

Tell the Story
Acts 1:1-11

Did you know that you have beautiful feet? I know that you are probably saying, “Who me? You haven’t seen my feet.” You may have bunions and corns, or short, stubby toes. It doesn’t matter. You have beautiful feet. The Bible says so.

Isaiah 52:7 says, “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns.’”

That scripture describes you and me. The church has been given good news to announce to the world. It is the good news of salvation. We have been given the glorious task of declaring to the world that we were created by a good and loving God for the purpose of being loved and sharing God’s love with all creation. Those who trust God’s goodness and love enough to take the risk of sacrificing themselves in a life of love will receive life that is abundant and eternal.

How do we know that is true? Because two thousand years ago the Son of God came to us to offer up his life for us. He taught us the way of love through his words and his deeds. He loved us so much that he willingly suffered and died on a cross for us. He was resurrected three days later. For forty days, he came to his disciples in various times and places. He showed himself to five hundred of them on one occasion. He spent those forty days explaining to his disciples the meaning of his life and death and resurrection. After forty days there was no doubt in any of his disciples’ minds that he was the Son of God and that he had been resurrected to eternal life.

On the fortieth day Jesus gave his disciples final instructions, and then he ascended into heaven. The disciples stood there, dazed and confused, staring up into the sky, until two angels shooed them off, telling them that someday Jesus would come back the same way he left.

Last Thursday was Ascension Day. It was the fortieth day since Easter. I’m sure you all celebrated Ascension Day. Did you send out Ascension Day greeting cards to your family and friends? Did you exchange gifts? We had a special service here at the church in which we went outside and stared up into the sky until we got cricks in our necks.

Just kidding, of course. For most people Ascension Day came and went without our even being aware of it.

But Ascension Day should be celebrated, because that was the day the church was given our marching orders. Before Christ ascended he gave us the Great Commission. He told us to go out and tell all the world his story and what it means. It is good news. It is the message of salvation.

And we’ve been doing that ever since. The story of Christ’s life, death and resurrection has been told over and over again in ways in every conceivable way. We have preached his story. We have written his story. We have witnessed to his story. We have sent out missionaries to tell his story. His story has been proclaimed in homes, in fields, by lakes and rivers, in theaters, in courtrooms, in football stadiums. It has been made into plays and movies. It has been broadcast over radio and television. It has been shared over the internet.

Whenever we Christians find someone who has not heard the story of Christ, we joyfully share it with them.

And we do keep finding people who haven't heard the Gospel story. The vast majority of people have heard it, whether they believe it or not. There is hardly a corner of the earth where the message of Christ has not proclaimed. But we keep telling the story because there is always a new generation of young people who will not hear it unless we tell them.

So, we will continue the work that Christ gave us on Ascension Day. And we will continue it joyfully.

We know that there are some who do not believe the story. There are over two billion Christians in the world. Two billion people believe the story. But the world presently has a population of over six billion. That means there are over four billion people who don't believe it.

It's a miracle that anyone believes it. It sounds pretty unbelievable. You say there is a God? This God is a person? This God is a loving God? This God became a human being? This human being died and was brought back to life? This human being is still alive and will never die again? How in the world can anyone believe such a fantastic story?

Even those of us who were raised in the church and grew up believing the story have a hard time really believing it. As a boy and a young man, I never doubted the story of Christ. It was just never real to me.

In one of my science classes I was taught that at the center of the earth is a nickel-iron ball surrounded by molten lava. I believe that's true. I believe it because people I trust told me it was true. I knew it was important, but I didn't quite understand how. It was certainly not something that was important to my everyday life. I didn't consider that fact in making my life's decisions. I could go for months at a time without even thinking about the fact that the earth's center is a nickel-iron core. And I certainly didn't expect to ever experience the truth of it first hand.

That's pretty much the story of Christ was to me. Then the Resurrected Christ came to me. Suddenly this story was no longer just a story. It was a reality. God was no longer a theory. God's grace and love became a powerful force in my life. Christ became the Lord of my life.

That's the miracle. The Spirit of Christ takes the story and makes it real to us.

But Christ cannot make the story real for someone who has never even heard the story. Our job is to continue telling the story and explaining what it means. It is up to the Spirit of Christ to bring the story alive and make it real for those who are hungry for the truth.

And we will do just that. We will continue telling the story. It is good news. It is a beautiful story. It is a story that helps us make sense out of life. It gives us a foundation upon which to build our lives. It gives our lives meaning and purpose. It gives us an unconquerable hope. Its message guides us through our lives.

So, we celebrate the day of ascension. It is the day Christ said to the church, "My story is done. I give it to you. Share it with all the world." And that's what we will do. We will continue telling the world the story—the good news of the salvation of Christ—until the day Christ returns.

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