

Sharing Your Faith Makes Disciples

DARRELL DELANEY

I remember not too long ago there was a really cold night that led to a chilly morning. The night was so cold, the ice was caked on my car windows. I grabbed my scraper and worked feverishly to get the ice off. Now, my custom is to start the car so that the heat can get going while I scrape, but when I went to turn the key, nothing happened: No lights, no heat, no power at all. So, I lifted the hood and checked the battery. That was the problem; I had no juice there. So, I took the jumper cables and I hooked them up to my other vehicle and the car started immediately. I realized that without power, I was going nowhere. In this episode of *Groundwork*, we will talk about the ascension of Christ and the power to be disciples and witnesses coming from the gift of the Holy Spirit, because without him they were going nowhere. Stay tuned.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Welcome to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DARRELL DELANEY

And I am Darrell Delaney; and we are starting a new series, Scott, called Sharing Your Faith. The first thing told to the people by Jesus was that they needed to share their faith; they needed to make disciples; and this topic in general...sharing your faith...for some people it is really exciting, but for others it can be kind of nerve-wracking. It is something personal...it makes me nervous...it makes me unsure...what do I say...what do I do. Have you ever felt like that?

SCOTT HOEZEE

Oh, sure; and I think a lot of people do. I mean, a lot of people I know, including myself at times, would rather make small talk with strangers about almost anything rather than start to try to talk about religion or their faith or do you believe in Jesus? So, I think a lot of us feel intimidated. Some of us think: Well, you know, I am not very articulate; I am not, you know, well spoken; I am not a professional missionary or evangelist; I don't know if I can do this; but we've got the Holy Spirit on our side, as we are going to see here. So, we are all going to have various abilities, strengths and weaknesses when it even comes to witnessing, but we've got somebody really important in our corner to help us; and so, we are going to be talking about that.

DARRELL DELANEY

And that is exciting to know and comforting to know that we have help whenever we need it. I realize, too, that our faith has pretty much two aspects to it. One is to testify to what God did to save and redeem us...just talk about the person and work of Jesus and what he did; and then the second is to encourage others with that good news to join the family of God. When I was a kid, we actually had opportunities to use our scripture and try to lead people to Christ, but then, you know, we stumbled over our words...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes.

DARRELL DELANEY

And we learned by trial and error and things like that, but those two aspects were still part of it: What God did and how that involves us.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes, I think...as you were saying that, Darrell, I was thinking we start with saying: Here is what Jesus did for me; *but*, here is what Jesus can do for you, and if you accept that, then here is what he did for us, right? Now, we become part of the community of faith together.

In this series here, two of the episodes are going to get anchored to two really important events after the resurrection. In this episode, we are going to look at the ascension of Jesus, and then in the third episode, we are going to look at Pentecost itself; but in this one, we are going to look at the ascension. So, this now is forty days after Easter...forty days after Jesus rose again from the dead; and he had been saying to the disciples even before he died...this comes out really clear in John's gospel, but in the other ones, too...that at some point he is going to return to the Father. He wasn't going to stick around physically on earth forever. He was going to go back; and now, forty days later, he does.

DARRELL DELANEY

And it is a significant part of the Church calendar for Christians to remember this is when Jesus ascended...this is when he promised to send the Holy Spirit, and not too long after we have Pentecost.

SCOTT HOEZEE

It is in Luke 24. It comes after the road to Emmaus story; but in verse 50...this is sometime later...well, forty days later...after the road to Emmaus story: When Jesus had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. ⁵¹While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. ⁵²Then they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. ⁵³And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.

So, Luke wrote both this account and the other account that we are going to get to in the next part of the episode. There are slight differences between Luke 24 and Acts 1, but not real significant; but the point is, Jesus returned to heaven. Some people, of course, say: Well, you know, that just shows how naïve these people were. Heaven isn't really above us. I mean, we know that. It is in a different dimension or a different realm. Okay, but you know what? Still today when people refer to God or they say: Praise Jesus! They look straight up. They will lift their hands to heaven. Football players, you know, look up to heaven and cross themselves after the touchdown...

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

We still think of heaven above us, so that is no knock on the disciples. That was a symbolic way for Jesus to return to the Father.

DARRELL DELANEY

In this passage you see that they are rejoicing and they are worshipping while Jesus is ascending, but I like what happens before that passage in verses 46 through 49. Jesus himself tells them: "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

This is why they are worshipping, this is why they are rejoicing, and it is also why they are remaining in Jerusalem, because Jesus specifically says: Stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high. I love that phrase.

SCOTT HOEZEE

It is sort of a reverse on a phrase we often say. In this case, they are saying don't just do something, stand there. We actually say don't just stand there, do something; but for now, Jesus says just stand there. It is

going to be ten days, we know. Pentecost will come fifty days after Easter and ten days after the ascension; but it is important that they get clothed with power from on high. So, you talked about a car with a dead battery at the beginning, right? This is going to be the juice in our battery...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And until you get your battery charged by the Holy Spirit, you are not ready to go. So, stay here and wait, and it will come. It has been promised.

