



ENTER God's presence

As we have heard, so we have seen in the city of the Lord Almighty, in the city of our God: God makes her secure forever. Within your temple, O God, we meditate on your unfailing love. Like your name, O God, your praise reaches to the ends of the earth; your right hand is filled with righteousness.

Psalm 48:8-10

God of all power and might, you have unfinished business in this world and you invite us to participate in that work. As we gather together, fill us with the power of your Holy Spirit that your power may continue to flow through our life. Help us continue the story of your grace and love in this world that your praise may reach the ends of the earth. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.



SHARE life together

1. **How have you seen Jesus at work in your life this week?**
2. **Share how you went with your living purposefully from last time?**
3. **Who is your favourite author or story teller? Why?**
4. **What is a task in your home that is almost always left undone? Why?**

The last pages of a novel. The final scene in a movie. Your last conversation with a loved one. We want endings to feel complete. To tie up loose ends. To wrap up unfinished business. To bring a sense of closure & completeness...finality. We don't get that as Luke writes the final verses of Acts... Instead we get a never-ending story that lives and adds pages from generation to generation. But it's not a children's book or an sweeping romance that revisits old characters or weaves a new tale in the next instalment. It's your story...your autobiography of life with Jesus that fills the chapters ahead. Written in the tears & struggles, the joys & triumphs, the wisdom & folly of God growing you into the likeness of Jesus...the Spirit moves you out into the world with a calling and a purpose; to be an intentional invitation to draw others into that narrative of the God who loves the world enough to send his Son as a sacrifice so all might have life with Him forever. What unfinished acts has God purposed for you in the days, months and years ahead?

Week beginning
Sunday 11th July 2021

Worship series:
Getting Our Acts Together



VERSE for the week

"He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ—with all boldness and without hindrance!"

Acts 28:31



REMEMBER this week

**God's not finished with you yet!
When the Spirit gives you a story of grace to tell, he will also give you an opportunity to share it!**



LISTEN attentively

Read Acts 28:11-31

- 5. What stands out for you in this text? What questions does it raise for you?**
- 6. What is something in your life that you stopped that you wished you had continued doing?**
- 7. How often or how easily do you think of your life as a continuing part of this story, the story of God at work in the world through his people, the church?**

As we have journeyed through the book of Acts throughout this sermon series, hopefully it has been apparent that God's people, A.K.A 'the church', have a mission. Jesus gave his disciples a task or a mission to bear witness to him, and his life, death and resurrection, to proclaim the good news of forgiveness of sins and eternal life for those who believe in his name. Throughout this book of Acts, we have encountered God's people attending to that task in many ways, through ordinary acts, surprising acts, powerful acts, healing acts, acts of obedience, discernment and boldness. Yet just as Luke seems to leave the book of Acts somewhat unfinished, with a lot of loose ends and unanswered questions, so is the mission yet to be completed. God is inviting us to partner with him in bringing it to completion.

- 8. What are some stories of the ways that you have been aware of God at work in your life? How might they contribute to your efforts at participating in God's mission?**

Stories are a powerful mode of human communication. Many of us will remember the details of stories we were told as children but fail to remember all the details of our own childhood. There is something about a well told or crafted story that helps us to connect to its events, to identify with its characters, to imagine ourselves in the action. Often when it comes to evangelism or sharing out faith with others, we don't know where to start. The stories of the Bible are always helpful, but God has also given you your own story which is a part of his overall story. The question most non-Christians will ask a Christian usually goes something along the lines of, 'why are you a Christian?' The story of God's work in your life is just as powerful a witness to Jesus as the stories of the apostles in the book of Acts.

- 9. Have you ever considered an answer to the question, 'Why are you a Christian?' Think about it now, what would your answer be?**
- 10. We all have stories of how God has been at work in our lives, even if it is only the story of how we came to faith in Jesus. Those of us who have been Christians for a long time probably have a number of stories that come to mind. What stories of God's work in your life might also help you to talk to others about Jesus?**



GROW deeper

Paul was limited physically by his chains, but the reach of his ministry was not bound. At times, you too, will find yourselves restricted by time, ability, opportunity, and personal means. The question is, will you allow yourself to put a full stop and be mastered by your limitations or will you allow God to use your circumstances to transform you and others by His power and for His glory? The one unique, universal distinctive of the gospel, that is foolishness to Greeks and a stumbling block to Jews, and is offered nowhere else in the world, -is found in no other faith system in the world but actually saves us, is Jesus Christ and his resurrection. Paul locks onto the resurrection of Jesus, for it is this one event alone that drives everything about his life and gives him confidence and certainty to keep writing the story of Jesus in the world. It's the resurrection of Jesus that gives the power to continue no matter how tough things get...for it tells you, God is not finished yet.

- 11. What are some of the factors that feel like they are limiting or restricting your witness to Jesus at the moment?**
- 12. How might you be able to reframe your thinking about those things and allow God to make them opportunities?**

Most stories, whether they're fact or fiction have a similar structure. They begin with a setting, some characters and a goal. Then, as the story progresses, the characters experience a complication in their attempts to achieve the goal. As the story draws towards its inevitable end, the characters usually find a resolution to the complication and achieve the goal which they set out to complete. In many stories, this sequence is very predictable. In the best stories, this normal narrative sequence is full of unforeseen and unpredictable complications and remarkable, if not miraculous, resolutions. God's story is the best story ever told. We can take great confidence from the parts of the story that have been recorded in the Bible, they might even give us insights as to how best to address the complications we face in our lives, but we should always be prepared for God to do new things in surprising ways.



LIVE purposefully

Your story, your life will be given to something....all of us give our lives to something. We attach our energy, our time, our resources and our money to things that either cause our lives to end with us or cause our story to continue the ripple effects into eternity. We usually call this a legacy – what we leave behind. Yet for Christians, even our death is not the end of the story; it's simply another complication for which God has provided a very surprising resolution, his son Jesus Christ. The only legacy which really matters is how the story of our lives brings others into God's unfolding and continuing story of salvation through Jesus.

- 13. As you reflect on your life, will the things you are investing your life in right now end with you when you die or continue to ripple into eternity? What needs to change to turn the full stop of your life into a semicolon?**
- 14. Our world encourages us to see ourselves as the star of our own lives. What would it look like in your life if Jesus was always the central focus or the main character in your story?**
- 15. Who is one person who you could share part of your story with this week?**



PRAY intentionally

- Praise God for continuing his story in the world through us. Thank Jesus for giving us a story which has an eternal ending. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you lock onto the promise of the resurrection that his power may continue to write a story of grace in the world.
- Pray for those who are experiencing endings in their lives at the moment: the end of employment, the end of health, the end of life. May these endings be the beginning of a new story of an encounter of faith and life in Jesus.



BLESS one another

You might like to address one person in your group and make the sign of the cross in the air as you say...

[Name], Christ is still writing his story of grace in your life. Amen.