw the glory of God and Jesus, God the Son, standing at the right hand of God the Father. The Spirit's power enabled Stephen to forgive and love his enemies, just as Jesus had. On the cross, the Lord Jesus prayed for the Roman soldiers who were putting him to death: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34). Before he died, Stephen also knelt down and prayed for his killers: "Lord, do not hold this sin against them."

The Holy Spirit still works in us today, enabling us to love and forgive as Christ did. The Taiwanese documentary Coming Home tells one such story. In 1992, Tang Ming-Hsiung, whose life had been marked by disappointment, was beaten in a confrontation. Seeking revenge, he took a gas cylinder to a karaoke bar and set it on fire, killing sixteen people. One of the victims was the younger brother of a Christian woman, Du Hua-ming. She had cared for him since childhood, and he had just graduated from the police academy. The pain of losing him was immense. Yet through the Holy Spirit's healing work and the love of Christ, Du began a journey toward forgiveness. She repeatedly wrote to Tang in prison, sharing the message of salvation in Jesus. Tang initially threw them away without reading them. But Du did not give up. She kept writing, letter after letter. When Tang finally opened one, he found forgiveness and care. He was deeply shaken: he had taken her brother's life, yet she wanted him to find salvation in Jesus. Du and members of her church continued to visit him, and eventually Tang repented and came to faith in Christ. As he walked to his execution, he wore a shirt that read "Jesus loves me." Du and members of her church were there to see him off. He still had to face punishment for his crime, but in Christ he had received forgiveness and eternal life.

No one can live out this kind of love by relying on human strength alone. But a life in Christ, transformed by the Holy Spirit, is empowered to reflect Christ's character. We, too, experience many kinds of hurt, some deeply painful, and forgiveness can be a long journey. We can begin by bringing our pain and our unwillingness to forgive before the Lord, asking the Holy Spirit to lead us step by step. He can give us the power to break free from bitterness and resentment, to respond with love to those who have hurt us, and to help draw sinners back to God through Christ's love.

The Holy Spirit transforms our lives so we may experience God's blessings more deeply and bless others through the gospel. Jesus calls us to be his witnesses.

III. Our Witness

We are witnesses to Jesus Christ, called to proclaim who he is and the salvation he has accomplished for us. When we share the gospel, we often focus on Jesus' identity and his sacrifice on the cross. But Acts reminds us that his resurrection, ascension, and return are also essential to the message. The apostles repeatedly proclaimed "the resurrection of the dead," with Jesus' resurrection at the heart of their message. His resurrection and exaltation reveal that he is the King of God's Kingdom. He will return to judge the world and renew all things. Therefore, the Jesus we bear witness to is the one who died for us, has risen, now reigns, and will come again.

Acts mentions the resurrection of Jesus Christ 22 times in its accounts of the apostles and disciples sharing the gospel. When preaching to Jews, they drew on the Old Testament to declare that Jesus had risen, had been exalted, and would return. He had fulfilled the promise that "the Lord reigns" and is the King of God's Kingdom. Peter declared, "God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. … God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah." When addressing Gentiles, Paul declared that by raising Jesus from the dead, God had shown that he was the one appointed to judge the world with justice: "In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead." Whether speaking to Jews or Gentiles, the apostles proclaimed that Jesus had risen, that he is the reigning King and the coming Judge, and that we must repent and turn to him.

This is important for us too, because we share the gospel with people who have no Jewish background. Jesus' resurrection is powerful evidence of His divine identity. He is God, who came in the flesh to save us. He will come again to judge the world, but through His saving work, we are saved from the final judgment.

Therefore, the resurrection of the dead is essential to the gospel of God's Kingdom. As Jesus' witnesses, we testify not only that he is God incarnate and that he gave his life on the cross to bear our sins, but also that he rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and will come again.

You may ask, "We have never seen the risen Jesus. How can we bear witness to him?" The apostles saw the risen Jesus with their own eyes, and Scripture records their testimony. Today, we proclaim that Jesus has risen based on their testimony. We also bear witness to the risen Christ's work in our lives. Sharing how our lives have changed cannot replace sharing the biblical message of the resurrection, but it can help people see that the Lord we proclaim is still at work today. So we need both to clearly explain what Jesus has accomplished for us and to testify to how he has changed us. We may not have a testimony as powerful as Du Hua-Ming's, but the risen Jesus' work in our lives is real. Every small change in our lives can be a beautiful witness.

Summary

Let us summarize several important themes in Acts. First, the gospel is the good news of God's Kingdom. God's Kingdom has come into the world in Christ, bringing salvation and renewal. The risen and reigning Jesus is the King of God's Kingdom. When we share the gospel, we must proclaim that God reigns. Second, the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit brings people to faith in Jesus. He empowers and guides believers and churches to bear witness to Jesus. Our main focus has been on how the Spirit first transforms our lives, making us more like Jesus so that we can bear witness to him. Third, our witness. We testify to who Jesus is and the salvation he has accomplished for us. We must remember to bear witness to his resurrection, ascension, and return. On the basis of the apostles' testimony recorded in Scripture, we proclaim that he has risen. We also bear witness to the risen Jesus' work in our lives.

Acts seems to end without an proper ending, as though Luke is telling us to continue the story—to take up the baton as witnesses to the salvation Jesus has accomplished. Now I invite you to think of one person you hope to share the gospel with. This week, begin praying for that person. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you an opportunity and to help you share the good news of God's Kingdom in Jesus Christ. We pray to the Lord: "Hallowed be your name. Your Kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. For yours is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen!"