

Acts 1:6-11

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[0 : 00] Good morning. It's kind of emotion this morning because I have been locked down for more than two years.

And also, every time when I stand here, my mind just dropped back to 42 years ago. I came to Cochrane to Aris Garden 26, started the Chinese ministry in 1980, the month of August. And then we started our first prayer meeting the month of September of 1980. And then in 1990, December, our family was sent up as missionary to Africa from this church. At that time, Pastor Ong and many other people, including Nicholas and a lot of church leaders. And we were off with your blessing, with your prayer support, and even financial support. So our family regard this place as home, a spiritual home. We have a lot of friends here. So standing here and knowing that my dear brother, Nicholas, is not here, my heart is heavy.

[1 : 31] And when I arrived in Limban 10, 12 days ago, not Limban, Miri, one of my best friends was unconscious in hospital for two months already.

So my heart just felt very heavy, like, you know, when we see each other next time, you know, what will happen.

So we need to be very conscious about opportunities. Today we can come here and worship our Lord and count His many blessings.

We need to be sincere to listen to His word because His word will guide us through our, you know, life that will please our Lord and then bring glory to Him.

So this is very important thing that we need to remember. Why I choose to preach on Acts chapter 1 verse 6 to 11?

[2 : 31] Because I have a lot of questions. Because I have a lot of questions. I have a lot of questions. So when I'm getting a little bit older, not really old, but I start asking Jesus a lot of questions.

So one of the questions is, I'm not very sure how Jesus feels when He spends His last minutes with His disciples. I'm not very sure. I'm not very sure. You remember the mission of our Lord Jesus is to come here, you know, to work together with people on this earth and to, you know, complete His salvation plan so that all of us can be saved through His salvation.

And then He wants to teach us the Word of God so that we can have a guideline knowing how to be Christian, how to live a life worthy and glorified God.

And He also, the main thing, the main thing, the main thing, one of the main things is, He would like to hand the baton to the twelve disciples so that the twelve disciples will continue to preach the gospel until the end of the earth.

[3 : 51] So when I read this passage, my heart is very heavy. I wonder if Jesus made the right decision.

I wonder if Jesus made the right decision. It was just a fact. It was just a fact. Peter denied three times when Jesus was arrested.

Almost none of the apostles can accept the truth that Jesus, you know, resurrected through the death.

And even Jesus spent 40 days before, in between resurrection and His ascent to heaven. The disciples doesn't make me feel comfortable that they are ready for this great commission.

And then when I read John chapter 21, Peter said, Well, I'm going back to fishing. Who is coming with me? And then seven, together with Peter, went to fishing.

[4 : 57] I mean, fishing is nothing wrong. I felt like Peter got lost. He was not very sure what next. Okay, before we have Jesus with us, so wherever He goes, we follow.

And now Jesus, you know, He said that He is leaving us. So what should we do? So I have a question for Jesus. I said, Are you sure that these twelve disciples, of course, at the time, minus one, eleven, are you sure these eleven can do what you commit, you know, command them to do? I have a lot of questions. And then at this time, verse six. You know, at the very end of the Jesus ministry, supposedly Jesus make it clear.

And then His disciples understand what Jesus had for them so that they can carry out the great commission. And yet the disciples, they didn't get it.

They didn't. Verse six says that when they gather around Him and they ask Him, Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom of Israel?

[6 : 14] You just compare what Jesus had taught them in the early days in the three-plus years ministry. Jesus mentioned all the nations, all the nations, all the nations.

So Isaiah chapter 49 saying that, you know, there's a small thing to restore Israel. Our Lord, our God's heart is for the world, for all the nations.

Why after three-plus years, and supposedly they are graduated from their training school, discipleship training school. And the final question, the disciples couldn't answer.

They didn't get it. I was worried. I said, Lord Jesus, can you delay not return to heaven as planned, as scheduled?

Because how can you hand this great commission to these eleven disciples? I was confused.

[7 : 22] And then, God just helped me to understand. Help me to understand something very important. Help me to understand something very important.

That God is going to use whoever. Weak, strong, you know, with strong faith, with little faith.

God is going to use them. Because what really can accomplish the great commission is not because who we are. It's because who He is.

When we realize that that made me real, just changed my life. I'm preaching, but I'm also telling you a testimony. Preaching, you know, changed my life.

You know, in 1980, I was single, 25 years old. No experience at all. And then I came here, you know, ran the room at three miles of rock road there.

[8 : 21] And then we asked SIB, the English Church, Pastor Tony, and church leaders to give me six people to help me to do door-to-door evangelism for three months.

