

Commissioned and Empowered

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Preacher: Andrew Midgett

[0 : 0 0] I'd like to add my word of welcome to those already expressed by Otis this morning. And it's always a pleasure to come to New Bern. The first persons that I saw this morning were Bill and Carol Warner.

And I have known them for 20-something years. And that kind of makes... It's been a long time. And it makes coming to New Bern very special to me because I see people that I don't get a chance to see very often.

And so I have great love and affection for this site. I think a lot of Bear. And, you know, Bear's been dreaming about me a lot lately. He hasn't said anything about that, I'm sure. But he's been dreaming prophetic dreams, no less.

And so that scared the heck out of me. And, you know, my relationship with your staff is very close.

I think the world of Jesse and Haley. But, you know, it's kind of funny. Elliot saw me a couple of... It's been almost a month ago at a function in Moorhead City for the community groups.

[1 : 0 4] And he looked at me and he says, When are you coming back to New Bern? And I said, Bud, be patient. And I said, You've got about four weeks. He said, I don't want to know because I want to be there.

I want to make sure I'm not when you show up. And so that's kind of... I said, Dang, Elliot, where is the love? But I am so, so glad to be here this morning. You know, preaching is one of those things that I enjoy doing.

On top of my other job, which is really pulling at me this morning. And opening God's Word is something that's very special to me. And this morning we are starting a new series out of the book of Acts called The Body in Motion.

Now, a few months ago, or even maybe six months ago or so, we did a series on the church. But it was a little bit more technical in nature. It was the workings of the church, the leadership of the church, deacons and elders and all those kind of things.

And so it was a little bit more of a technical series. This series is about, you know, the energized state of the church. You know, what the church does and how we move and are energized in Christ Jesus.

[2 : 1 5] And so that's really going to be the focus out of the book of Acts. Now, Acts has a whole bunch of characters that you're going to see. If you go in the book of Acts, you immediately see Jesus. You see his disciples.

You see the church. You see Paul. You see his conversion. And there's just a lot going on in Acts. But this series is really going to focus on the church in motion and how it moves and how it breathes.

Now, just to help us out, you know, sometimes you need to understand the context of the word of God. Scripture always has a context.

And it's not always something that we can apply so easily to us. But it was sure applicable to those in Christ's day. And so Acts has a very unique context.

And so just a few things to help you out this morning, just so you understand the book a little bit better. A tradition says that it was written by Luke the physician. He wrote the book before A.D. 70.

[3 : 17] Now, A.D. 70 in church history is very important because that is when Jerusalem fell to Rome. And so all that you see in Acts happened prior to that event because after Rome sacked Jerusalem, it really almost ceased to exist.

The temple was completely tore down. I mean, everything that the Jews trusted in was gone. And so when you look at Acts, this is all happening prior to that.

Now, Luke was a Gentile, and he was most likely led to the Lord by Paul. And so Luke and Paul had a very unique relationship. It was, you know, he led me to the Lord, and I'm committed to him.

Kind of one of those deals. In fact, in the book of Colossians at the very end, you know, Paul says something about Luke. He says, Luke, the beloved physician, sends his greetings.

And so there is a special relationship that Paul has with Luke. And so he calls him the beloved physician. And so Luke was a physician. He was a doctor. But he did not practice medicine, so to speak, like what we have now in our days.

[4 : 32] In fact, he had a benefactor who is Theophilus. And when you look in the letter of Luke, it says this. He's writing a second letter to this individual called Theophilus. And Theophilus was his benefactor.

He's the one who gave him the ability to travel with Paul on his missionary journeys and to be a firsthand witness of what was going on in the church.

His style is very alive. When you get into the middle part of Acts toward the back end where Paul is on his way to Rome because he's appealed to Caesar, those stories in there about boats and ships and wind and all storms and sinking and rocks and all that, he's given you eyewitness accounts of these things.

And so it's alive. You feel like you're right in there with him. And so that really helps us out. You know, and really, I'll put this in my notes. In Acts, it's the only place you're going to hear about a nor'easter.

I thought that North Carolina had to worry about that. But in Acts, he talks about the northeast wind that rose up and sunk their ship, basically. And so this is just a very good book, and it's a very historical book that we need to look at.

[5 : 53] And so with that in mind, if you will open your Bibles to Acts chapter 1. Now, we're going to be reading a couple of passages this morning. One is a little bit long. The second one not as long. We'll begin in verse 1, and we'll go through verse 9 in Acts chapter 1.

And so read along with me, please. In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach until the day when he was taken up after he had given commands to the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen.

