

Greetings! As you read this the church is commemorating the Ascension of Christ:

Perhaps you may know that after Jesus rose from the dead, He "presented Himself alive" (Acts 1:3) to the women near the tomb (Matthew 28:9-10), to His disciples (Luke 24:36-43), and to more than 500 others (1 Corinthians 15:6). In the days following His

resurrection, Jesus taught His disciples about the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3).

Forty days after the resurrection, Jesus and His disciples went to Mount Olivet, near Jerusalem. There, Jesus promised His followers that they would soon receive the Holy Spirit, (Pentecost 10 days hence) and He instructed them to remain in Jerusalem until the Spirit had come. Then Jesus blessed them, and as He gave the blessing, He began to ascend into heaven. The account of Jesus' ascension is found in Luke 24:50-51 and Acts 1:9-11.

It is plain from Scripture that Jesus' ascension was a literal, bodily return to heaven. He rose from the ground gradually and visibly, observed by many intent onlookers. As the disciples strained to catch a last glimpse of Jesus, a cloud hid Him from their view, and two angels appeared and promised Christ's return "in just the same way that you have watched Him go" (Acts 1:11).

The ascension communicates Christ's glorification. Jesus' work here was done. Jesus' ascension brought to an end the time of His ministry as God in man. The church is Christ's body in the earth (Ephesians 5:30; 4:15-16). The ascension forms the point of continuity between "all that He began to do and to teach (Acts 1:1), and what the apostles and the church continued to do and to teach after His departure.



So, what was Jesus' Ministry: At his baptism-before doing any ministry-Jesus heard the Father say, "*You are my son whom I love; with you I am well pleased.*" *God unzipped heaven and the Spirit descended onto and into Jesus to empower him.* (Lk. 3:22). "*Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert.*" (Lk. 4:1-2). After the temptation, "*Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread.*" (14). Jesus was full of the Spirit without measure and empowered for a purpose: to proclaim and demonstrate the Kingdom Ministry.

What exactly is Kingdom Ministry? Luke gives a glimpse into Jesus' own self-perception. At his coronation address he announced his kingly agenda: "*The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.*" ..a Spirit Empowered Ministry.

In the gospels we find **Jesus' action plan for Spirit-empowered ministry:**

Jesus - preached good news to the poor and poor in spirit
proclaimed freedom to prisoners bound in sin and darkness

cast out demons
healed the sick and he mentored his disciples to do the same

Jesus proclaimed and demonstrated God's right to rule creation as he destroyed the works of our enemy (1 Jn. 3:8). He equipped followers and promised that they too would do what he did because, "everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher" (Lk. 6:40; Mt, 28:16-20; Jn. 14:12-14). I view this process of kingdom ministry as a continuum i.e.: a blessing passed on to us, even today.

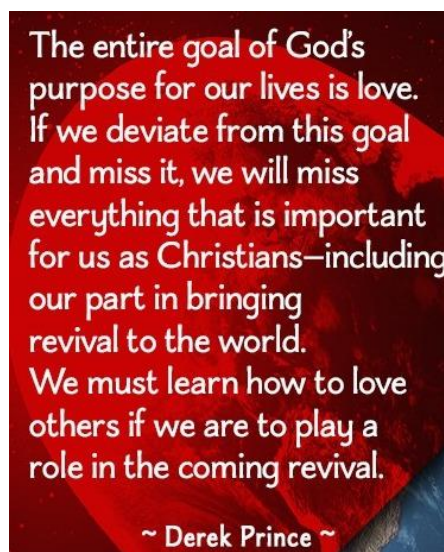
Jesus' Vision: Today the buzz word in leadership training is vision. Sometimes I wonder if we have it right. What I am seeking to do is ask Jesus to build his vision and strategy among us, to keep up with Him and believe and do what His book says. **So, what is Jesus' vision?**

Simply put...the kingdom of God. Our primary aim in life is to love and glorify God and expand his kingdom in relevant ways in the time allotted us. As communities of the King, churches should model what the kingdom looks like when God has his way with a group of people.

Power for a Purpose: Many have placed a priority on being empowered by the Spirit to continue Jesus' ministry. But the Spirit empowers for a purpose-not just an experience.

At times we almost lose the purpose; at times we seem to lose the power. From the beginning we have attempted, however inadequately, to keep these two together.

My passion is to imitate the ministry of Jesus in the power of the Spirit. This requires that we follow him out of baptismal waters, through our personal deserts, into the harvest. We want to take the teachings of the best of conservative Evangelical theology, the best fire power of mainstream Pentecostal practice, fuse them, and hit the biblical target of making and nurturing disciples.