DARRELL DELANEY

And it is interesting to me because it is counterintuitive. I feel like probably when they got the instructions they may have wanted to get going, but Jesus says: Stay. He says: Wait. It can be counterintuitive for us who feel like we have a job to do, but if we are not clear on the instructions or the how or the method, then we could actually be setting ourselves up; and so, the good news is, you know, even though God knows sometimes we get impatient and it could rub us the wrong way, he knows the best way to get this witnessing done; and therefore, he is going to give us exactly what we need in order for that to happen; and so, they continued to praise God...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes.

DARRELL DELANEY

They continued to meet in the temple courts daily to make sure that they were waiting for that promise.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; and this is what Jesus had said, because when Jesus...again, particularly in John's gospel...when Jesus tells the disciples he is going to go away, they are sad, right? And why not? Jesus is their friend, he is their master, he is the glue that holds them together. So, the idea is just like little kids, you know. When Mom and Dad go away on vacation or Mom or Dad has to go away on business, we are always sad when somebody we love isn't going to be around; and so, the disciples are sad; but Jesus says: Don't be sad. Your sadness will turn to joy because it is for your good that I go away. If I don't go away, then I cannot be replaced by the Spirit. So, when I go away, I will make sure that I will still be with you through the Spirit. So, I really will still be with you by the Holy Spirit; but we want to look a little bit more at this ascension idea, and we will look at the classic text that we use for Ascension Day, and that is from Acts Chapter 1, and we will look at that in just a moment.

Segment 2

DARRELL DELANEY

You are listening to *Groundwork*, where we are digging into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Darrell Delaney.

Scott Hoezee;

And I am Scott Hoezee; and Darrell, we are talking about Jesus' ascension into heaven forty days after he arose again from the dead; and we just looked at the briefer account of that; actually, it is not a whole lot briefer, but a little bit briefer, from the very end of Luke's gospel. Luke, of course, still wrote the book of Acts, and so, he tells the story again for us in Acts Chapter 1.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, starting at verse 6, it reads: Then they gathered around him, asking him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" ⁷He said to them, "It is not for you to know the times or the dates the Father has set by his own authority, 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." ⁹After he said

this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. ¹⁰They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. ¹¹“Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”

SCOTT HOEZEE

You know, we talked earlier, Darrell, where Jesus said don't just do something, stand there—wait until you are clothed with power from on high; which ultimately is going to be in ten days at Pentecost, which again we will look at in the third episode of this four-part series on sharing our faith; but what is interesting is that it is not only that they need the juice...the power in their batteries is the image we have used...that the Holy Spirit will give, they are also going to need some of the clarity that the Holy Spirit is going to bring to them. The Spirit is going to finally help them connect the dots as to who Jesus is in the right way, so their witness is true and accurate. You see the need for that here in Acts 1:6. It is forty days after the resurrection and they still say to him: Lord, are you going to restore the kingdom to Israel now? It is like, they are still waiting for that political kingdom; they are still thinking Jesus is going to replace the Caesar. They still have some of those wrong ideas in their head that they had all along; so, the Holy Spirit is going to provide power, but also clarity, so that not only do they have the power to share their faith, they will get the content right finally, too.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes, and they will be focused on the main thing being the main thing.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

The main thing isn't that Jesus is going to politically overthrow and be David the sequel.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

It is actually a spiritual kingdom that comes to change the hearts of people, and that the Holy Spirit will help them to do; and so, right now, they are being told to wait because the Holy Spirit is going to clothe them with power from on high; and I was thinking about the word *witness* because he says, “You will be my witnesses.” Two things came to mind. One of them is actually the court case. If you go take this as a lawyer into the courtroom, the witness is the one who stands up and testifies under oath: Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth? And they testify to what they have seen, heard, or experienced as under God being I am going to tell the truth and tell you what I saw; and that is an accurate account that people around are judging to see this is a witness who is telling the truth.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Well, and the interesting thing there, Darrell, is that the Greek word for witness is the word from which we get our English word *martyr*. So many people along the ages got roughed up, if not killed, for their witness to Jesus that martyr became synonymous with those who died for the faith; but you don't have to die for the faith to be a literal martyr, because you are just a witness, and like you said, in court you testify to what you see; and a lot of times, the people who testify to what they see in a courtroom were there because they witnessed something. There was an accident at the intersection, and maybe there were people standing on three out of four different corners at the intersection, and they all get interviewed, and they all offer slightly different perspectives. If they all saw the same accident, they are ultimately going to pretty well track with each other, although every once in a great while somebody was in a better position to see something that the others missed; but all we can do is say what we saw. We cannot go beyond that. So, what we need to do...what the disciples needed to do...was just say what they saw. What did Jesus do? What did Jesus say? What did Jesus promise? Now, we pick up on that, too; and we will talk about some of that more in the next

episode. We just say what we know.