He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during 40 days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

And while staying with them, he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which he said, you heard from me. For John baptized with water.

Now, he's looking at John the Baptist. He says, John baptized with water, but, you know, the baptism of the Spirit comes many days from now. So when they had come together, they asked him, Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?

[7 : 04] And he said to them, it is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father is fixed by his own authority, but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.

And you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth. And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up and a cloud took him out of their sight.

Now, turn over to chapter 2. Beginning in verse 1. I think it's very interesting that in our text this morning that you see that Jesus continues to teach the disciples even after he has been raised from the dead.

I mean, he's been resurrected. He had spent three years in the earthly ministry before his death and resurrection. And he taught them all during that three years period. But after his resurrection, he continues to do this.

And I think that's very interesting. Sometimes when we read the Gospels, the Gospels make it sound like all Jesus did was walk through a wall and just show up all of a sudden.

[8 : 46] The guy, all the disciples are in a room and all of a sudden Jesus appears and he says, peace be with you. And so we think, okay, he didn't do very much. He just walked through some walls.

He ate a piece of fish. He cooked some breakfast for his disciples. I mean, these are things that he did. You know, just your normal everyday kind of stuff, right? Is Jesus just did normal everyday things.

And so we think that he really did not say much. But as our text this morning says, that he taught them for over 40 days. Again, verse 1, chapter 1, verse 3.

He presented himself alive to them. And after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them for 40 days and speaking about what? The kingdom of God. Jesus is not speaking to them about anything else but the kingdom of God.

Now, why is this so necessary? Why was the kingdom of God a subject that Jesus thought was so important for them to understand? Well, the disciples' view of the kingdom did not mesh with Christ's view of the kingdom.

[9 : 57] Okay, you need to understand this. Their view of the kingdom was a whole lot different than what he even was thinking. Because their hopes rested in Israel being restored to its former glory.

That is what they wanted. That's what they were looking for. They wanted Israel to be out from underneath all these nations that had dominated them and God had put them under because of sin.

And so they said, look, when are you going to finally restore Israel to his glory? You know, listen to how it reads.

It says this. When they had come together, they asked him, Lord, are you going to restore Israel at this time? Is this going to happen now? And in NIV, it says that they surrounded him.

That they surrounded Jesus and they got all around him and there's a sense of urgency in their minds. Is this now? Is it going to happen today?

[10 : 59] Are you going to restore us now? Because that had been the hope of the Jews. That the Messiah would come and restore their kingdom. Make them great again.

Okay, so just keep that in your mind. From the infancy of the church, the church needed a course. It needed a course to steer.

When I get finished today, I will go back to Moorhead and I will get on the ship and I will put the ship on courses and I will steer the ship in and I'll bring it in sometime this afternoon.

And so that's what I do for a living. The church was being set on a course by Jesus. And the reason is this. The gospel has more to do with building the kingdom of God than it is about building the kingdom of man.

You see, in their view, it was about building Israel again into a world power and having preeminence over all their enemies. And Jesus says, no, that's not the focus.

[12 : 03] You are to be concerned about the kingdom of God. And I do think it's interesting the way that he answers them. He says, it is not for you to know the times or to know the seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority.

Now that is a very interesting way to answer the question, Lord, is today the day? Is it going to happen today? Are you going to do this?

And he says, that's not for you to know. It kind of reminds you of, mom, dad, what are you doing? None of your business.

It's none of your business. When I was young, he was like, none of your beeswax. I mean, it's none of your business. This is not your concern. And we know how that feels.

We know how that feels when a parent looks at us and we say, mom, what are you doing? None of your business. You kind of feel like, oh my goodness, you almost want to shrink back and fall back.

[13 : 05] And so that was a very strange way for Jesus to answer them. It made them feel less than normal for sure. They did not know how to respond to that.

It's none of your business. And one thing you need to understand is that scripture says this, the secret things, the secret things belong to the Lord our God.

And then it goes on and says, those things are revealed to us are for those and our children forever and ever. So there are things that God holds very close and that are none of our business really.

And so Jesus is looking at the disciples and he says, your focus, your focus is not the restoration of Israel. It is not Israel's glory. Your focus is the kingdom.

And so by saying that, he says, God has set the other times for that to happen and it's really not your concern. You know, Paul speaking into this says this by God and Otis read this set of verses this morning.

[14 : 08] And it's out of Romans chapter 11, verses 33 through 36. And I think it speaks into who God is. Oh, the depths of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God.

So God's knowledge is above all. How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways. So his judgments are out of our minds.

