

BIBLE STORY MAY 3rd, 2020

The last few months we've talked about Jesus' life—everything He did and everything that happened to Him. The disciples were there for it all. They had seen the miracles Jesus performed, like when He raised Lazarus from the dead. They saw how the crowds gathered everywhere Jesus went to hear Him teach about God. Some of them actually heard the voice of God declare: "This is my Son, and I love him" (Matthew 17:5, NIV).

And then they had heard the threats from the religious leaders. They saw Judas betray Jesus, and they saw Jesus being arrested. Then they had seen Jesus die on the cross, but they also saw Him after He came back to life!

It had been a wild ride. The disciples probably hoped that now Jesus would take charge and put some of His plans into action. They certainly had questions about His plan, and Jesus had answers for them.

Jesus DID have a plan, but it wasn't exactly what the disciples were expecting.

When we pick up God's Story today, the disciples were heading to a mountain in Galilee where Jesus had told them to go.

The disciples worshipped Jesus when they saw Him. They must have been in awe still that He was alive! Jesus had big news for them. They had a HUGE, important job to do. Check out what Jesus said---which we can find in the book of Matthew.

Open the Bible to Matthew 28:18-20 (NIV) and read.

Jesus said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. So, you must go and make disciples of all nations. Baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And you can be sure that I am always with you, to the very end."

In other words, the disciples thought the answer to the question of WHO (in Jesus' plan would be Jesus Himself. But Jesus said it was up to His DISCIPLES to carry out this big plan.

And WHAT was the plan?

Let me read those verses one more time and see if you can tell me.

Open the Bible to Matthew 28:18-20 (NirV) and read.

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Jesus wanted them spread the word about Him and let everyone know that He was the Savior God had promised.

Jesus continued to spend time with His disciples and reveal more about His plan for the world. One day, Jesus led them to a hill outside Jerusalem, near Bethany. They shared a meal together, and Jesus shared some important words with them. Listen to how Luke described the scene in the book of Acts

Open the Bible to Acts 1:4-5 (NirV) and read.

“One day Jesus was eating with them. He gave them a command. “Do not leave Jerusalem,” he said. “Wait for the gift my Father promised. You have heard me talk about it. John baptized with water. But in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

Yes, the gift was the Holy Spirit. You might be wondering what that actually means. What, exactly, is the Holy Spirit? How it could be a gift? Well, the disciples had some questions about it all, too. Listen to what they asked next.

Open the Bible to Acts 1:6 (NirV) and read.

“Lord,” they said, “are you going to give the kingdom back to Israel now?”

The disciples still thought that Jesus had come to set up a powerful kingdom here on earth. They didn’t fully understand that He had come to be our Savior and give us the promise of eternal life.

In other words, the reason Jesus wanted the disciples to tell everyone about Him wasn’t so that He would become popular or live as king of the whole earth.

Jesus wanted others to know about Him so that they, too, could put their trust in Him and so that they could have a relationship with God that would last forever.

Jesus continued explaining to His followers exactly what He wanted them to do. Here’s what He said:

Open the Bible to Acts 1:8 (NirV) and read.

“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you. Then you will tell people about me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria. And you will even tell other people about me from one end of the earth to the other.”

Jesus wanted His disciples to spread word of His death and resurrection from one end of the earth to the other. Just like that, Jesus had given His disciples all they needed to know to put His plan into action. Jesus had done what He had come to do, and it was time for Him to return to heaven to be with God.

Listen to how Luke describes the scene.

Open the Bible to Acts 1:9-11 (NirV) and read.

“After Jesus said this—about the Holy Spirit—he was taken up to heaven. The apostles watched until a cloud hid him from their sight. While he was going up, they kept on looking at the sky. Suddenly two men dressed in white clothing stood beside them. “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking at the sky? Jesus has been taken away from you into heaven. But he will come back in the same way you saw him go.”

Yes—just like that, Jesus was taken into heaven.

Wow. Jesus had given His followers what seemed to be an impossible job: to share His story and His love in every nation across the entire world! It was a huge task for these few people to take on. But Jesus had given them everything they needed to know.

Still, I imagine the disciples still had one lingering question, and it’s the missing piece to our plan here, too.

HOW?

Technically Jesus had told them **HOW** they could accomplish their mission: with the gift of the Holy Spirit. But no one actually knew what the Holy Spirit was at this point, how they would receive it, or how it would actually help them. There were still a lot of question marks to this part of the plan.

For now, the disciples waited in Jerusalem like Jesus had said they should. Soon, God would give them exactly what they needed to not only start the job but also to keep going. God offers the same thing to us, too.

We can keep going even when it seems impossible. God can do impossible things through us. He gives us everything we need to accomplish the plan He has for our lives.

Let's thank Him for that!

PRAYER

Dear God,

Thank You for sending Jesus to be our Savior. Thank You for giving His disciples everything they needed to spread the word about Him. We know about His life, His death, and His resurrection because THEY kept going—even when it must have seemed impossible. We want to live out that same kind of determination, too, and finish the job that you've given us to do. Help us to keep going even when it seems impossible.

We love You, and we ask these things in Jesus' name,
Amen

God always had a great plan for humankind.

But people messed it up when sin entered the world. So God had another plan to rescue us. That plan was sending Jesus. Jesus knew what He was taking on when He came to earth. His purpose was to set a plan in motion. He came, lived a perfect life, and died on the cross to pay the price for our sin. Then He rose from the dead.

Before Jesus went back to heaven to live with God, He gave His closest friends and followers a mission AND a promise—that He would send a Helper, the Holy Spirit.

Jesus' mission for His friends is also true for us today—to tell others about Him. That may seem impossible to you. Maybe you think you don't have the right words, that your friends will make fun of you, or that they'll ask you questions you don't know how to answer. But remember that God is with you.

Keep going even when it seems impossible.

Whether it's the mission Jesus left us or anything else that God wants us to do, sometimes things seem impossible for us. Maybe you think you'll never be able to obey your parents like they want you to, or study hard enough to pass your math test, or have self-control when playing video games. It may seem like you just want to give up sometimes. But you can remember that God is always with you, and that can help you keep going.