DARRELL DELANEY

You picked up this point, Scott, on the car accident analogy, where there are different people there and different vantage points, who testify; and there is an officer or an insurance claim or something that is trying to gather this information to get an accurate report; and if you think about it, that is exactly what Luke did, because he was not a disciple of Jesus...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DARRELL DELANEY

He did not get to follow him or witness firsthand. He had to get witness accounts of what Jesus did, and he was an historian so he organized those facts to truly prove that Jesus is who he says he is and he did what he said he would do; and that is how we got these testimonials from the book of Luke and the book of Acts; and so, Jesus also makes this clear in these accounts that we will be witnesses...that the disciples will be witnesses...in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth. If you look at this geographically, he is talking to Jewish guys, so that means they are starting at home; and even though missions are called to be both near and far...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes.

DARRELL DELANEY

I just came from a mission trip in Mississippi, and I thought it was awesome. We had people who went to Guatemala and other places. So, I am not discounting missions that have gone far places, but I am saying that we also have a call to do missions right where we are—right at home.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; and we will talk about that a little bit more in the final part of this program, too; but that is exactly right. It is sort of a series of concentric circles, if you think about it...

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

You know; so, here they are in Jerusalem, and then a little farther out is Judea, and then a little farther out is Samaria; and finally, the ends of the earth; and we are going to see that pattern in the book of Acts, that they will continue to move out; and not always willingly. What is interesting...we are not going to talk about that in this series, but the disciples did...the apostles now, after Pentecost...they kind of stuck around Jerusalem for a while; and so, what really scattered them was persecution.

DARRELL DELANEY

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

When the Romans started to come down hard on these new Jesus people, you know, the Way, as it was first called, that forced the people to flee; but thankfully, the Holy Spirit is very good at taking the most of every opportunity; and so, by forcing them out of Jerusalem, they started to do what they were supposed to do in the first place. They go to Judea and Samaria, and all of a sudden Philip...it is like he is getting beamed around. All of a sudden, he is by the chariot of an Ethiopian eunuch, and then he disappears and gets beamed to somewhere else. So, the Spirit had to sort of impel them outward, but that was the idea. You start where you are, and then you go from there.

DARRELL DELANEY

Then the Holy Spirit also gave them the power and the courage. You mentioned about how they were being persecuted. They actually prayed for more boldness so that they could do that; and that is exactly what we need to do when we are sharing our faith; ask the Holy Spirit to give us the boldness, courage and strength; and then even bringing these things back to our remembrance is what he promised to do. So, at the end of this episode, we want to look at the great commission and how having the privilege of sharing our faith will play into our daily lives. So, stay tuned.

Segment 3

SCOTT HOEZEE

I am Scott Hoezee, along with Darrell Delaney, and you are listening to *Groundwork*; and we are beginning a four-part series in this episode on sharing our faith, and we have been saying, Darrell, that this is something a lot of us are intimidated to do or shy about doing it. We maybe think you need to be a professional evangelist or a fulltime missionary or an eloquent speaker, but we have been saying the Holy Spirit is the energy to help motivate us and empower us, but the Spirit also gives us the words to say, and Jesus sends that Spirit after he ascends into heaven.

DARRELL DELANEY

And he also gives us, through the Spirit, the boldness to actually get it done...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes.

DARRELL DELANEY

And to do it well; and in a way that honors God; and so, we want to rewind a little bit and go back before that passage in the book of Acts and look at Matthew 28, where Jesus gives them the great commission; and it reads in Matthew 28, starting at verse 16: Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

SCOTT HOEZEE

That is where Matthew ends. He doesn't record the ascension, but that will come next, obviously; but these are the marching orders. This is the great commission; and as Frederick Dale Bruner, the Bible commentator, points out, Darrell, this follows the story just ahead of it, where the guards come and report to the governing authorities that Jesus rose again. I mean, he was just gone, right? And so, the governing authorities pay these soldiers...they bribe them...they pay them off and say: You go out and tell the story that the disciples came and stole the body...

DARRELL DELANEY

Stole the body...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Dale Bruner calls that the great counter commission, right? They are going to go out and tell the false story; so now Jesus comes in at the end to give the great commission: You go out and tell the true story. This wasn't grave robbery. I arose and I have all authority. So, now you go and you baptize and you witness to me.

DARRELL DELANEY

What is beautiful is that when Jesus meets the disciples and he tells them to go, there are some who worship and then there are some who doubt, and that is not unlike the world we live in here, Scott, where there are people who believe and there are people who doubt, but we still have a job to do...we still have the authority that Jesus has given us to share our faith and make disciples.