You know, so naïve. I thought, three months I can start building a church, like going on with a meeting. Start from zero. I mentioned to Lenny this morning, you know, who they were.

I managed to remember five. Another one I can't exactly sure who he or she is. But anyway, we use Iris Garden 26 downstairs, Wednesday night.

And then the English prayer meeting upstairs. We have prayer meeting downstairs. We have just a few people. Just a few people. I felt so, you know, nervous because I never done this.

I have no experience. You know, I just don't know what to do. And yet, God just helped me to experience his great power and his mercy.

[9 : 32] So in six years, we start five churches. Iris Garden, Padungan, Taboncae, and Seven Mouth, and Padukawa.

We start five churches. And then on the seventh year, six years, you know, 1986, we start another Eban church in Taboncae.

When I say we start, actually, we didn't plan for that. And our church member went to the group. They were from the Wuru area, temporarily, you know, settle in Taboncae.

And then government plan to relocate them to other places. But someone from our church went to them and shared the gospel. The wife of the head man became Christian.

And this family requests for a church building there. So they request us to help to build the church building there. Do you know where is the church now?

[10 : 37] 2018, I was preaching at Padukawa. I asked them, where is the Eban church? They say, Pastor, just next door in Padukawa. They probably have over 200 people now.

I just felt like I understand. Because I asked questions according to what I think. Jesus, you need to choose somebody like Paul.

Or maybe somebody that's really good in many ways. Very powerful. And they understand God's word and be obedient.

I look at the 12 disciples. I hesitate to, you know, to say that they are the right choice. But in history, God just used different people.

Not because of, if I'm gifted or I'm strong, I have faith. But because even though we are weak, once we obey God's word, command, teaching, God will help us.

[11:45] You know, to glorify Him by doing something that is not from us, but from God. So this is very encouraging.

Very encouraging. So you see, when I was in a Bible seminary from 1976 to 80, I found out my heart always goes towards a direction that whatever Jesus said, I'm going to try.

I'm going to try. I'm going to try. So I'm more, you know, when you talk about practical theology. I'm going, I just believe, when I read Acts chapter 1 verse 8, that you will receive power.

Okay, I like power. When the Holy Spirit came. And then you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in old Judea, Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

And I say, okay, Lord Jesus, this is what you say. I'm going to do it. I'm going to do it. So when I arrived in Kuchin in August 1986, I bought a map of Kuchin.

[13:05] I marked down where I went to plan a church, where there is no church nearby, or a lot of non-Christian in the area. So I marked it down. I start praying.

I went to Bible school. And then I share my vision. I recruit people. Every year we have Bible school students come and join us. Every year. So whenever our church is arriving, 60 people, I challenge them.

At least five families. You move out. You know, you help the Banzai, you help the Badungan. And then in six years, we plan six, five churches. Two Hakka language, three Mandarin language.

Now, this is very exciting because in doing so, I saw what Jesus is saying here become a reality. It's the truth. Because when I did that with my team, none of us are experienced people. We are young, naive. We don't know what to do.

[14:09] we can go and share about Jesus, but besides that, we know very little. But how God works through a group of people like us.

You know, Ian, you know, very little experience, but with a heart for the Lord. And the Holy Spirit starts moving among us. Start moving among us.

So my question here is, you know, why for 2,000 years churches cannot take this verse serious enough to make it happen?

Every time I went to different conferences, you know, some speakers say, oh, in this world nowadays we still have maybe 1,000, 2,000, 3,000 people group.

They are not yet heard about Jesus Christ. I ask why? What's the problem? What's the problem? So that's my worry about the disciples.

[15:16] But that's also my worry about Christ's church. What happened? Are we not taking this seriously? Are we not believing Jesus Christ? Jesus said, okay, I give you a timeline.

I'm leaving now, but I'm coming back. So in between his, you know, ascend and then coming back, we don't know how many years. God expects us to fulfill, bring the gospel from Jerusalem to all Judea, Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

I have difficulty to convince churches. I preach in many, many countries. Some countries, some churches, I felt like, you know, whatever I say, no one really hear it.

Because what happened? For 2,000 years, churches still stay in Jerusalem. Never reach out to Judea. Never consider about Samaria.

Okay, we don't need to say about any of the earth. Every time I talk to them, they say, oh, our church, we need to strengthen our discipleship training program.

[16:30] We need to strengthen our youth ministry. We need to, you know, help our children ministry, the Sunday school. All are very good. Those are must. We need to do that.

