

Journeys with the Early Church:

Sent into an Uncertain
Future



Easter Verbs

“Do not hold on”

Go!”



Verbs for the Easter Season Journey with the Early Church

What will they be?



Verbs Jesus gives the disciples

1:4 – “ordered them **not to leave** Jerusalem, **but to wait** there for the promise of the Father.”

1:8 – “But **you will receive power** when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and **you will be my witnesses** in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”



(Certain) Verbs the disciples Want

1:6 So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, is this the time when **you will restore** the kingdom to Israel?"



A Quote about the Dangers of Nationalistic Understandings of Resurrection

“The disciples ask the nationalist question: When will we rule our land, and become self-determining, and if need be impose our will on others?...The nationalism suggested here is...the deeply human desire of every people to control their destiny and shape the world into their hoped-for eternal image. Nationalist desire easily creates a fantasy of resurrection and the fantasy of resurrection appeals to peoples, calling forth a triumphal vision of a nation that rises from death and is filled with conquerors and the powerful.”



A Quote about the Dangers of Nationalistic Understandings of Resurrection

“Jesus, however, is not a sign of resurrection. He is its Lord. Resurrection will not define him. He will define resurrection’s meaning and resurrection’s purpose. It will not be used by these disciples as an ideological tool for statecraft. Nor will it constitute them the winner’s circle. Such ways of thinking resurrection turn Jesus into the greatest victor in an eternal competition and produces disciples who follow Jesus only because they worship power.”

– Willie Jennings, *Acts Commentary*, 17.



Jesus Leaves...

Now what?



Tempting Verbs

While he was going and they were **gazing up toward heaven**, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. They said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."



“Gazing”

“As [Jesus] ascends, the disciples watch, and here the danger of watching becomes clear. Jesus is no action figure, no superhero to be consumed in spectacle. Watching Jesus and watching for Jesus was and is a significant temptation for his disciples. Such watching can easily undermine movement and easily undermine the priority of the journey....These disciples consumed in spectacle may easily turn toward monument thinking and building.” Willie James Jennings – *Acts Commentary*, 19-20.



Scripture Challenge

Throughout the next weeks on our Journey with the early church, pay attention to the significance of the “gaze” of the disciples – where are they looking?

At whom do they look?

How does whom they look at change their vision & thinking?



(Uncertain) Verbs for our Journey

Acts 1:4 – “Wait....”

Acts 1:8 – “...you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses...”



Witness – What Kind of Verb is It?

Not (Nationalist) Kingdom Building...

Not Gazing....

Rather....



Witness – What Kind of Verb is It?

“Witness...is...in conflict with nationalist desire,. And against the fantasy of any people for global influence or world domination. The disciples will be formed by the Spirit as witnesses. They will be turned out to the world not as representatives of empires but those who will announce a revolution, *the revolution of the intimate*, God calling to the world. They will enter new places to become new people by joining themselves to those in Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth.” – Willie Jennings, *Acts Commentary*, 18.



Why does the Script of Acts 1:1-11 Matter for Us?

- The gift of this script (Acts 1) is the gift of a future of new, creative possibility for us (Jesus' disciples)
 - uncertainty can be a gift, rather than something we resist.
- The Spirit's power creates new possibilities of transformation and healing in our communities and in our world.



Let's Live Script: Be A Witness

- What are your ideas for “witness?”
- Some views of “witness” see the task of witness as inherently competitive. Do you think it has to be?
- How do we witness by joining ourselves to others that are different than us?

Let's share ideas in WR time.