Now, when I pastored at Madison Church: Square Campus, we came up with a definition of a disciple that says: A disciple is one who loves and follows Jesus, becomes more and more like him in their attitudes and actions through worship, community, mission, and reconciliation, and seeks to make disciple makers who do the same. That to me is really significant, because the Holy Spirit is the one who empowers us to do this, and Christ promises, no matter what he will be with us through the end of the age.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And you know, I love that definition that you had at Madison. I also love the other thing you mentioned, Darrell, about the doubters, right? So, we said earlier in this episode, some of us don't feel equipped; but you know what? Jesus commissioned the doubters to go and witness, too.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, in other words, we sometimes think: If I don't have my act together...if I am not an eloquent speaker, I cannot witness. Jesus says yes you can, because those of you who are believing in me and those of you who are kind of doubting, you go, too, and I will help you. So, I think that is an encouraging word for all of us. You don't have to be the perfect disciple; you don't have to be full of knowledge that such that nobody could ever knock you off stride with a question. No, no, no, no. The power is from the Spirit; the commission is from Jesus; and we trust that God is going to give us what we need to do it.

DARRELL DELANEY

When you said that, Scott, it echoed me all the way back to before Christ, in the book of Exodus when Moses is making all these excuses about how he cannot speak and how he is not eloquent; and God says: I will help you speak and I will teach you what to say; and so, in the New Testament...fast-forward...we get the Holy Spirit, who is going to actually help us and give us exactly what we need to share. But then I looked at, okay, practically, what does that mean? Okay, we are at the so what part. So, what do we do? How do we live this? Where do we make disciples and how do we do it? So, I think that if we think about what was said in the book of Acts, where Jesus says: You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in Judea and Samaria, and the ends of the earth...if you think about the four places that we as people spend most of our time...I mean, we spend our time at home, we spend our time at our work, job, or campus, we spend our time at extracurricular activities, and on the social networks. I mean, I have seen so many people who have social network/media accounts: Facebook, Instagram...you name it...Tik Tok...it is great because God can use us in any of those places by the power of his Spirit.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And that is a nice facet that we often overlook in Matthew 28. Jesus says go and witness, but there is a little ambiguity in the Greek verb there. It can also be legitimately translated *as* you are going, witness.

DARRELL DELANEY

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And so, the idea is this isn't just specific mission trips, important though they are. This isn't just somebody, you know, flying off to Asia to become a fulltime missionary in Japan, important though that is. This is our everyday life. You go from home, you go to work, you go to Starbucks, you go to Panera; you go to your

kids' soccer game. You post something on Tik Tok or Facebook. As you are going, just keep telling people about me. As we are going to see in the next episode of this series, that is going to include just how you behave, too; but as you go...and I really like that...witness.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, that means that we are called to be a light, and witness where we are and as we are going. It is our lifestyle. It is designed to help us think. It is not an event; it is a way of life. So, this is how we as disciples are supposed to live. We are called to be a light and witness together in community; and we do that daily, we do that weekly; we testify to what God has done; and then when we go to church, we get reminded and we get resent, recapitulated out: Hey, you are going to go out and do this again; right where you live, right where you stay, right with your neighbor; and you are encouraged to use your testimony to do that because Revelation 12:11* says: We overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony.

SCOTT HOEZEE

I like the word *recapitulate* you used for worship because that ties in with my colleague, John Witvliet's definition of worship: Worship is Trinitarian new covenant renewal, in which every single worship service recapitulates...repeats the story of Jesus all over again to remind us, right? And so, this is the story that when church is done and Sunday is done and you are going to go back to school, you are going to go back to work, you are going to go back to whatever you do during the week, this is the story...so, we are just reminding you...this is the story; go out and tell it.

DARRELL DELANEY

So, when Jesus ascended, he sent the Holy Spirit here to empower us to be a witness to his person and work, and we will be able to do that thanks to his power; and the fringe benefit of that is we are encouraged in our faith. So, why not do that often? May we be salt and light wherever we go, God helping us.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Well, thank you for listening and digging deeply into scripture with *Groundwork*. We hope you will join us again next time as we continue examining what it means to share our faith as we unpack the biblical meaning of evangelism and what it looks like in our lives today.

Visit our website, groundworkonline.com, to share what *Groundwork* means to you, or tell us what you would like to hear discussed next on *Groundwork*.

DARRELL DELANEY

Groundwork is a listener supported program produced by ReFrame Ministries. Visit reframeministries.org for more information and to find more resources to encourage your faith. We are your hosts, Darrell Delaney with Scott Hoezee.

*Correction: The audio of this program misstates the reference for this passage as Revelation 19:11. The correct reference is Revelation 12:11.

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