But can we consider for 2,000 years, step up from our four walls and go outside and see?

This morning, I was very heavy-hearted just looking at our neighbor. The incense smoke came out, you know, rise up. And the police came to help with the traffic.

That means a lot of people. They are searching. They want to know the truth. They need help. And they are yet to hear about Jesus Christ.

I just felt like, you know, as a church, what are we going to do here? You know, I share this everywhere. I pastored a church in America for 10 years.

[17:31] It was a, it was not planned. Our family came back from, you know, left Africa.

And then, because my youngest daughter was going to university, so the mission say, since the church in Africa can be independent financially, they have their own church pastors, church leaders.

So it's time for our family to move forward, either to go to another mission field, start new ministry, or whatever. You know, just let the church in Africa just trust the Lord and keep going. It was very encouraging. Just two weeks ago, I talked to the pastor in Africa. He said that he called me Maran, or called me father, you know, baby, you know, because he considered me as his spiritual father.

He told me, saying that the New Testament, the manga language, the New Testament almost complete, getting ready for public. It's very encouraging because this is a people group that have no written language.

[18 : 48] Now, for the first time in there, in these people, within these people group, their first book came out is New Testament. It's New Testament. I'm very encouraging, encouraged.

So what I'm saying here is, you know, a lot of churches think that as a church, our ministry, the main thing is our own church.

How are we going to grow our own church? How to help spiritual life, you know, with each individual or church member? How are we going to make sure that they have firm foundation of theology and our belief, everything?

Again, I say those are all important. But please, just look at what Jesus said. You know, be my witnesses in Jerusalem. Don't stay there.

How can we know that we are not staying there? Look at our church project. You know where are we standing. Some churches have maybe 90% of the project is for our own church youth.

[19 : 53] Then another 10% for reaching out to the local, maybe low houses or whatever. And then some percentage going to oversee ministry.

And then we ask the second question, how can we know that our church, where is our church according to this verse? Chapter 1, verse 8. How many of us from our congregation went out to the Judea, to the Samaria, to the end of the earth?

You just look at that. That is a temperature measurement. How healthy our church is. Because it's not how big our congregation is.

If you pay attention to the early church, the first church in the Bible, according to the book of Acts, it was the church of Jerusalem.

When we come all the way to chapter 6 of the book of Acts, the Jerusalem church, they have thousands and thousands of people gathering there.

[21 : 01] If you talk about church growth, that was one of the quickest, you know, the best example. But when I read the Bible, you know, chapter 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, why the focus of the book of Acts, the focus should from Jerusalem to the church of Antioch.

Then you realize that church of Antioch, they are ready to go from Jerusalem, and then Judea, and then Samaria.

They are ready to go. So when in chapter 13, when during the prayer meeting, Holy Spirit saying that, send, you know, Barnabas and Saul.

You know, Saul, after what his name is Paul. You know, send them out. Immediately, they, these two missionaries were out from their comfort zone, left their own church, and start traveling around and preaching the gospel to so-called Judea and even Samaria.

And in some point, we can say that even to the end of the earth. That means within the first, you know, the early church, the record, gospel already reaching out to Europe.

[22 : 23] According to that time, that can be called the end of the earth. What does that mean? That means that if we really follow the word of God with the power of the Holy Spirit, not because of who we are, how strong our financial is, you know, not because of what we can do, but because we trust the Lord, and that we believe that the Holy Spirit will provide, will guide, will open up the door for us.

We can do it. We can do it. This is a very old, old message. 2,000 years ago, Jesus laid out very clearly.

For 2,000 years, churches around the world struggle to understand and implement it. I just felt like the heart of our God, our Lord Jesus Christ, is very difficult.

Why? Why my people refuse to set up from the comfort zone of Jerusalem and start reaching out? What's the problem?

Okay, people may say, well, because, and when we look at the because, those reasons, if you can remove I, or we, the human factor, and replace it with the Holy Spirit, everything changes.

[23 : 51] everything changes. We can do it, not because of who we are, or what we can do, but because of who he is, and what he can do.

If we can just swap, and have a, you know, biblical, you know, value, and thought, and saying that whatever our Lord say, we believe that that is truth, that is what God wants us to do, and to go, and let's trust him, and do it.

and put into action. If we do that, brothers and sisters, I believe, I believe the world will be very different today.

The world will be very different today. You know, in the US, I hesitate to go to preach, to speak on mission conferences. Some of them have been doing mission conferences annually for 20 years, and I ask them, you have 20 years of mission conferences.

