

The Lord's Message: "Why Do You Stand Looking Up?"

Date: May 17, 2026

Where: Tilghman Methodist Church

Scripture Reference: Acts 1:1-11

Today, we celebrate Ascension Sunday. It is the culmination of Jesus' earthly ministry and the beginning of our call to be His witnesses. From the time of Jesus' birth to His becoming a man, more than thirty-three years had passed since He had left Heaven to become one of us. He had taught about the kingdom of Heaven. He had healed the sick, the lame, and the mute. He had raised people from the dead. He had died on the cross for our sins. He had been raised from the grave by God. He had spent another 40 days teaching people about the kingdom of God. Now, His earthly ministry is coming to a close. He has final instructions to give to His disciples and to all of us.

Let us pray.

The Book of Acts is considered to be volume 2 written by the disciple of Paul, Dr. Luke. The first volume is the Book of Luke. In both books, Dr. Luke addresses these to Theophilus. We are not sure who Theophilus is. There were many men with the name of Theophilus at this time, but the spiritual meaning of the name is either "friend of God" or "loved by God."

In verses 4 & 5, we are told that one time after the resurrection, Jesus told His disciples to stay in Jerusalem and wait for the Holy Spirit. For us living after the Pentecost, this might seem strange to us. In **Ephesians 1:13-14**, Paul tells that if we put our faith and trust in Jesus and believe that He is the Son of God who came to save the world, then God provides us with the gift of the Holy Spirit who lives in us. In **John 14:15-20**, Jesus promises us He is sending to those that believe in Him the gift of the Holy Spirit to live in them. Pentecost marked a radical change in how God interacted with people. We will discuss this more in next when we celebrate Pentecost, the Holy Spirit being poured out.

Now, the disciples were firmly convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God. They were still stuck on the fact that the Messiah would come and overthrow the Roman rule, fulfill the Old Testament prophecies, and make Israel a sovereign nation. They might have based this thinking on the prophecy found in **Daniel 2: 34-35 & 44-45**. During Jesus' trial by Pontius Pilate, Pilate asked Jesus if He was king of the Jews? Jesus responded in **John 18:36-37**. The disciples were ready to go to battle to establish this kingdom. Jesus put the brakes on their thinking. In verse 7, He tells them that only God when this kingdom will be established on earth. They are not to worry themselves about it.

Instead, they are to tell others of the love, grace, and mercy that they have received from God. This is what the Bible calls witnessing. This is found in verse 8. They are to witness in Jerusalem (local). They are to witness in Judea and Samaria (national). They are to witness to the ends of the earth (world). As followers of Jesus, we are called to witness to our neighbor, to others when we travel to other parts of the country, and to people all over the world.

You may be asking how can you be an effective witness for Jesus? Here are what I think are the important steps that I try to follow. First, above all else, pray. I get up in the morning and I ask God to use me today to bring someone closer to you. Be careful what you pray, God will respond. While we were on our vacation to Texas, God introduced me to two people to share my faith with. One person, a lady, was at an outside craft fair that I went to with JoAnn and my aunt Nancy. I had on my "I Still Believe" hat. This lady asked me what I still believe in and I responded, "Jesus." She gave me a high five and said that she did to. She told me, I will look you up in heaven. The other was at a pizza shop. We ordered pizza online, and I went to pick it up. Well, I walked into the pizza shop and got talking with manager. He first thought that I was one of his new drivers. I explained to him that I was a pastor who was on vacation, and I came in to pick up my order. He then proceeded to tell me his life story. How God has saved him from a life of drugs and alcohol which resulted in bad relationship. Left him homeless until, at the end of his rope, he turned and asked God to come into his life. God told him to go to a motel and ask for a room. He walked into the motel, the owner greeted him and told him that he was expecting him, that his room was ready, and that he needed to take a shower and clean himself up. He asked, "how did you know?" God told him. Once, he did that then he was to go to the thrift store down the street for new clothes. He took his shower and walked into that thrift store, the owner greeted him and said that he was expecting him. He asked the man, he man "how did you know". God told him. From there God provided me with a job in a pizza shop. I came down here in 2023 and bought this shop and God is still with me and I am still with God. When I got home the pizza was cold. So, you might have to eat cold pizza if you witness for God!

After prayer comes action. Simply be ready to show God's love through kind words and deeds. Next, be ready to tell others what God has done in your life, your testimony. Build an authentic relationship. Be a person that others can trust. Also be a friend. Serve others with no strings attached. Then look for openings in the conversation to share the gospel message clearly and unapologetically. You will develop your own way to witness but start with prayer. Lastly, thank God. There is a saying that goes, "make a friend, be a friend, bring your friend to Christ." Paul says in **Romans 10:14-15**. "Make a friend, be a friend, bring your friend to Christ."

In verse 10, after Jesus tells the disciples to go out and witness, then Jesus is lifted up. It reminds me of Elijah passing on the mantle to his disciple, Elisha, in **2 Kings 2:9-14**. Just as the mantle of Elijah is passed to Elisha, so Jesus passes the work of ministry to His disciples and to us.

That is why the angel says to the disciples in verse 11, “why do you stand here looking up? There is work to be done.” The angel provides comfort and hope to them and to us. “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.”

Jesus is coming back. This is confirmation. We know where Jesus is going to come back, The Mount of Olives. Look at verse 12. When He comes back, He will establish His kingdom on earth as it is in Heaven. This is found in **Revelation 20:4-7**.

After hearing Jesus’ final instructions and watching Him go up in the clouds, the disciples went to Jerusalem and praised God, **Luke 24:50-53**. They stayed in Jerusalem praising God until the Holy Spirit came upon them. Then they went to the ends of the earth being witnesses for Jesus. We are called to be witnesses for Jesus wherever we go until Jesus returns to this earth. Let us be faithful to Him, **Revelation 22:20**.

So, let us listen to hear the voice of God and do His will. Amen.