

November 23, 2014

BECOMING THE CHURCH JESUS ENVISIONS

Fulfilling God's Great Plan

Acts 8:1-40

Something profound happened in the lives of the early church—they became living witnesses to the power and presence of Jesus. The scriptures say they were recognized as people who “... *had been with Jesus.*” As we see the church develop, the truth of Jesus’s words in **Acts 1:8** are becoming a reality: “*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.*” The challenge of Jesus is a reminder for us today of our responsibility to fulfill His purpose and plan.

1. We don't get discouraged when life gets hard.

*“On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him.” **Acts 8:1-2 (NIV)***

*“Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” **Matthew 5:10-12 (NIV)***

*“We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.” **2 Corinthians 4:8-10 (NIV)***

2. We are willing to take risks for the sake of Christ!

*“Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ there.” **Acts 8:4-5 (NIV)***

*“But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ...” **Philippians 3:7-8 (NIV)***

*“Be careful how you live among your unbelieving neighbors. Even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honorable behavior, and they will believe and give honor to God when he comes to judge the world.” **1 Peter 2:12 (NLT)***

3. We examine everything under the truth of Jesus.

*“Now for some time a man named Simon had practiced sorcery in the city and amazed all the people of Samaria. He boasted that he was someone great, and all the people, both high and low, gave him their attention and exclaimed, ‘This man is the divine power known as the Great Power.’ They followed him because he had amazed them for a long time with his magic. But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.” **Acts 8:9-12 (NIV)***

*“Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’” **John 14:6 (NIV)***

“Preach the word of God. Be persistent, whether the time is favorable or not. Patiently correct, rebuke, and encourage your people with good teaching. For a time is coming when people will no longer listen to right teaching. They will follow their own

desires and will look for teachers who will tell them whatever they want to hear. They will reject the truth and follow strange myths.”

2 Timothy 4:2-4 (NLT)

4. We keep our lives ready for God’s “divine appointments”.

“Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, ‘Go south to the road--the desert road--that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.’ So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the book of Isaiah the prophet.” **Acts 8:26-28 (NIV)**

“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity.” **Colossians 4:2-5 (NIV)**

5. We help people to believe and follow Jesus!

“Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. ‘Do you understand what you are reading?’ Philip asked. ‘How can I,’ he said, ‘unless someone explains it to me?’ So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.” **Acts**

8:30-31 (NIV)

“But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.” **John 20:31 (NIV)**

“Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.” **Colossians 4:6 (NIV)**