

Acts 1:1-11, Luke 24:44-53  
Not Standing Around  
Ascension Sunday May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2018



Mom stood at the kitchen stove a crying hungry baby on her hip while she tried to stir the pot she simply called “dinner” as it tried to stick and burn. Another child was tugging on her leg crying while a third sat at the table asking for help with his homework. The dog then threw up on the carpet just as the phone rang. Into this chaos stepped her husband home from work to whom she said, “Don’t just stand there.... Do something!!!”

This is very similar to what the angels said to the disciples as they stood looking off into heaven after Jesus ascended. The two angels said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”

As I thought of today’s service I realized it was as stuffed full of things, as that mother was trying to deal with, that I introduced you to. It is Mother’s Day, Ascension Sunday, Prep for New Vistas Pledging Sunday, it is Stephen Ministry Commissioning day as we also recognize some of our outstanding lay ministers as we say goodbye to others.

No one can accuse Vista Church of doing nothing of just staring off into space waiting for Jesus to return. We’ve got work to do and it’s all hands on deck. We are doing the work of witnessing for God in word and in deed.

I want to open up for you today the scriptures that were read. Today in the church calendar is **Ascension Sunday, the day we celebrate Jesus ascension into heaven.**

The Luke passage records Jesus first ascension into heaven. The event there occurred on the night of his resurrection. The event listed in the Acts reading is Jesus final ascension into Heaven. It occurred 10 days before Pentecost and the sending of the Holy Spirit. Pentecost is next Sunday and can you believe it, it will have been 50 days since Easter! Wear Red next Sunday.

In Luke the message Jesus gave his disciples was, “repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.

And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

Note that Jesus calls them “witnesses” and that the purpose of witnesses is to witness. And also note the promise of power. It would take 50 days for this promise to be fulfilled and in the meantime they abided with Jesus in prayer. That is what they were doing in the Upper Room when the Holy Spirit fell.

The Acts event, the Ascension, it is 40 days later. It is a very interesting discussion between them and Jesus. They want to know when they are going to rule over those who are oppressing them. They still didn’t grasp Jesus called them to serve and not be served. This we know because they ask Jesus, “Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?”

Basically Jesus says, that’s not your job, or your concern for in reply he says, “It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority.” No Jesus had other things in mind for them and for us to do and standing around staring off into the sky wasn’t one of them.

Here’s our job, our concern and theirs, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Again Jesus promised power, but the power we and they got was not to rule or dominate, but to witness. So what did they do? They went back to the Upper Room to pray and they replaced Judas with another disciple. They rested; they abided with Jesus in prayer, which I spoke about 2 weeks ago in the message on Jesus as the True Vine. They rested before they were charged with the power of the Holy Spirit to go out and witness on Pentecost day.

Well you might want to ask, **“Why did Jesus ascend into heaven?”** Couldn't he just have hung around here on earth in his resurrected body? Well when Jesus was on earth, in his earthly body, he could only witness to those who could hear his voice. His ministry only covered the area of the Holy Land a strip of land about 100 miles long and 20 miles wide and he only ministered in certain portions of it.



Now as the ascended Lord through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit he can be in all times and all places. The big theological word for it is “Omnipresent”. Jesus could not do this here on earth while he was in the body.

Now in once sense the cover of our bulletin is absolutely wrong, **“God could not be everywhere and therefore he created mothers.”** No, God is all around us. As it says in Romans, **“In him we live and move and have our being.”**

In another sense the cover of our bulletin is absolutely right. God chooses mothers (and fathers, but their day is coming) to minister to their children. And for some, God calls them to minister to many peoples' children, just think of teachers. You don't have to physically be a mother, to mother children.

The odd thing about being a Christian is that God chooses to work through us. And God has chosen us to help each other. Dennis Prager in his Hebrew translation of Genesis 2:18 he has a literal translation of

this verse which reads, **“It is not good for man to be alone. I will make him a helper who is his equal.”** We are made to help each other.

God indeed works through us. *“A legend recounts the return of Jesus to heaven after his time on earth. He returned bearing the marks of his earthly pilgrimage with its cruel cross and shameful death.*

*The angel Gabriel approached him and said, “Master, you must have suffered terribly for people down there.”*

*“I did,” said Jesus.*

*“And,” Gabriel continued, “do they now know all about how you loved them and what you did for them?”*

*“Oh, no,” said Jesus. “Not yet. Right now, only a handful of people in Palestine know.”*

*Gabriel was perplexed. “Then what have you done,” he asked, “to let all people know about your love for them?”*

*“Well, I’ve asked Peter, James, John, and a few others to tell people about me. Those who are told will in turn tell others, and the Gospel will be spread to the farthest reaches of the earth. Ultimately, all of humankind will hear about me and what I have done on their behalf.”*

*Gabriel frowned and looked skeptical. He knew that people weren’t dependable. “Yes,” he said, “but what if Peter and James and John grow weary? What if the people who come after them forget?”*

*And what if, way down in the twenty-first century, people get too busy to bother telling others about you? Haven’t you made any other plans?”*

*“No, I’ve made no other plans, Gabriel,” Jesus answered. “I’m counting on them.”* Hot Youth Illustrations Youth Specialties 2001

God has no plan B. He has just you and me! We are God’s “plan A”. We are to do his work and will here on earth. We are to be his

witnesses. Our plan A for this time in the life of Vista Church is to raise funds necessary for the Education and Administration building of Phase 1 of our Master plan. We are half way there in terms of pledges and with pledges and cash on hand we started with we are over 50%

There is no foundation that is going to sweep in and pay for this. I had a very naïve business manager at one time at Christ Church. He was amazed to find out we raised our own money to pay salaries and apportionments and take care of the facilities. He thought there was some big foundation out there that paid for it all.

So as we say yes to God we will receive the power of the Holy Spirit to proceed. Remember last week this verse, **“And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name.”**

Note: we bear fruit first and then God answers our prayers. Think on that a moment. We act on our faith, and light already given us, and God through prayer gives more.

As each of us say yes to God we will receive the funds necessary to do God’s will here. As we promote our Vista Church Online and the Satellite Fellowships we will write another chapter of Acts. Think about it, some in the early church stayed in Jerusalem and built the church there and others went out to the ends of the earth. That’s why we’re here.

I don’t have to preach to you as a church to not be standing around staring off into space. You are a very dynamic, growing, mission minded people. Think back to that desperate mother at the beginning of this message who held that crying baby and demanded of her husband don’t just stand there.

Through our Snak Pak ministry and Impact food collection we feed the hungry children. Through Family First we diaper their little bottoms and often save their lives. Our Stephen ministers visit the sick and our Congregational Care Committee takes care of many of their physical needs.

Our “Blessing of the Animals” will bless animals this Fall. No sick dogs on the carpet. And our New Education Building and Nursery will take care of the education of our children, youth, and adults and we can thank God for it all!!!

So you see, we’re Not Standing Around, and I worked it all in after all,...amen!