To continue Jesus' ministry requires that we adopt his methods. Unfortunately, Christians today would rather implement programs. We are blind to our mechanical assumptions when we reduce ministry to what others are doing (works for them?) and try the same.

An early catchphrase was, "**What is the Father doing?**" Perhaps we should seek to enter each ministry situation with that question foremost in our minds. My experience in spiritual gifts are an attempt to discern what the Father was/is up to. Whether the situation was evangelism, healing, budgeting for the poor, the important thing was (and is) to ask the Father what he is/ was doing.

To continue to listen is essential because Jesus is still Owner-Operator of the church. It is, after all, *His* ministry, *His* authority, not ours. Our job is to cooperate.

It is the Lord who adds to the church-not men-and he graciously stops to use our clumsy efforts (Acts 2:47). Church growth theory and practices, though helpful, only tell us where to prune, and what fertilizer to use. In no way do they cause or even explain the miracle of conversion growth.

Jesus' Big Bride: Jesus said, "*I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.*" (Mt. 16:18). Peter preached, "*God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people*" (Acts 2:17). Evidence confirms that Jesus' and Peter's prophecies are being fulfilled. Despite darkness (2 Tim. 3:1-9), **Jesus is building his church, the Spirit is being poured out all over the world. The percentage of earth's population that is Christian is growing.**



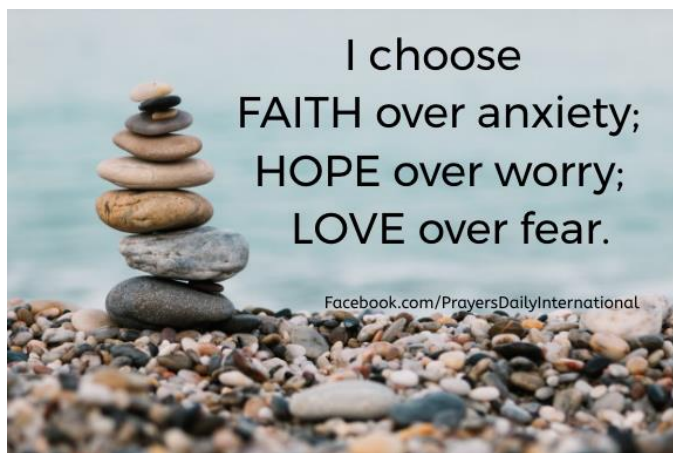
Paul said the church reveals something of the nature of God (Eph. 3:10). God reconciles the many from different cultures into the one body. Jesus will build his church "from every people group" (Rev. 7:9). The groom wants a healthy bride, not some emaciated fashion model who only appears beautiful. Our evangelism and outreach should reflect this optimism: with or without us, Jesus is marrying a big bride and sharing the Gospel is still the most effective evangelistic tool on the face of the earth.

Perhaps then we should refocus on our purpose, which is to evangelize the lost, enfold them in churches, equip them to exalt Jesus in every area of life, and so expand his kingdom through continuing his ministry.

My hope is that our Church fellowship remains a Christ-centred group focused on the main teachings of Scripture as we follow Augustine's ancient advice: "**In essentials unity, in nonessentials diversity, in all things charity.**"

We are thankful for the ideas God calls us to implement, if they are solid, it is because they are his and rooted in rock solid Scripture, in tune (at least in part) with some of what the Holy Spirit is doing today.

And though our church is a mere thread in the global tapestry of the church, I believe it is a thread of his weaving, **May God always empower us to continue Jesus' ministry!**



"It is time to arise."

Your Bridegroom is coming. He is in the land to lift you up and lead you out. Trim your lamps, buy oil of my Spirit, fill your heart with expectancy, and go out to meet Him.

The day of His wedding is near—arise and leave what is familiar to meet Him in His glory. Just as He walks in mighty power over all His foes, so will His bride walk in the ways of glorious power. Nothing will hinder Him as He appears for His bride.

I will speak my words and release my power through you. For the Lamb's wife is making herself ready. Her garments of splendour are becoming clean and spotless.

I will draw untold millions to myself in these days of power. So come, be clothed with faith and confidence in me.

Leave all that hinders.

Do not look back or try to take the old with you into the new.

For the way is straight, and the door is narrow.

Come with faith alone, and you will see the unveiling of my power.

This is love: not that we loved God,
but that he loved us and sent his Son
as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.
1 John 4:10

WHENEVER MY BUSY THOUGHTS
WERE OUT OF CONTROL, THE
SOOTHING COMFORT OF YOUR
PRESENCE CALMED ME DOWN AND
OVERWHELMED ME WITH DELIGHT.

PSALM 94:19



**"I will make a way in the wilderness and
open up flowing streams in the desert."**

Isaiah 43:19 TPT

