

Resurrection: The Promise of Power

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Texts: Acts 1:1-14, John 16:5-7

This day on which we remember Jesus' Ascension, we celebrate the event that marks the climax of the resurrection saga. Luke alone reports Jesus' ascension, in both books he authored, Luke and the Acts. The Ascension story serves as the pivotal element tying the two works together, the Gospel of Luke about Jesus' ministry and the Book of Acts accounting the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the early Church. For Luke, the Ascension is Jesus' final proof of his claim as the Son of God, the jewel atop his crown of the Resurrection, his coronation as King of Glory, Lord of death and life through the **power of the Holy Spirit**.

As we read the story in Acts 1, Jesus is about to leave his followers after three years of intense training for the new positions they were to play for him. His final words were like a coach's talk at the last practice before the big game. As if he were helping them understand the plays in a playbook, he helped the disciples understand everything written about him in the Hebrew scriptures, the mistreatment he endured, the horrible death he suffered, raised up to life again, and then show them how to be victorious. He showed them the tactics of their opponents and how to read their plays, and how to overcome them. But, they didn't know yet, that he would not be there personally leading them on to the field. He knew that they were not extraordinary players or experienced leaders in this game. As Coach, knew he had to depend on his players and to believe in them to do what he taught them. Everything depends on them performing as they have been trained.

The Coach challenges them with these words, "There is one thing that makes all the difference in the outcome of the game, the secret weapon: all other factors being equal, it comes down to which players have the greatest fire inside. Do you believe in me? Do you believe I have taught you how to win? Will you be ready to go out there and win without me actually being there on the sidelines? Yes you will. I have taught you and everything you need. I have worked you hard to get you into condition to be ready to do your jobs and win the game. And, the **most important thing, I have given you my heart so that you can give your all. *Believing that will take you to victory.***

Now, as you wait for the whistle to kickoff, **believe my promise- you WILL HAVE that FIRE inside you need.** You have to believe I have prepared you, and **you WILL HAVE the power to win? It doesn't matter how big you are or how much experience you have; it's all about having the**

FIRE inside to fight and win. It all depends on you doing what I taught you. There is no one else; you are my only hope.

Teddy Roosevelt once said, "It's not the size of the man in the fight; it's the size of the fight in the man."

Jesus had trained and prepared his disciples as well as possible. They were rather ordinary people, not eloquent or powerful, but they had been with Jesus and had seen the powerful miracles climaxing in his bodily resurrection from the dead. But they needed more than that. The mission they were about to be sent out on would be beyond their strength and wisdom. They need a secret weapon, a power that only Jesus could impart, his own heart, the power of the Holy Spirit. Here Jesus made his last promise to them, the power they needed would be theirs in a few days if they waited and followed his plan. Though he would not be with them bodily, he would be with them in unseen form, the Holy Spirit, the light that shown through Jesus in person would be shining within their hearts to empower and to accomplish what they could not do alone. Though he would not be seen, everyone would see Jesus' Spirit shining through them.

There is a story about a mother who would often walk her son in front of Abraham Lincoln's home in Springfield, Illinois telling him about what a great man and president of our country he was, but that he was tragically taken from us. One evening as they walked by the beautiful home richly decorated for the Christmas season, each window warmly lit, the lad turned to his mother and said, "Mother, Mr. Lincoln can't be gone because his lights are still on." "Yes Dear, he is gone." His mother gently corrected him. Then the boy excitedly exclaimed, "Then he must be coming back!"

We stand in need of the power Jesus promised to the apostles, the Holy Spirit. He calls us also to live by his words and directions, following his game plan to live victorious over sin and death. Without his Spirit we can do nothing of eternal value, but filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, we too will shine Jesus' light as his witnesses. Some day he will return, but until then...

Hear Jesus' promise to us, "With MY Spirit inside, MY HEART IN YOU, You Can Do Anything!"