

**Jesus on the Mount of Olives**  
**Acts 1:6-11**  
**By Senior Pastor Tom Harrison**  
**Mountains, Valleys and Caves Sermon Series**  
April 24, 2022

The Mount of Olives is a key geographical spot in the Bible. The location and elevation of the mount provides a scenic overlook into Jerusalem. David fled barefoot from Jerusalem, through the Kidron Valley, and up the Mount of Olives when his son, Absalom, had his coup d'état. Bethany, the home of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, is just east. The Palm Sunday Road begins here and passes by Gethsemane, where Jesus loved to pray. This Mount is the site of the ascension and the promise of power when the disciples would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This Mount is also where thousands of Jews have been buried through the centuries. The Mount of Olives is a perfect description of "Mountains, Valleys, and Caves." We uphold our loyalty to Jesus through Asbury by five actions: our prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness. Asbury exists to help others follow Jesus. A witness has had some type of experience. A major reason Christians become bored with their faith is because they have ceased to be witnesses. Jesus told us to be a witness. Witnessing is core to our identity as His followers. *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."* (Acts 1:8) And 1 Peter 3:15-16 says: *"...but in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience...."*

One illustration says, "Witnessing is one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread." Jesus is the bread of life. The story is not about us, but what He has done in us. In a quote attributed to the author of "Amazing Grace," John Newton, said: *"I am not what I might be, I am not what I ought to be, I am not what I wish to be, I am not what I hope to be. But I thank God I am not what I once was, and I can say with the great apostle, 'By the grace of God I am what I am.'"*

APPLICATION: Our theme this week is **witness**. Letting our light shine may help others who are living in darkness. Who can you share your faith with this week?

Small groups are great opportunities to witness and share. The story is not about us, it's about Jesus. When was the last time you verbally talked about your faith in Jesus? Our mission of helping others follow Jesus will be demonstrated during the 11:00 service today as our confirmands unite in membership vows with Asbury.

The gospels are the stories of Jesus. We could **draw it** like this: God came from the **MOUNTAINTOP** (heaven) and became a human being ("Christmas") and was born in a **CAVE**. There are shepherds' caves in Bethlehem— great places for shepherds to keep their flocks. Jesus could have been born in one of these caves. Jesus experienced the routines of **VALLEY** life in Nazareth and His earthly ministry – until He was again placed in a **CAVE** after His crucifixion. Last Sunday was another mountaintop: the **RESURRECTION**.

*Luke 24:1-12 But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise." And they remembered his words and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened.* This is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is about God's activity. The Gospel is NOT about US, whether we are "too good" or "too bad." Our righteousness or lack of, does not matter. Without Jesus' Resurrection, our final destination is a cave, not a mountaintop.

Luke wrote the Gospel of Luke, which were the Actions of Jesus. Luke also wrote a sequel – these are still the Actions of Jesus but made known to the disciples.

**Acts 1:6-11 p 1080**

<sup>6</sup>So, when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time **restore the kingdom to Israel?**" <sup>7</sup>He said to them,

"It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. <sup>8</sup>But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, & you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." <sup>9</sup>And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. <sup>10</sup> And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, **two men** stood by them in white robes, <sup>11</sup>and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

<sup>6</sup> The disciples desired a **political solution** (crush the Romans & "Make Israel Great Again" 😊) They desired insider knowledge and power. Some Christians are preoccupied with the end times – but that's not what Jesus desired. Do not focus on THAT but receive and be empowered by the Holy Spirit to help us be witnesses. The **last thing** Jesus said: "**BE MY WITNESSES.**" Be my witnesses *in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*" It is the **one thing** He wants. <sup>10</sup> Luke has these "**two men**" gently giving direction. In the Gospel of Luke, they said, *Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here but has risen.*" Now they said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven." In other words – get to work. You've got something to do.

Luke shows in Acts how the early church fulfilled Jesus' orders: *you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*" Start local (Jerusalem – Acts 1-7), go regional (Judea/Samaria – Acts 8:1), and go to the ends of the earth (what Paul did Acts 9). Luke organized Acts to show how the early church fulfilled Acts 1:8. The purpose of receiving the Holy Spirit wasn't to know when Jesus would return or to make us proud of a spiritual gift– the Holy Spirit was ultimately given to empower us to witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

**WHY do we witness?** Because of Jesus. John 1:14 *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

**HOW do we witness?** There are 2 simple ways we can do it. This completely takes the pressure off us.

1.) By **Praying**. A Methodist layman, Harry Denman, would witness by asking people, “Will you pray for me?” That was one of the first things he said even though he didn’t know the person. The flip side is true, “How can I pray for you?” A lot of people will respond to that. Just be careful it doesn’t come across in an arrogant, haughty, or self-righteous way.

2.) **By telling our story**. I was baptized as a baby, went through Confirmation when I was in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, but it wasn’t until we had a weekend experience at Rose Hill called a “Lay Witness Mission” when I was in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade (14 ½). This was the transforming weekend in my life. My story is different than yours – but if we are in Christ, we have a witness. It doesn’t have to be something that happened 50 years ago – what difference does Jesus make now.

3.) By **listening**. Ask good questions. Meet people where they are. Last week we showed the episode of The Chosen when Jesus listened to the woman at the well. The Chosen is about the relationships He had with people. A few people may feel they are too good and don’t need God, but most feel they are not good enough for God to love them. We do not like it when others preach to us. Let the Holy Spirit “preach” to people.