

## Evotional.

**Date:** 18<sup>th</sup> April 2010 (pm).

**Speaker:** Neil Durling.

**Message title:** “What Jesus did next.”

**Bible passage:** Acts 1:1-11.



### **Message summary:**

In the above passage Luke is writing to Theophilus. This is his second volume about Jesus (in Luke's Gospel he tells Theophilus about Jesus' birth, life, death and resurrection). Acts is about the growth of the early Church. But first Luke tells us what Jesus did next; after rising from the dead, he appeared to five hundred people, over forty days. The question is: Why? Why not just go straight to heaven? Here are a few thoughts...

**Proved he was alive:** The passage says he gave them many “convincing proofs”. They didn't just have a fleeting glimpse in the garden of that resurrection; Jesus met them several times because he knew they would be facing difficult times, when they really needed to know that Jesus was alive.

**Proclaimed the Kingdom of God:** This was Jesus' chief passion; he spoke about, taught on and discussed this with his followers (Matthew 13). If we knew we weren't going to see someone again, we would want to share something with them that was deep within us and on our heart – that is what Jesus does. Dallas Willard says that the kingdom is “wherever what God wants done gets done”. It can be seen in acts of love, justice, forgiveness and inclusion that are often mysterious or small. God's kingdom is larger than but includes the Church: It is God's missionary activity. Emil Brunner writes: “The church exists by mission as a fire exists by burning.” The disciples want to know when the kingdom will be restored to Israel; they miss the point, and Jesus tells them to not worry about this. They get sidetracked from the central issue. I'm glad we don't, aren't you!

**Prepared for his departure:** Jesus spent forty days with them: Why so long? Forty is a familiar Biblical number for making a decision; you have thirty-nine days/weeks/months/years to think about something, but in the fortieth you must make your decision (e.g.: the Jews in the Wilderness, Noah in Nineveh, Jesus in the desert). Jesus tells them that when he goes they will receive power from the gift of the Holy Spirit. They are to wait in Jerusalem to receive this. I don't imagine they sat for ten days (until Pentecost) in silent meditation with strained looks on their faces. I think they were together; eating, sleeping, praying and talking about what Jesus had said to them.

After this Jesus ascended into heaven. The disciples are looking into the sky when two men (angels) appear and basically tell them that Jesus will return as he has left – Get on with what Jesus said.

So what will we do next? I think we need to:

**Prepare:** We must rely on the power of the Holy Spirit as well. Some of us are scared of the Holy Spirit, whilst others feel they can cope on their own and have almost “outgrown” the Holy Spirit. We all need to come to God and remember that we need him, and the gift of the powerful Holy Spirit. Paul told us to “be-being filled” with the Holy Spirit in Ephesians. We can prepare in personal prayer, by praying with others, by reading the Bible and refocusing ourselves, or by going for a walk with others and chatting about Jesus and his kingdom; the list goes on.

**Proclaim:** We must advance the kingdom of God. Some say we aren't all evangelists, and whilst I hear that, we cannot deny that we are all called to be witnesses for Jesus to the ends of the earth (this may start with going to the end of our street). We prepare in order to proclaim by what we say and do. We don't prepare so that we have a ‘nice feeling’, rather, we are blessed to be a blessing (Genesis 12).

**Prove:** When we do this I believe we will see convincing proof of Jesus, and our faith will grow as others come to him.

### **A question:**

When did you last ask God to fill you with his Holy Spirit?

### **A prayer:**

Jesus, thank you that you stayed around for forty days to prepare your disciples. Thank you that you have now given us the gift of your Holy Spirit so that we too may be prepared, in order to proclaim your kingdom and see our faith grow. Amen.