

# God's Mission: Our Witness

## Acts 1:1-11

We're on a mission: A mission from God! So said the Blues Brothers in a movie many, many years ago (*Blues Brothers*). Do you know the movie?

But it's true. We are on a mission. We go on this mission... God's mission. Not ours, but God's. Not in

our own strength... not with our own

wisdom... not by our own resource or power, not a collective power like a political party which is in power for a time, but by the power of gift of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Jesus says, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses."

But how can we be God's witnesses? Have you seen God? Did you see Christ suffer? Did you see him die, and did you see him rise to new life? And come on, did you look up and see him ascend into heaven?

Well, did you?

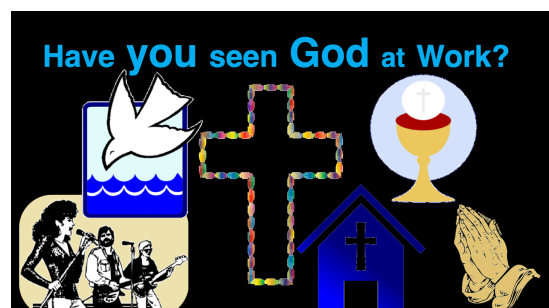
Maybe you and I weren't right there on the spot.

So can we be witnesses, as Jesus suggests? Have we actually received this power? Or are we still waiting for it? Do we need more human strength and power and more faith? Can we be witnesses of Jesus?

Well, let me ask you a different question...

Have you seen God at work? Have you seen God at work, perhaps in these ways?

1. Baptism
2. Sins forgiven: spoken and in the Lord's Supper
3. People changed by the "ah ha"'s of the Spirit at work in the Word... for each of us
4. Prayer
5. In everyday serving in life, and in the everyday miracles of love and life
6. Can you think of other times and occasions in your life? Times where you've reflected that God was amazingly at work? You know... It was just too amazing that God had this plan when... for example, building the church at Station Street;



7. and years later, the blessing of the sale of the church at Station Street, the availability of this church for purchase, and so on.

Paul talks of the reality of the eyes of our hearts... the place where faith resides and beats and grows. The eyes of your heart seeing God regularly and powerfully at work.

Paul says to the Ephesians and to us today:

I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power.

*Ephesians 1:17-19*

So here is the power of God... not in human strength to overcome others with aggression. But God's power is that of the Spirit working in hearts... hearts which not only beat... hearts which not only believe. But hearts which see. By our hearts we are witnesses... in Jerusalem and in Judea and in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. In mission and as we walk this National Reconciliation Week as a congregation, as a national church, and as a nation, we are called to be witnesses bringing the love of the gospel to all people.

By our hearts, we are met by Jesus and by his Father in heaven. Paul prays for the eyes of our hearts to be enlightened to know the hope we have to which we are called, the riches of God's glorious inheritance of the gospel of life among the saints. With the eyes of our hearts, we learn of God's immeasurable power (remember power is by the Spirit, promised by Jesus for us who believe.)

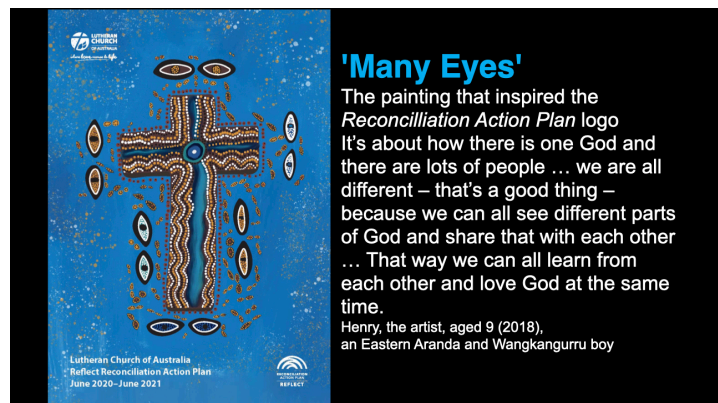
Have you seen God at work? God's power at work as his Spirit has worked in your life? I not only hope so. I know so.

