

**Acts 1:6-11.**

**So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."**

**After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."**

Dear Children living in God's power,

Your eyes reveal a lot about you. There's an old saying: "The eyes are the windows to your soul." People can tell by looking in your eyes if you are happy or sad. If you've been crying, your eyes will be read and teary. If you are happy, your eyes will be wide open and alert to what's going on around you. If your eyes are looking upward, your mind is on something else instead of being focused on God's word. If your eyes are looking downward, you are timid or shy or unwilling to look at what's in front of you. If your eyes are looking straight ahead, it means your mind is focused and you are listening with attention.

You know, Jesus can tell the same thing about your spiritual eyes. Your spiritual eyes are your faith in Jesus. The Holy Spirit has opened your eyes and mine to see Jesus as our loving and forgiving Savior who is with us always, even to the end of the age. The story of Jesus' ascension makes us take a look at the eyes of the disciples then and also at you and me, Jesus' disciples today. Where are our eyes when it comes to the doing the work of the Lord Jesus? Where are the eyes of God's people today? Luke leads us to answer that question in his account of Jesus' ascension.

**Theme: Where Are Your Eyes Of Faith Looking?**

- 1. Are they looking at this earth?**
- 2. Are they looking into the heavens?**
- 3. Are they looking to do the work which Jesus has given us?**

Luke says, "**So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"** Jesus had risen from the dead. This was now the eleventh time Jesus had shown himself alive during a period of forty days after his resurrection. They were gathered together on a high hill or mountain, and Jesus was teaching them. The disciples were filled with questions, but their questions were all focused on earthly things. When they asked Jesus if he was going to restore the kingdom to Israel, they were not thinking of the spiritual work of getting out the good news that Jesus had conquered sin and death. They were expecting Jesus to set up a glorious earthly kingdom that would wreak vengeance on those who had cruelly put him to death, and he would put the disciples in positions of worldly authority. They wanted to drive the hated Roman soldiers out of the country. They wanted to get rid of those detestable Roman taxes. They wanted to take revenge on the Roman governor and the religious leaders who had put Jesus on the cross. Their eyes were focused on this earth. They were only concerned about their comfort here and now.

Ask yourself, as modern day disciples of Jesus, where are your eyes focused when it comes to the great spiritual work of Jesus' kingdom? What are you concerned about most in life? Are you only concerned about "little" things like your taxes and who the next President of our country will be, about your bills and your budget, about your friends and your relationships? Are your thoughts focused on your summer travel and vacation, your fun and recreation, your retirement and your leisure? If you are only focused on the small earthly things, then your eyes, like the eyes of Jesus' first disciples, are looking down only at earthly things.

## 2. Are they looking into the heavens?

While the disciples were talking with Jesus, suddenly he started to rise off the ground and went up until a cloud hid him from their sight. He had completed his saving work for all mankind. He returned to his Father and took back again the full use of his majesty and power. He ascended to the right hand of God, which means he is ruling over the universe making all things work for the good of his church, his believers. **“They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”** After Jesus ascended into heaven, the disciple now had the opposite problem. Instead of looking down at the ground and this earth, they stood there staring up into the sky. Now that their Savior and friend had left their visible presence, they felt their only job was to wait for him to return.

There are a lot of us who have that same problem as those first disciples. The affliction might be called “sky eye.” “Sky eye” is the idea that the church exists only to make sure that we know about Jesus, and our only job in life is to hang on to our faith until he returns. So we go to church to get our own faith recharged with the word of God, but nothing of real significance happens when we leave church for the rest of the week. The rest of our time is spent gazing into the sky, as it were, waiting for Jesus to return and take us to heaven. Our Christian faith and life have no focus, no goal, no energy. We just stand around, biding our time, until Jesus returns.

## 3. Are they looking to do the work which Jesus has given us?

Jesus himself has the cure for looking down at the ground and thinking only of earthly things. He has the cure for staring up at the sky and simply waiting for him to return. **“He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”**

Christian life is not a matter of standing around idle – not really doing much. Jesus didn’t leave us here to focus on earthly things, all of which he promises to take care of from the right hand of God. Nor did he leave us here to just mope along from day to day waiting for his return to take us to heaven. Every word from the mouth of Jesus after his resurrection had the word “Go!” in it. *Go into all the world. Go and make disciples of all nations. You shall be my witnesses.* And to help us in this great work he has given us, he promised to give us real power from on high, from the Holy Spirit. Just as Jesus poured out the Holy Spirit on those first disciples ten days after his resurrection, just as the Holy Spirit reminded them of everything Jesus taught them and led them to write it all down in the Bible, just as the Holy Spirit strengthened them in their faith and made them bold witnesses for Jesus – so also the Holy Spirit has done the same things for you and me. Jesus did not teach us these many years so that we would hide his love in our hearts. What we hear and cherish in here is to be shared out there. If your personal relationships are not going the way you want them to, it’s because you’ve got your eyes so focused on earthly things that you can’t see the spiritual needs of the people around you. Or, it is because, even though you believe in Jesus, your eyes are up in the skies, and you have forgotten that it is your task from the Lord to talk to others about his love.

The Lord Jesus and his church do not prosper when we, his disciples, have our eyes on the wrong thing. Don’t be so caught up in the things of this world and this life, that you don’t see the spiritual needs of others around you. Don’t be caught with your eyes on the skies, forgetting that Jesus has commanded you and empowered you from on high to be his witnesses. Don’t believe that your only task is to take to heart what Jesus has taught you and hide it in your heart until he returns. Look straight ahead at what Jesus has called each of us to do until he returns. What email will you send, what will you say to your children, how will you witness to the people at work, and whom will you invite to worship with you next Sunday and the list goes on. Amen.