His ways are way above us. For who has known the mind of the Lord or who has become his counselor or who has given him a gift that he might be repaid?

For for him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever and ever. Amen. You see, the things of God are secret.

Some of those things he reveals to us, yes. But the church had a mission. And it was not in its beginning the restoration of Israel's glory. It was to focus on the kingdom of God.

[15 : 10] So God has set a destination. Jesus, by doing this, has set them a destination. This is where you're going. But he does say something very interesting to them.

He says, look, this is where you're going. But you have to do what? You have to wait. Now, waiting on God is something that is very hard. If you've been a Christian very long, there are times in your lives when you just stand there and you say, Lord, I've been waiting for you to move in a certain way.

I've been waiting for you to answer in a certain situation. We heard somebody this morning say, we might be moving. We don't know. God's going to make it plain. He might.

Yeah, he might. It might take a while, too. And so sometimes that waiting is so hard for us. And Jesus looks at his disciples and he says, look, your focus is the kingdom of God.

That is the direction you're going. But you have to wait. Well, why wait? And that's because the power of the active church or the activated church comes through the Spirit of God.

[16 : 14] It comes through the Holy Spirit being involved in the life of the church. In verse 4, in our first text, it says, and while staying with him, he ordered him not to depart.

Don't leave Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which he said, you heard from me. For John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.

And so Jesus says, go back to Jerusalem. Don't worry about the kingdom. You sit and you wait for the Spirit of God to come. And so there is this divine directive, wait for the Spirit.

Now, I wonder what they thought about this. I wonder what was on their mind. You know, what were they thinking? Okay, we're waiting. What are we waiting for? What is this that we have to wait for?

What is the Holy Spirit? Because at this time, the Spirit of God had worked in Old Testament saints, but not in the sense it does in the church. It was more specific in the Old Testament.

[17 : 16] But now this feeling is coming in on the church. And so, you know, I wonder what they were thinking. In some ways, I think they had an inkling maybe that something was coming because Jesus spoke about the Spirit's coming even during his earthly ministry.

In Mark chapter 16, verses 15 through 18, it says this. And he, this is Jesus, speaks to his disciples. And he says this. Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation.

There is their course. Understand this. That is their course. Go preach the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved. But whoever does not believe will be condemned.

And these signs, now listen to this. These signs will accompany those who believe in my name. In my name, they will cast out demons. They will speak in new tongues.

They will pick up serpents with their hands. They will drink. If they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them. If they, they will lay their hands on the sick and they will recover.

[18 : 28] Jesus is telling his disciples before his death, before his resurrection, before his ascension, the Spirit of God is coming. And this is what it's going to do. Now, in our day, many evangelical Christians and even churches will doubt the signs of the Spirit are still available to us in our day.

And I think one reason is because they don't normally see it happen in front of them. It's not something that's always in view. If you saw it all the time, you would say, okay, I believe it.

But sometimes because you don't see it, you conclude it, they're not happening. Especially when you have to pick up a snake. I mean, if you've got to pick up a snake, I'm telling you, I'm not going to do that.

In fact, all the rest of them I accept, but picking up a snake, I won't. Donnie Griggs and I went to go pick up a pop tent that we had for turkey hunting on a rainy day in a swamp.

And so he calls me and said, let's go pick this tent up. I said, all right. So I got in this truck and I said, whoa, wait a minute. Went in the house, got my shotgun, went out in the garage, got some shotgun shells, came back, sat in the truck.

[19 : 39] He looked at me, he said, why are you bringing that gun? And I looked at him, I said, snakes? You got that? There's snakes here. We're in a snaky club, dude. I am going to bring some firepower with me.

And so, I mean, the church looks at that and they go, oh my gosh, they're going off the deep end. And it's just one of the signs that are available. Understand this. If the signs and wonders accompanied the early church and Jesus promised it was to come, should we not expect the same in our day?

Should we not expect the Spirit's power to be on display? Now, granted, I made fun of snakes. Some of those things you may not ever see in your lifetime.

You may not ever speak in tongues in your lifetime. The Spirit is sovereign in how he dispenses gifts to men. And he is the sovereign Spirit and that's what he does. He does it with whomever he will.

But I do think we should at least individually, all right, and corporately, all right, desire more of the Spirit.

[20 : 50] You should want to see the Spirit move. But you need to understand one thing, that the Spirit's gifting, the Spirit's movement in the church will not build the church without the post-resurrection preaching of the Word.

I was listening to Andrew Wilson a couple weeks ago. I'm doing an Acts theological study with some guys at church. Andrew Wilson is a guy from the UK. He is smart.