The Spirit has worked through the gospel to bring us faith, and by this faith to give us heart eyes to see Jesus at work.

Luther says it this way, in the explanation of the third article of the Creed:

I believe I cannot by my own understanding or effort believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him. But **the Holy Spirit has called me through the GOSPEL, enlightened me** [there's that word that Paul uses] **with his gifts** and kept me in the faith. In the same way he calls, gathers and enlightens the whole Christian church on earth.

We see and witness God through the gospel as it's told, heard, and lived. Witnesses who have received power. That's us, to witness here in Jerusalem. But there's more isn't there? We are called to witness beyond... to all Judea, and to Samaria, and even to the ends of the earth. We are equipped by the power of God through the work of the Spirit to have vision as God's people, and to follow where God leads us in his mission.



I want to share with you more about our mission plan that we will be presenting at our AGM, and because Garry has to be away at this time, we prerecorded this discussion to share this morning.

[Pre-recorded video segment]

*Neville:* Well, Garry, thanks for joining us today. In the sermon, we've been focusing on Jesus' call to be his witnesses as he leads us on his mission to the world. We've been talking about God's mission at St Paul's, seeking to listen to God and to discern where he is calling us. I know that a small group of Pastoral Assistants did some listening to people in the congregation and their experiences as witnesses in mission. So my first question is, what did you learn?



*Garry:* Yes, during last year we talked with and listened to more than 70 congregational members to better discern what God is calling us to in his Mission at St Paul's. We learned that the Holy Spirit is working through us to witness his Gospel in a number of different situations and activities — whether one-on-one discussions with family, friends and work colleagues; reaching out and helping people in their need such as food and gift parcels; through our outreach programs — Alpha, Mainly Music, and the like; through our partnership with the Chinese Lutheran Church of Victoria; and facilitating mission through intercessional prayer and giving, for example through Australian Lutheran World Service.

We also learned that there are some areas — the more challenging areas of Mission work such as partnering with an Aboriginal community or an overseas church — where we are being called to focus increased effort.

*Neville:* Wow! God certainly calls us to witness in lots of places and ways. It seems that being a witness might involve God's call to us in lots of ways as the Spirit leads us. So that raises another question: how do we discern and decide what God is calling us to as a community of faith?

*Garry:* Yes, we know that God is calling us to be his witnesses, but the 'to what' or 'to whom' and 'how' is not always clear to us. To assist in this regard, our congregational meeting late last year agreed to the development and implementation of a 'Mission Plan'. So:

- a) We've been listening to God in Word and prayer at St Paul's
- b) We've been listening to each other
- c) We've started a mission plan, which Pastoral Assistants Team and Church Council have endorsed, and we'll introduce it to the broader congregation at the AGM in June.

*Neville:* What is in this mission plan?

*Garry:* First of all, can I encourage people to read it in the Book of Reports and be ready to discuss it at the AGM — we are looking for your input.

- You will be able to see a number of Mission Participation Activities that are currently undertaken or are being planned, either individually or collectively.
- You will see we are called to follow where God continues to lead us, to be his witnesses as individuals and families and so on.

- And you will see that we are called to decide where and how God is calling us as a whole community to be witnesses. What and where is God calling us to, at this time in mission together?
- Finally, a Mission Coordinating Team is being formed to help with coordinating and with forming recommendations for whole-of-congregation activities, including things to help us grow as witnesses.

*Neville:* We'll have opportunity to share about this at the AGM on June 19. In the meantime, please feel free to talk to us Garry or me, or any of the staff, Church Council or Pastoral Assistant teams.

Thanks Garry, and may I encourage you all at St Paul's to speak with Garry and me, and share your thoughts and questions with us anytime.

It's time for us who have been blessed with faith... who have been blessed with community... who have been blessed with resources... to consider our witness to Christ, individually and together as St Paul's.

Make no mistake. We're on a mission... God's mission to Jerusalem and all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth. A mission of witness... a mission of gospel grace and God's power in love. Look forward to where God is calling, as you see God leading with the eyes of your heart.

Amen.



*Video of the service including the above address: <https://youtu.be/0Ek7oI-4qy0>*