You know, anything change, like from the first mission conference, and then the 20th mission conference? Anything change? Oh, they say, yes, our budget changed.

[25 : 05] We have smaller budget before, now we have bigger budget. I say, okay, then, anything more than that? And they look at me like, what are you talking about?

Am I not doing enough? I just, I just, wondering, how our Lord Jesus, feel about his churches now, globally.

I don't know. And Jesus make it very clear. You know, the two men with white robe, saying that Jesus is coming back the same way.

When he came back, we don't need to do evangelism anymore. You know, that is the end of our opportunities. So, brothers and sisters, reconsider the meaning of our Christian life.

Are we following the world? Because the world considers sending our children to good school, become doctor, lawyer, you know, become engineer, is our dream.

[26 : 10] Those are the world thing, worldly thing. I'm not saying that being a doctor or engineer or whatever is wrong. No, it's very good. Because God also bless, you know, them and through them, you know, bless many people.

But, the thing is, what do you, do we as parents, communicate with our children? Did we mention about, you know, serving the Lord need to be our first priority?

Full-time, part-time, or even with your, you know, vacation, you still serve the Lord. How clear the message we teach our children.

You know, the last Sunday was Mother's Day or Parents' Day. The Chinese churches, they call Parents' Day. That means they don't celebrate, celebrate Father's Day separately.

So, I challenge them, I say, as parents, or soon-to-be parents, the, the single, what are we going to teach our children?

[27 : 18] How to become parents, Godly parents. I say, do you realize that in the whole Bible, there is no example about good parents?

No example. You talk about Adam, Eve, not very good example. You talk about Noah, didn't even mention his wife's name. You talk about lots, you know, his wife become a salt piller, and then you talk about different people.

So, the only person I can choose is Abraham and Sarah. What I'm saying is, we need to look for a, a, a track, a pattern, in the Bible, how they can prepare godly children.

It's very challenging. And then, when we talk about church, church leader, how are we going to lead our congregation to be godly and then ever ready to respond to God's command and his teaching.

It's very challenging. Very challenging. It's never easy. So, when I say this, brothers and sisters, unless we stay up from Jerusalem, because within the common, comfort zone, you know, forgive me to say that.

[28 : 39] We actually don't need the power of the Holy Spirit. We can handle most of the things. Okay? We can handle most of the things. In 1988, when I went to Australia to further my study there, and then, the Australian government offered me, saying that, okay, if you stay more than six months, you go to see doctor free.

And then, you pay \$2.50 for pharmacy those drugs, you know, medicine. So, I went to the church. I said, will people pray for your health needs?

Most of the Christians say, we don't really need it because government take care of that. You know, we have a lot of people we don't really feel like we need the power of the Holy Spirit because we are doing fine.

So, why do we need the Holy Spirit? But the thing is, when we step out of the comfort zone of Jerusalem, when you go into Judea and Samaria, you have cultural shock, you have language challenges, religion challenges, you have a lot of challenges coming up.

You need to just turn to God and say, God, unless you help me, otherwise, I can't do it. I can't do it. Brother and sister, do you know that this is the best way of experiencing God?

[30 : 08] When you obey and step up from your comfort zone? The best way. You know, until the day I reached Africa, it was very hard for me because for more than 10 years our children didn't stay with us.

It was very hard for parents. So, besides the weather, the food, the local people, the black African, besides all those challenges, language, I just felt like I was just totally kind of just say helpless. I don't say hopeless, but helpless. And then at that point I turned to the Lord. I turned to Him because He is my only hope.

He is my only help. When I turned to Him, then I started experiencing Him. When I started experiencing Him, in spite of my shortness, like, you know, limitation, you know, my language came very slow, and then everything came very slow.

You know, this religion, these people, they are not, you know, friendly to Christianity, to Christian missionaries. It's very difficult. It took me several years to see first converts kind of thing.

[31 : 28] you know, when you are in that kind of situation, you are totally out of comfort zone, and you are totally out of what you can do. And this verse becomes a reality to me.

I read this verse, I said, Jesus, thank you. You promised me, and the Holy Spirit will come, and give me power. The condition is, be my witnesses from Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the earth.

The condition is, so, without moving out from Jerusalem, the Holy Spirit may not work among us because we don't ask for help, because we can handle the province ourselves.

We don't need him. He is ever ready to, you know, to help us, but we never actually need him in a sense. It's like when we got sick, we seek doctors, help first, and then if doctors say, sorry, I can't do much, then Christian will turn to the Lord, say, oh, please, I don't want to die, so please help, heal me.