I mean, he is brilliant. He is Yoda smart. He is, oh, my gosh, he's just off the charts. But he says something that really ties into what we're talking about this morning.

In the church, you have two different views. You have hyper-charismatics on one end that say it's all about the Spirit and all about the gifts of the Spirit and being on display.

Then you have those who say, no, it's the Word of God. And those would be more like cessation. It's in their view of the Spirit. Okay? So you've got hyper-charismatic on one side and you've got those who say the Spirit basically doesn't do anything anymore.

[22 : 01] It's just the Word of God. And they're both ends. Now, I want you to understand something. And sometimes we can focus so much on the Spirit that the Word of God means absolutely nothing to us.

You can do that. You can focus so much on the Spirit of God that you do not understand the Word of God and the power that it has. Or you can focus so much on the Word of God that you forget the Spirit even exists.

And that's one of the things that really changed my mind as a young man. Before I ever came to One Harbor, I kept thinking, why is it that we take the Spirit of God and stick him over here and say he cannot do anything?

He doesn't do anything anymore. He is very God of very God. He's the third person of the Trinity. He is God. The Spirit of God is divine. Why do we say he can't do anything?

But you see the problem. Some of them say it's all about the Spirit. Some of them say it's all about the Word. I think there's a tension that you have to live with and you have to develop in your minds.

[23 : 05] Because post-resurrection teaching combined with the Spirit of God, right? So they're combined is what builds the church. If you want to know what's going to build One Harbor New Bern, it won't be your music, which was off the charts good this morning.

Excellent worship this morning. But it's not that. It will not be who comes up here and preaches no matter how cool we are. It won't build the church.

It is the Word of God combined with the Spirit of God. Now, the context of your preaching has to be relating to the death and resurrection of Christ.

That is the focus of post-resurrection preaching. That's what it should be focused on. If we don't have the resurrection of Jesus, then the gospel is not good news.

There is no good news to the gospel if Jesus is not raised from the dead. In fact, the church must always preach the death and resurrection of Jesus.

[24 : 13] And Paul says something very interesting about this resurrection, what makes it so important. Listen to what he says in 1 Corinthians 15, 13, and 14. He says this, for if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised.

All right? Some people were saying to Paul, there is no resurrection. He said, okay, if there is no resurrection, then Jesus has not been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then all of our preaching is what?

Useless. It is vain. He says, if he's not raised, our preaching is of no use to us. And then he says, and your faith is useless.

Okay? So post-resurrection teaching combined with the Spirit of God must always be focused on the death and resurrection of Christ. However, some believers, some Christians want to do one more than the other.

Again, you remember the hyper-charismatic and then you've got those who are cessationists. They want to do one but not the other. Some of them want the Pentecost and all of its glory and power and works, but not faithful Bible preaching.

[25 : 30] They don't want expository preaching. They don't want teaching. They don't want that. You can have both. You do understand that, right? You can have the Spirit of God and all of his power and might in your presence and you can declare Jesus Christ crucified, risen from the dead, the glory of him.

You can do that. You can do both. And you need both if you want the church to grow and to empower. However, it's not always easy to do this.

It's not always easy to carry that proper tension. Sometimes our minds are drawn away from the word of truth. It's kind of like we kind of say, yeah, I see, but our minds are kind of drawn away.

Or our hearts become dull to the Spirit. Our minds can often say the word is of no benefit or even our hearts become dull to what the Spirit's doing.

And that's a very dangerous place to be when you don't care what the Spirit's doing and you care less about the word. There is a danger there. You know, Paul's speaking about this in 2 Timothy and he's talking about the latter days, which is what we're in.

[26 : 43] We are in the latter days. We are waiting for the return of Christ. But listen to what he says. He says, This thing of having itching ears and wanting to build up teachers that will tickle your ears.

And so that is a very big danger for us. You see, false teaching has an allure to it. It draws at us. It pulls at us continually.

And the direction it pulls is always away from the pure gospel of grace. And you need to understand that and I need to understand that.

The allure of false teaching will always move you away from the grace of God. It will always do that. It pulls you away. Now remember, I've talked about the church has a course that it is steering.

The course was set right before Jesus ascended into the Father's right hand. He says, this is your course. This is what you're doing. But false teaching says, no.

[28 : 15] Move away from that. And I think one of the temptations is that what happens to us, especially with the word, is that we think that was for then, but we're more modern now.

You understand that? We live in a modern time and so the gospel doesn't really have as much, you know, for us anymore. That's kind of where we end up.

The only way for you and me as a church to remain faithful to the gospel is to live within the tension of the word and spirit.

