

Jerusalem, Judea & Samaria, Ends of the Earth

Brynmawr Family Church Sermon
Stuart Wheatman, Sunday 26th February 2011

Intro-

- We have seen a lot happen in the last year! (examples).
- As we look forward to what God will do in the future I felt God wanted to challenge our mindsets about what it is we are aiming at, and expand our expectations about what He is able to do. As the saying goes 'many a person aims at nothing and hits it with remarkable accuracy'. What are the broad goals to which Jesus has called us to? We have as a Church vision the fulfillment of Matthew 28- the great commission to make disciples. Jesus gave this command in different ways on different occasions. We will look today at the way Jesus spoke this commission in the book of Acts and highlight 3 main geographical regions we are to see the great commission fulfilled in. As we look at these 3 areas of our call, let's allow God to expand our vision and expectations.

Read Acts 1:4-8

Jerusalem

- This meant the place where they were starting from. Our Jerusalem is Brynmawr. We are to make disciples here in Brynmawr.
- Commitment to evangelism within the locality.
- Living with people can be difficult.
- We are called to be family. The dream of the next Welsh revival resulting in the restoration of family.
- The poor concept of the local Church in Wales.
- Without fellowship we do not thrive.
- Accountability.
- A strong local Church is foundational and essential.
- The early Church saw the fulfillment of the great commission by preaching the gospel and planting healthy local churches- we must do the same.
- Things we need to deal with: Not really giving our all. Skipping meetings. Taking offence and not turning up. Forgiveness. Paranoia. Gossip. There is a cost to love, but it is a price worth paying.

Judea and Samaria

- This meant the surrounding regions were to be transformed by the gospel. Some regions might have seemed more 'achievable' than others in the disciples' minds. Judea was Jewish culture, but Samaria was held with contempt by the Jews then- they used to walk around it and avoid it (and the feelings were mutual). There may be some regions we take to more readily than others, but Jesus deliberately included 'Samaria' knowing it would have been controversial to the Jewish mindset of the time. The gospel is for all people groups. Who are those we wrongly think it would be hard for God to save?
- In Wales 2 extremes- poor concept of local Church, or being 'in a holy huddle', too comfortable in a local Church and not seeing what God is doing on a larger scale- both extremes are wrong. We all like our creature comforts! However, our call is not

to comfort but to the great commission of Mt 28.

- Paul's vision to see whole regions come under the gospel.
- Our immediate sphere of influence- south Wales valleys, but also Wales as a whole. How big is our vision? Widen the tent of your dwelling, stretch out tent pegs. Jerusalem will be a city without walls. The Church also is not to be contained by walls. God wants to break out of the box we have tried to put Him in. Our name change to Valleys Family Church to reflect more of a regional vision.
- Paul's letter to Galatian Church- see Gal 1:1-3; we think in terms of the Church in Galatia being 1 small local Church, but it was his apostolic team writing to many Churches in the huge region of Galatia so that legalism would be nipped in the bud and the foundation of grace would remain in the Churches. The point is- there was an apostolic region there- this is what we want to see develop in Wales- an apostolic region within Newfrontiers.
- It will take sacrifice to see a region develop- just as it did to Paul and his companions. Being willing to travel, undergoing hardships and persecution. Picking up people along the way and travelling with him on mission. Shipwrecks and hassles.
- Welsh revival 1904 affected all of Wales- breaking out in North and South, again people started to believe 'can a nation be saved?'
- Regional transformation through homegroups. 2 homegroups- would like to see expansion to more, but need to continue to commit to homegroups, especially in our locality + need to reach out. Getting involved more and doing things in homegroup- spiritual growth. Homegroups eventually grow into Churches. Dream of evangelism- need break out of being 'comfortable'.
- Regional celebrations. Monthly prayer for the nation. Regional monthly team meetings. The church plant in Swansea..
- Hospitality is key. Early church- as Jesus sent out His apostles they were to look for people of 'peace'- i.e. people who showed them hospitality. Are you a person of peace? Do you show hospitality to Christians who travel for the sake of the gospel?

The ends of the Earth

- This meant literally the gospel going out overseas, to other nations, not just Israel and its environs. It must have been a huge thing for the disciples of Christ to take something that had happened in Israel and go overseas with it- even Christ had stayed within the vicinity of Israel for His mission, but now, through the Church, the mission was to go global. The disciples' mindsets had to change for this to be fulfilled.
- The great commission is a global commission and the early church saw it as such. There are those who go and those who support, we all have a part to play in world mission.
- Welsh revival went all around the world.
- Alexander the Great spreading Greek culture over the known world.
- A paradigm shift. The world is smaller than we think. Facebook, mobile phones, internet, cheap flights. How much of a global citizen are you? How can you be an influence in other countries? What are the connections you already have? Andy Davies' trips to Germany. Our contacts with Sierra Leone, Brazil, South Africa (Ruth). Philip & Paula's contacts in South Africa. Baxter's Fairtrade. Diana Haynes coming to speak about Compassion child sponsorship. Valleys culture can be inward looking, where we think London is the other side of the world. If we are to fulfill the call of God on our lives we need to live in a 'Great Commission' culture more than be influenced by the culture around us.

- We need to 'think different' as the slogan for Apple goes. In 1997 Apple had an advertising campaign with this as a slogan. It was based around 'the Crazy Ones' a poem written a copywriter at Chiat/Day (the agency that produced the campaign) about those who make a difference:
 "Here's to the crazy ones. The misfits. The rebels. The troublemakers. The round pegs in the square holes. The ones who see things differently. They're not fond of rules. And they have no respect for the status quo. You can quote them, disagree with them, glorify or vilify them. About the only thing you can't do is ignore them. Because they change things. They invent. They imagine. They heal. They explore. They create. They inspire. They push the human race forward. Maybe they have to be crazy. How else can you stare at an empty canvas and see a work of art? Or sit in silence and hear a song that's never been written? Or gaze at a red planet and see a laboratory on wheels? We make tools for these kinds of people. While some see them as the crazy ones, we see genius. Because the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones who do."
- For many of us we don't even try something because we lack self-confidence etc. However, the difference is 'I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength'. This year, why not creatively begin to explore what some of those 'all things' are?

Summary

- Jerusalem
- Judea and Samaria
- The ends of the Earth

Song: *You said 'Ask and you will receive'. There's a call to the people of Zion. Father of Creation*