

Notes on Acts 1 : 6 - 8 'Enabling all to meet Jesus as His witnesses'

One of the joys we had when we walked the Cleaveland Way was the opportunity to visit many different seaside towns from the quaintness of Filey, Staithes and Robin Hood's Bay to the busyness of Whitby and Scarborough. But I was amazed by a Trip Advisor poll which said the UK's worst seaside town was Bangor in North Wales. There was some good news for Bangor, it hadn't suffered the fate of Skegness which has been listed with Syria and North Korea as the world's worst holiday spots!! Trip Advisor is where people tell everyone what their experience of the place has been and telling others is the heart of the second and third parts of our Members' Covenant which defines and shapes our identity and practice as a church.

How many of you use social media? What do you put out there? I mainly post about our walking holidays when I share the experiences we've had each day because we know people like to read them. Part of why people read them is because they admire us, or maybe jealous of us, or think we're just plain mad to be lugging our big rucksacks around the country. I want to encourage us to think of evangelism as being like when you post on social media, because to witness is to speak about our daily life of anxieties and fears, as well as our joys and laughter but the big difference is that we also speak about the difference Jesus makes to our lives too. This is why we sing the Graham Kendrick song 'For the joys and for the sorrows', because it says for this, I have Jesus. But our witnessing is also far broader than what is happening in our daily lives, it is also our telling others about the Father's heart for this world. It is when we tell others of our experience of knowing our sins have been forgiven, that we have a heart of flesh and not like stone, that we know we are a child of God, and that we know the Spirit is within us.

So, I want you to practice being a witness to Jesus. The first step you take is to say 'Morning' to people you don't know but I guess you do that anyway, don't you? I would hazard a guess that you don't think saying 'Morning' to someone is either odd or strange, do you? We don't live in London, with its love of the sound of silence on the Tube, but how about the second step, would you be able to say, 'Can I help you?' to those in difficulty. The third step is where you ask, 'Can I pray for you?' or say 'God loves you' but my hunch is that you will probably think that this is a step too far. But yet may I encourage you to do so and I have two examples to help you. The first is Tilly who went to Russia on a mission trip and was quite fearless there and the other is Gilli who was happiness itself in

offering people a hot cross bun at the train station on Maundy Thursday and people's response to her was just wonderful.

Do you power dress? I know this is a silly question, but Jesus tells us that we are to dress ourselves in the power of the Holy Spirit. We are to do this so that we will know his making our hearts tender, his teaching us to be compassionate in word and deed and his enabling us to persevere in being his consistent witnesses even when we're tempted not to do so. Jesus power-dressed at his baptism, as Luke describes in chapter 3 verses 21 and 22, when the Spirit descended on him and he heard the voice from heaven confirming his identity and role as the Son of God, the Messiah and the Servant of the Lord. This power dressing included his being empowered to fulfil the mission given to him to speak the Word of God and his acts of power which culminated in the 'futility' of the cross and his being raised from the dead. We too can 'power dress' in the Spirit when we 'Engage with Jesus', as this is how we know the power of his love in us, of being reminded and dare to believe that we live in God's time of forgiveness and mercy, as in verse 6, and when we ask for and receive afresh the gift of the Spirit from God, as described in Luke 11 verse 13 and Acts 1 verse 8, again and again. To live our lives dependent on the Spirit, day by day is to live exactly how Jesus lived. It is to live in the most truly human way possible and when the Apostles in Acts lives like this, it was said that it showed that they had been with Jesus.

It has been so encouraging to hear from so many of you today and I hope these stories have encouraged you to dare to post more about Jesus and to power dress in the Spirit as consistent witnesses to Jesus, speaking of and showing all that he has done in our lives and the vastness of love of God for this world.