You have to live in that tension. And you have to do both very well. But you have to lay there. That's where you have to set your hopes. And as we keep that balance and as we keep that tension, it gives us the ability to stay on course in the direction that Jesus has given us.

Go and be my disciples. Preach the gospel to all peoples. I'm low on with you always, even to the end of the age. Jesus says, this is your focus.

[29 : 32] It's not Jerusalem. It's not Israel. It's not this. And it's not that. It is the gospel of Christ, the power of the Holy Spirit. It is staying focused where God has put you.

And so may he give us the grace to do so. So, how are we going to end all this today? Well, I need to land this plane because I've talked long enough. If you're here this morning and you're not yet a follower of Jesus, and just because there's a lot of you in this room does not mean all of you are Christians or that you follow Jesus, I would simply say this.

First of all, we're glad you're here. We're glad you're here because it takes a lot of courage to walk into a place, and you're not quite one of the others in the room. You don't know who Jesus is.

You don't really believe yet. We're glad you're here. And even though we're talking about the church, I want you to understand we are not preaching one harbor church.

One harbor is just a vehicle of God's grace. We're not preaching one harbor. What we are preaching to you today is the gospel of the kingdom, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

[30 : 48] Christ in you, not in a building. It's in a people. It is the church. That's what we're preaching. Christ in you, the hope that you have in glory. And so I would love a chance to speak to you after the service this morning and just talk to you about what it means to follow Jesus.

I would love to do that if you would like to come and talk to me. If you are here and a follower of Jesus, I would say this. Follow the course that's been laid ahead. It's hard to stay on course.

I know this just from what I do for a living. Current wind, strife, troubles, churches have all of it. In order to stay on course, keep your eyes focused on what God has laid before you.

And the only way you're going to be a body in motion is to follow the directions that have been given to us. A ship will not make it into Moorhead City very well if the captain never listens to what I tell him.

And we can't do very well if we don't listen to the Spirit of God as he directs the church. Live, again, in that tension of word and spirit and live kingdom-focused lives for the glory of your great King, Jesus.

[32 : 07] Live a kingdom-focused life. It's not about your brand. It's not about anything else. It's about Jesus. Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. So may God give us the strength to do so.

Let me pray for you and then we'll have communion. Lord God, we thank you for how you direct the church. We thank you that you fill the church. And I know the Apostle Paul meant, there's some verses where he just says, he wants us to know the depth of what it means to know you and to be filled by you.

And so, Lord God, I pray as just one of the pastors at One Harbor Church, that this body, these people, would come to know the depth of who you are and be filled with the power of your spirit in ways that transcends all things in their minds.

Lord God, I pray for them. I pray for the leadership of this church. I pray that you would use this church modely in New Bern and that you would glorify your son in it, Lord God. We thank you for the resurrection.

We thank you that Jesus is raised from the dead. We thank you, Father, that he is seated at your right hand and that he makes intercession for us even today. Even so, Lord Jesus, cry out to the Father for us for we are so weak and we are so needy.

[33 : 17] Lord, we love you much. Blessed be your name. And I ask all these things in your name. Amen. Amen. All right, guys. If you can, pick up your cup this morning.

Why don't you sneak up behind me like that? You know, thinking about the resurrection and the importance of the resurrection. You know, Paul said it so well.

He says, if there is a resurrection of the dead, we have nothing. Jesus gave himself bodily to all those around him. In fact, when they arrested him in the garden, he says, while I was in your midst, you did not lay a hand on me, but now is your time.

And so they took him and they beat him and they scourged him and they put a crown of thorns on his head and they mocked him. And they spit at him and they hung him on a cross and they did not care.

And he says, you know, this is for you. My body is broken for you. And so rejoice in the fact that he gave himself for you and then three days later, he raised from the dead.

[34 : 25] Rejoice in that and take your meal. The cup is that we proclaim his death until he comes.

You know, taking communion is that we proclaim Jesus. And remember, that is the course of the church. Proclaim Jesus and his greatness.

But the juice also signifies something more important. And that is that your sins are forgiven. All this week, I have been, I've sinned in mind, in thought, in tongue.

I've had a rough week. But I know that in this, in his blood, I am made righteous even though I don't always look righteous.

And you are just like me. And so today, rejoice in the fact that your sin is forgiven. No matter what you've done, you can look at Jesus and say, Lord God, forgive me.

[35 : 21] And it's covered. And it's done. And so let's rejoice together in this. And then it says in Scripture, after they took the meal, that they stood up and they sang a song.

So we stand together.