

Looking Up

2019, Pastor Debbie Bronkema

<http://www.pvillepresby.org>

“In an effort to reach people with different perspectives and preferences, we’re testing an automated speech to text transcription for Pastor Debbie’s sermon. This process is not 100% accurate but provides a rough transcription of the sermon Pastor Debbie preached. Pastor Debbie preaches from a manuscript but often goes off script as led by the spirit, making the original manuscript an inaccurate representation of the Sunday service.”

In this sermon, Pastor Debbie reminds us that although we may feel anxious the world Jesus is creating is a world where love never dies, death does not win, forgiveness and grace are gifts that never end--a world where Jesus is LORD. “But you will receive power when the

Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” — Acts 1:8 (Originally Preached on Sunday, June 2, 2019 at Pleasantville Presbyterian Church)

Scripture: Acts 1:1-11

<http://bible.oremus.org/?ql=426501002>

[0:03] From Acts chapter 1. In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote all about that Jesus did and taught from the beginning until the day when he was taken up to heaven.

After giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. After his suffering, he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them during 40 days and speaking about the Kingdom of God. While staying with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem but to wait there for the promise of the father.

This, he said, is what you have heard from me for John, baptized with water. But you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.

[0:52] So when they had come together, they asked him, Lord, is this a time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?

He replied. It is not for you to know the times or the 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 all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.

When he had said this as they were watching, he was lifted up and a cloud took him out of their sight while he was going. And they were gazing up toward heaven suddenly, to men in white robes stood by them.

They said, Man of Galilee, Why do you stand looking up toward heaven?

This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.

The word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

[2:01] Please pray with me. Oh God, May the words of my mouth and the listening ears of our hearts be acceptable in thy sight.

Oh, God, our rock and our redeemer, **Amen.**

Sermon: "Looking Up"

[2:19] As I begin to share God's word with you today, I want to give you the gift that I received this week.

It comes from First Peter, chapter five, verse seven. "Cast all your anxieties on God because God cares for you."

In this age, when anxiety seems to be a way of life, this is an invitation we need to plant deeply in our hearts to have it in us whenever we need it on our journey, passed all your anxieties on God because God cares for you.

[3:07] I feel for the disciples in this moment gathered together.

As the book of acts begins, their anxiety must have been so high for them to see and hear that Jesus will be gone ascending into heaven.

They've already been through so much purpose and joy and and lots of good teaching and miracles and crowds about crowds.

But then pain and grief beyond imagination and then transformation and life changing resurrection and hope so much.

And now Jesus will disappear from life as they know it. Now the seeds he's planted need to bear fruit in them.

[4:03] It is a message that must have produced a lot of anxiety among his followers.

So they look up into the sky to see where he's going to imagine the place where he will be to be patient, as he asked them to do to wait for the spirit.

That's what they do for a while. They look and they see and they imagine.

And they hear what he said to them about going well everywhere to spread the gospel, the love that he had taught them, the power of resurrection, the hope that exists in God.

Look up into the sky and be patient until the moment comes and the angels come and tell them it is time.

[4:53] Time to stop looking up time for what's next.

To understand what that is, they need to look in,

in at what they have to share in At the good news that has been growing in them all along in for the Holy Spirit's presence, showing them the way not to stay put, looking up,

but to move to move each in their own way toward the world that Jesus shows them a world that needs to know the good news that love never dies.

That death does not win that forgiveness and grace.

Those are gifts that never end that Jesus is Lord.

[5:48] Cast all your anxieties on God because God cares for you.

[5:57] What is filling us with anxiety right now in our lives?

What is the part of our lives where we're scared?

We feel lost where we are confused.

Maybe everything we thought we understood has changed and we don't know what's next.

What next even looks like Maybe right now in our journey it is time for us to look up to stop and look for the spirit of God to wait,

to be patient, for God, to show us the way to spend our time grateful for God's presence to say along with Saint Francis of Assisi,

"You are our protector. You are our guardian and defender.

[6:59] You are our courage. You are our haven and our hope.

You are our faith, our great consolation.

You are our eternal life and wonderful Lord, God Almighty, Merciful savior."

[7:30] Maybe it is time to be invited to let the spirit accompany us in our anxiety to speak to us in our fear and in our sorrow,

Night time can be a really hard time.

[7:51] The time in which our fears become larger than life, unmanageable, too hard to bear alone. But we are not alone,

across the whole world There are always people living in the night,

Hear this prayer from the New Zealand prayer book:

[8:16] "Lord, It is night. The night is for stillness.

Let us be still in the presence of God. It is night after a long day.

What has been done has been done. What has not been done has not been done. Let it be.

The night is dark that our fears of the darkness of the world and of our own lives rest in you.

[8:47] The night is quiet. Let the quietness of your peace enfold us all dear to us and all who have no peace.

The night heralds the dawn. Let us look expectantly to a new day.

New joys, new possibilities in your name. We pray."

[9:12] Eventually the new day comes and someone comes to say Why are you looking up and then the waiting is over.

Then we know that it is time. Time to let God move in us.

Time to let God love through us time to be what we need or each other.

Empathy has no script. There is no right way or wrong way to do it.

It's simply listening, holding space, withholding judgment, emotionally connecting and in communicating that incredibly healing message of you're not alone.

[9:58] Brenee Brown said that and every time I hear it, I think of a story I heard about a little

child who fell and scraped his knee quite badly.

He was crying and someone came along and told him he would be okay, that Jesus was watching out for him and could help him.

And the child said, Well, that's good, But do you think, Jesus, could someone send someone with skin on to give me a Band Aid?

[10:29] I always think about that because I think there are times in all our lives when the Holy Spirit sends us to be God's love with skin on for one another, a person to listen, to, love, to cry with, to celebrate with.

Sometimes we are very aware that that is what we're doing. And sometimes it's not until 30 years later that we hear that what we said or did was the moment that turned someone toward the love of God.

Our part is to wait to look up, to look in and then be ready to show up wherever the Holy Spirit leads us.

And if any of that makes us anxious, it's It's okay.

Cast your anxieties on God because God cares for you in Jesus **n**ame, Amen.