



Ignited

WHY THE ASCENSION

The following document is a rough copy of Pastor Drost's sermon  
notes from May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020

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In the last few weeks we have heard the word **Pandemic** many times. When it first popped up in the news, many opened their dictionaries to find out what defines a “pandemic”.

**A pandemic is the rapid spread of a contagious disease that crosses international boundaries (or continents) affecting a substantial number of people on a worldwide scale.**

**For it to be a pandemic it has to:**

- Be very contagious
- Spread very quickly
- Cross worldwide boundaries
- Affect a large number of people in a short period of time

**We are living in a COVID19 pandemic which has spread very quickly across the globe infecting ½ a million people in just a few weeks.**

- This morning though, I want to talk to you about a different pandemic.

**A spiritual pandemic** that started with a small, **insignificant** and **reviled** group of **everyday people** from a little place in the world called Palestine.

- After Jesus rose from the dead, he spent 40 days with a small group of fearful disciples.
- Then before he ascended to heaven, he instructed them to **“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.”** (Mk 16:15)
- As these disciples started to spread the message of Jesus in Jerusalem, they were met with fierce resistance by their families, friends and by the Roman Empire.
- They were brutally persecuted on all sides. They were ostracised, shunned, jailed, stoned, tortured, and murdered at every turn by the populous.
- They did not have any buildings for the first 300 years.  
(Think about that. Canada is 150 yrs old! 2x the history of Canada!)
- They met illegally in homes, behind closed doors, in catacombs and in secluded areas.
- They could not invite the public to gatherings or Billy Graham-type crusades that would introduce them to Jesus.
- No Gospel Music concerts (In fact, they had to meet quietly).
- No worship bands like we had this morning.
- They had no access to the mass media of their day. No posters, newspapers, mailouts, Facebook, YouTube, or Twitter. No Church Online like we have this morning.
- Yet they spread like wildfire across the known world overtaking the Roman Empire, all across into Asia, Europe, Africa. A Spiritual pandemic crossing language barriers, cultures, continents. Reaching all countries, people and groups of the world... **Today 1/3 of the world’s population calls themselves Christian.**



## The rapid spread of Christianity in its earliest centuries is one of the most amazing events in all of human history.

- John the Baptist said of Jesus...

“I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.” Matthew 3:11

“He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.” **Jesus said...**

“I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to undergo, and what constraint I am under until it is completed!” Luke 12:49–50 (NIV)

He first had the Baptism of suffering on the cross for our sins...

But then, **just before he ascended to heaven**, he sent His disciples into Jerusalem to be filled with the fire of the Holy Spirit! (By the way, today is Ascension Sunday)

**AND THEN TO IGNITE THE WORLD! He said...**

“You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Acts 1:8 (NKJV)

- **The Bible and the early church placed way more emphasis on the Ascension than on Christmas and the birth of Christ.**
  - I want to give you three key reason why it’s so important.
  - The answer is a game-changer for every Christian!

### (1) WHY THE ASCENSION

#### **The Ascension is about EMPOWERMENT**

“You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you”

- The disciples did not want Jesus to go! They didn’t understand **WHY THE ASCENSION!**

“It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper (The Holy Spirit) will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.” John 16:7 (NKJV)

- **Illustration:** Car battery out of power → Booster cables

**Jesus ascended to Heaven to hook each of us with a set booster cables,  
His power directly in us**

- Empowering us to be witnesses
- Empowering us with God’s guidance...with His wisdom
- Empowering us with the gifts of the Holy Spirit
- Empowering us to be Jesus in the world



## (2) WHY THE ASCENSION

### The Ascension is about MULTIPLICATION

- **Illustration:** Have you even been stung by a bee? One queen bee in Canada can lay 1500 eggs a day for several years. Potentially one queen bee can produce 1.5 Billion bees!
- By herself, a queen bee could sit outside of her little nest and protect it and give you a good sting!
- But by removing herself and reproducing herself exponentially, she will build a huge colony... and 1.5 billion bees can really give the strongest man a terrible sting!

“Whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, (WHY?) because I am going to the Father.” John 14:12 (NIV)

While Jesus was on earth, he was only in one location at a time. But after he ascended, he was able to set the world on fire through each believer! **The end result is a bigger sting!**

## (3) WHY THE ASCENSION

### The Ascension is about COMMISSIONING

The disciples asked Jesus just before he ascended: “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”

They were missing the whole point of what God was up to.

**Their focus was:** get rid of the Romans and restore their former glory as the Kingdom of Israel. It was inward and ingrown. It was about their nation, their safety, and their freedom of religion. It was about them!

Jesus redirects them from IN to OUT... “**BUT YOU** will receive power and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth”: THE MISSION IS OUT THERE NOT IN HERE

**Jesus is still setting the world on fire by setting us on fire**

**THE MISSION IS OUT THERE, NOT IN HERE!**

- A few weeks ago, I was invited to a group call with members of our Provincial Government, Department of Health and WorkSafe NB. There were 20 or 30 clergy from different denominations on the call. The call was about the steps to getting people back to being able to gather in church.
- The provincial representatives were very respectful & helpful.
- The questions were about:
  - How do we get back to our church buildings like before?
  - When do we get to gather and do “church”?
  - What about Sunday School and our Christian camps?
  - When can we go back to our traditions, our worship sets, our sermons, our weddings and funerals, our customs and rituals?



- **Illustration:** NB ban on outdoor fires... contained fire!
  - I wonder who is more anxious to get us back into our church buildings? Jesus or Satan?
  - How do you stop a pandemic? **Social isolation**  
**How do you stop the spreading of the Gospel?**  
“Keep us busy in our buildings”

**I love church on Sunday!** And we will get back to having church!

I really enjoy our Praise and Worship with our worship bands!

I love the worship songs... they bless my soul and lift my faith!

I like the way we do it! Communion all together! Baptisms!

I look forward to an inspiring sermon!

**I'm thankful for this building!** Especially when it's -15°.

This building has a purpose. It's a tool where we can gather!

But the main reason Jesus ascended to Heaven and sent the Holy Spirit wasn't so that we could gather and have church on Sundays. The Holy Spirit wasn't so that we could have wonderful “Holy Ghost parties!”

- He didn't say, “Go into all the world and have great services”.
- He didn't say, “Go into all the world and build nice buildings”.  
(In fact, he never once talked about church buildings. He taught that “you are the temple of the Holy Spirit”, not this building)

### The building is a tool FOR the MISSION (Not THE MISSION)

- He said, “The mission is the world... OUT there... not IN here!  
Our city... Our neighbours... Our friends...
- **Jesus wants to set us on fire! Fill us with HIS fire! And through US with the power of the Holy Spirit in US. SET THE WORLD AROUND US ON FIRE!**

### To BE the church and not just GO to church!

#### That's the MAIN MISSION!

- And yes, we will do church and sing our songs together.
- And yes, we will have Communion together & baptisms.
- And yes, we will have fellowship and gather as well!

- **Song: WAKE**

*At break of day, In hope we rise. We speak your name; We lift our eyes, Tune our hearts...*

*Into your beat, Where we walk, there You'll be. With fire in our eyes, Our lives a light. Your love*

*untamed, It's blazing out. The streets will glow, Forever bright. Your glory's breaking through the night*



*You wake within me (us)... Wake within me (us). **May the Holy Spirit wake within us, IGNITE US with His fire! With His passion, with His POWER, with His love!***

