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SERMON TITLE: Daily News: Jesus Alive!
SCRIPTURE: Acts 1:1-11
DATE: May 16, 2021
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Read also Isaiah 61:1-7

A medical doctor writes an account about Jesus to his friend, in the late 60's A.D. He tells not only the story which he has researched by visiting all the people still alive who knew Jesus, but also what people did after Jesus ascended. He did that because he came to realize Jesus was Alive!

Dr. Luke was a Gentile, well educated in Greek, organized, and literary. He was Paul's close friend, and committed enough to Christ to go on missionary journeys with Paul.

Luke ends his first volume with the story of Jesus' ascension saying:

"Then Jesus led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven" (Luke 24:50-51).

"Lifting up his hands to bless them." This was not the first time Jesus lifted his hands to bless people, blessings that came straight out of Isaiah:

- ~ He brought good news to the poor;
- ~ He comforted the brokenhearted;
- ~ He proclaimed freedom to those who were in bondage;
- ~ He gave the LORD's favor to those who mourn;
- ~ He proclaimed God's anger against their enemies;
- ~ He gave a crown of beauty for mourning ashes;
- ~ A joyous blessing instead of sorrow;
- ~ Festive praise instead of despair.
- ~ He taught the people righteousness so they stand tall, for God's glory.

These hands provided precious friendship, instruction, healing, and life's true riches. He said, "The Kingdom of God is upon you."

This kingdom gives a total life-change through the forgiveness of sins—the disciples had witnessed it. And they were bursting with joy. Now let's hear Dr. Luke's recounting about their last hours with Jesus. READ Acts 1:1-11

Did you catch the most important verse?

"During the forty days after his crucifixion, he appeared to the apostles from time to time, and he proved to them in many ways that *he was actually alive*. And he talked to them about the Kingdom of God." (v. 3)

He was actually alive. He would ascend but would actually still be with them. The barrier between heaven and earth is diaphanous. We sometimes think of it as a shield we cannot penetrate, but it is more like a mere curtain. **Our human nature finds it difficult to see this reality.**

And so the disciples talked about politics. *Is this the time? Are you going to restore our nation???*

Like us, they thought if their nation was returned to a particular political state, all would be well. They thought this was the goal.

I don't know if they had two political parties or not. I don't know if they ever voted or watched MSNBC or FOX News. I don't know if they were all of one accord, or whether they excluded people based on their political views, or not.

I don't know the tensions of their day but I do see the tensions in our times.

Perhaps they were the same.

They could only see the here and now; the political stuff. They kept asking him, "*Lord are you going to free Israel and restore our kingdom??*"

They thought that would save the day. They thought that would be the power they need. They could not think of anything else so they kept asking it!

But remember now, a saying from the Bible. They knew it: "Some nations boast of their chariots and horses, but we boast in the name of the LORD our God. Those nations will fall down and collapse, but we will rise up and stand firm" (Psalm 20:7-8).

Yet they could think of no good outcome of Jesus' rising from the dead than Jesus putting their politics in order. *Is it time, Lord? Is it time that we are—our nation is—going to be in power?*

So Jesus answered their question with these words:

I DON'T KNOW

(Let's then imagine their stunned silence)

And as they stood there in confused silence he began to talk to them about the kingdom of God.

In the book of Luke, Jesus talked about the kingdom of God over thirty times. He said things like this:

- ~ It is yours.
- ~ It is near you.
- ~ It is here now.
- ~ It is powerful.
- ~ It begins tiny but grows huge.
- ~ It gives refuge.
- ~ It gives life.
- ~ The prophets are there.
- ~ People from all over the world are there.
- ~ It cannot be detected by visible signs.
- ~ It is hard to enter.
- ~ It is desirable.
- ~ I am revealing its secrets.

Jesus added in Luke and now again as he ascended:

“Your duty is to go and preach about the Kingdom of God” (Luke 9:60).

Then he adds (and I did not write this!): “Anyone who puts a hand to the plow and then looks back is not fit for the Kingdom of God” (Luke 9:62). In other words, he wants us to get that this is **REAL**.

So what exactly does that mean for us today in 2021?

I want to answer that with a personal story.

Recently, we set my husband's headstone, finally after ten months. On one side it quotes a Bible verse by Paul and then ends with this:

In whose kingdom do you live?

A tombstone is like a marker, like the stone that represents what you believe in. You might have a cross or reference to your marriage which was a commitment before God, or other symbol for who you are and what you believe. In Samuel, we read the story of him setting his own marker for his faith. So Dean's tombstone marks one of his “Deanisms.”

Dean used many expressions which we call “Deanisms.” I've shared a few before but this one is the most important. I wanted to put this Deanism on his headstone because he used this phrase again and again when talking to me or our children.

What kingdom are you living in today?

For instance, let's say you are a planner and you are looking at your future and trying to make the best decisions. You might be tempted to be selfish or not consider your family or be confused about how your faith fits in. Dean would frame it with: *What kingdom are you living in today?*

Sometimes we second guess ourselves or focus our decisions on pleasing others. If we step back and ask that question—*What kingdom are you living in today?*—it becomes not what I want or what others think I should do, but on what God wants for me in that moment.

If you are indecisive or struggling with something, if you would call Dean, he would ask that question. The question provides a way to discipline yourself when emotions might drive you to be otherwise.

You might have a hard time with certain habits and so you fall away from Bible-based living. If you put yourself in God's kingdom by asking that question, and if you apply that to your life, that is, you say, “I am living in God's kingdom today,” then you are going to have peace.

Dean would say, “Start there when you look at your options.” When one of our children sought his advice, as a father he would say, “Start there. Then come back and let's talk about what are the options that you are considering. Then you make the decision based on what's right for you and I will give you my opinion based on my experience in the past.”

In that way, Dean was following his duty of “preaching about or witnessing to the kingdom of God.” That's Dean Hertenstein's legacy. That's why it is on his tombstone.

Witnessing to the kingdom is more than just saying “believe in Jesus.” It expresses the fact that Jesus is alive in every area of your life. You can bring the Kingdom of God to life in you and it will

- Direct you
- Allow you to stay grounded in your marriage.
- Make you resourceful because someone else isn't just telling you what to do. Jesus becomes your resource.
- You begin to see your focus in life more clearly. So ask yourself what kingdom am I living in--“the kingdom of what?”
 - My ivory tower?
 - Of society and law?
 - Of popular opinion?

Then God will convict you and help you right yourself.

Did you read the daily news? It's not about politics. It's about a living kingdom. **JESUS IS ALIVE!**

“For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins” (Colossians 1:13-14).

Whose kingdom are you living in today?

AMEN