You know, what about if we intentionally, we are in a comfort zone, but we decide to follow, you know, the obedience to the teaching of Jesus Christ, then you experience, you experience.

[32 : 55] you know what happened in Kuchin? 1981, we had five people came to our congregation with demon process, evil process.

I cried to Jesus, I said, when I was in Bible college, I was seminary, I asked my professor about evil spirit, evil, you know, those kind of process, my professor came back from the West, they said to me, in this era, no more evil process, no problem, because nowadays, that's not the case, so I didn't get any training, I didn't even know how to do it, so the first one came to us during our Sunday school, and the whole family told me, pastor, if Jesus is true, if he can cast out the demon from my daughter, who she was 24 years old, and has been possessed for 12 years, and I always hurt herself, the house is over there, you know, the school, the next door to the school, at that time we don't have the main road, you know, that was very challenging, how can I say to him, yes, Jesus came, because no one tell me that Jesus came, I believe that he came, but the problem is, no one experienced it, I don't know what to do, so my wife and I went there, and the family keep saying that if Jesus is true, he can heal, then our whole family will accept the Lord, you know how challenging it is, I don't know what to say, I just say, okay, give us a week of fasting prayer, we need to fast and pray, so we came back to hours 26, at that time I stayed, we stayed on top of the church, then we started praying, we asked people to come and pray, pray, basically, after the five day, six day fasting prayer, I still had no answer, I don't know what to do, the time we went back, no matter what I asked her, this young lady, she said nothing, until the word of

God from 1st John saying that wherever the spirit acknowledge Jesus Christ, you know, incarnate, you know, God become man, and then if we, the spirit, if acknowledge this, then it's not from the evil spirit, when I read that verse, the girl cried out, so, became so angry, I have no experience, but at least I can tell the difference, so immediately I say, okay, in Jesus name, I ask the spirit in you to answer me, do you believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross, and then he completed the salvation, and he defeated the evil spirit, the devil, and just the reaction was just unimaginable, so immediately we realized that she was possessed, so we put a chair and asked her to sit in the middle, so the father, and a few of us, we circle her, and then we start praying,

I didn't have faith, I dare not open my eyes, I cross my eyes so tight, and I pray, and pray, and pray, and sing songs, and ask God to do something, finally I heard the father say, oh, she is dying, she is dying, because she was thrown on the floor, and then saliva came out, and then the father was so like afraid, not sure what happened, and then when we opened our eyes, we don't know what to do, also, we don't know what to do, of course, the Bible says something like that, but in reality, then the girl woke up, for 12 years, the first question, the first thing she asked, she asked her father, who are those people, for 12 years, the first time she spoke, the family was so just overwhelmed, with joy, and the following day, 6.30, my wife and

[37 : 39] I, we went to visit them, because from here to there, it's just, you know, a minute, two minutes driving, you know, and the girl already working with her father in the boutique, that the school children come, and they made a hole in the fence, so they buy breakfast, something from this family, and then when I arrived there, the father was so happy, he said, oh, she always just counted wrongly, counted wrongly, when she was 12 years old, possessed, and then she was delivered 24 years old, you see, as soon as I experienced that, I tell God, saying that, no matter what you say to me, going to the end of the earth, I trust that if you are this God, and you can do this, nothing will be too difficult for you, so our family went to Africa, it wasn't easy, but it was the best time in my life, every time I remember what happened in

Africa, how things get, us who become Christian, I see the hand of God, I see the power of the Holy Spirit, so brother and sister, trusting can be challenging, but trusting will make our life like Job, saying that before I heard about you, now I see you with my eyes, what kind of believers do you want to be, what kind of church do we want to be, my encouragement is, do as what God said, and trusting, we will experience the power of God, then our whole church, our whole life will be different, we know that who we trust is true, let's pray, brother God, we want to thank you, because we know that all the teachings, that you had record in the

Bible, it's a blessing for us if we trust and obey and put into action, we just want to thank you for your faithfulness, your trustfulness, we just want to thank you that we can call you Father God, our Father, because you never forsake us, whatever you say is true, once we decide to follow your teaching, we know that God, your blessing will be with us, and knowing that the one we trust is a true God, who loves us, who is ever ready to answer our prayer, and to work with us, to help us to understand who we are believing, who we are trusting, that will make our life the best and most meaningful life.

So we want to thank you and ask the Lord your challenge of church or individual to trust you also. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Thank you.

Amen. Amen. Amen.

[41 : 23] Amen.