*"Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" – Acts 1:6*

1. Introduction – Ascensiontide
   1. Background to the disciples’ question
      1. Jesus was clearly the promised Messiah
      2. He had shown through his death and Resurrection
      3. Israel’s prophets had prophesied about the Messiah restoring the Kingdom of Israel – misunderstood
   2. Jesus’ response “It is not for you to know the times or periods that the father has set by his own authority.” *Acts 1:7*
      1. Scriptural referents: Luke 21:34| Matthew 24:36|Mark 13:32|1 Thessalonian 5:2|2 Peter 3:10| Revelation 3:3
2. Modern context of “is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?”
   1. We fall victim to this sort of thinking – When will God restore the church to it’s former glory/or we have nostalgia for what is lost: to Sunday schools with 500 kids, standing room only
   2. So many churches – our own included – try out newest program etc. for growth
   3. We often wait like the disciples staring up into the air waiting for something
      1. God to fix our problems
      2. Jesus to return so everything will be right
      3. A word or piece of advice from God
   4. Jesus’ response is the same to us: “It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority.”

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

1. At the heart of this passage are two crucial points – the coming of the Holy Spirit and the call to be witnesses
   1. Jesus’ challenge to ‘stop looking into the sky’ comes after his promise of the Holy Spirit
   2. Jesus’ Kingdom is different than the one his first disciples or we expect
      1. God doesn’t consolidate power; he promises us power through the Holy Spirit
      2. Not power to hurt, or oppress or destroy – but to witness
   3. Witness: to give or serve as evidence of, from the word Martyr
      1. Derives from the practice at the time of Jesus where once a year Roman citizens would have to sign a declaration of their devotion to the Emperor
      2. Jesus is saying your life needs to be a declaration of your devotion to Jesus, to God the Father
      3. Our whole life is a witness to Jesus, and his resurrection:
         1. how you speak,
         2. how you love,
         3. how you welcome the stranger
         4. how sacrifice your time/possessions
         5. how you forgive
         6. how you care for the hungry/poor

*“All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.” Acts 1:14*

1. The disciples response is not to go immediately to the temple, not to immediately rush and preach a sermon to the crowds in Jerusalem but to pray
   1. Prayer as the foundation of witness
   2. Prayer as waiting upon Holy Spirit
2. We as a church, need to pray for the power of the Holy Spirit
   1. For revival
   2. For the strength to witness
   3. To be faithful to the God we have encountered in Jesus
3. What will it mean for us to be Jesus’ Witnesses in:
   1. Jerusalem: Here in the Church?
   2. Judea: To our friends and family who have fallen away from the church?
   3. Samaria: To our neighbourhood?
   4. To the ends of the earth: To people that have never heard of Jesus before?