



St. Michael's Church  
CHARLESTON, SC

SUNDAY, MAY 16, 2021

ACTS 1:1-11  
MARK 16:19-20

PREACHER: THE REV. AL ZADIG, JR.

HELP US LORD TO BE SO CONNECTED TO YOU THAT WE MIGHT BECOME YOUR  
DISCIPLES AND THE SERVANTS OF OTHERS.

TAKE OUR LIPS AND SPEAK THROUGH THEM,  
OUR MINDS AND THINK THROUGH THEM,  
AND TAKE OUR HEARTS, AND SET THEM ON FIRE.

Claim the Authority! YOU HAVE SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY, CLAIM IT! Authority that comes from what we celebrate today: The Ascension, as you can see from the inside cover of you bulletin. The Ascension of Jesus is one of the most amazing visuals in all of the Bible! The Ascension is that moment Jesus goes to be with God the Father. Here is how that came about: On Good Friday, Jesus died for our sins on the cross. Three days later, Jesus came back to life on Easter! And for the next 40 days Jesus would appear in various forms to the disciples and others on earth. Yes, the man who was dead as a door nail, alive again! Cooking for the disciples and teaching them, all to prove He is the Savior of the world!

But on the 40<sup>th</sup> day, Jesus ASCENDS, to heaven. Leaving the physical presence of the disciples, to sit at God's right hand, signifying His authority as God and Coronation as King. Verse 9 of Acts 1 says it like this: Jesus was taken up into the sky before the very eyes of the Disciples! Imagine, Jesus launching to heaven! Completely supernatural! The closest thing we have to it today is the Launching Pad at the Kennedy Space Center in Florida. All those rockets and shuttles launching from there! This is what the disciples would see! Jesus launching ascending to the right hand of God!

What does this have to do with us? EVERYTHING! WHY? Shortly before Jesus launches, the disciples ask: "Jesus, are you going to restore the Kingdom to Israel?" In other words, JESUS, Are you going to sort out all the earthly problems, including how to free us from Rome? Jesus on that launch pad, delivers an amazing three word response - Jesus says: NO, YOU ARE. YOU WILL RECEIVE POWER WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT COMES ON YOU, AND YOU WILL BE MY

WITNESSES AND MY AGENTS. My hands, eyes, ears, and feet in your home, your community, your nation, and the rest of the world! CLAIM YOUR AUTHORITY! The disciples say who? Jesus says you! You are the teachers, preachers, and the body of Christ on earth! CLAIM THIS life and death AUTHORITY! Meaning every time we tell another about Jesus we are CLAIMING THAT AUTHORITY AND ARE THEREBY accomplishing the mission of Jesus AND OUR PURPOSE ON EARTH! We're not consumers meant to come to church, get filled and keep the news that Jesus forgives sins and destroys death to ourselves! The disciples say who? Jesus says you! Claim it!

NOW, this has never been easy, it wasn't even easy for the disciples, which is what I love about the Bible, it is radically honest. Acts 1 verse 10....As Jesus launches into heaven, we're told the disciples literally just stare at the launch. I mean all they need is popcorn! Then all of a sudden, two men, two angels dressed in white come from out of nowhere, like God's quality control team and they say: Hey, why are you still here staring? CLAIM THE AUTHORITY-Get to work! Get moving! You are the teachers now, you are the witnesses, Stop staring and do something!

What I love about Acts 1 is that it proves Jesus uses broken, imperfect people like you and me to carry out His mission. Jesus trusts imperfect people to carry out his rescue plan for humanity, yes that old saying is true: God doesn't choose only the qualified...He equips the unqualified, folks like you and me! All that's required to claim the authority? Praying: Holy Spirit work through me! Come Holy Spirit enable me to claim that authority!

Well my friends, that prayer describes our Covid Year! On this day of our annual meeting, I can assure you it's not been a year of sitting and staring into the heavens! Far from it, a year where so many St. Michaelites through the Holy Spirit have claimed authority! Now, as Bishop Salmon used to say, we don't learn from our experiences, we only learn from the reflection of those experiences. So, let me reflect with you as to where I have seen you claim that authority. Where I have witnessed you as the HANDS EYES AND EARS OF JESUS.

Three specific areas:

1. Worship:
2. Life on Life Discipleship
3. And Telling Others

It all began Monday, March 16, 2020. Bishop Mark Lawrence made his directive clear to all the churches in the Anglican Diocese of South Carolina. All churches would cease in-person public worship due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. Immediately, your vestry, staff and volunteers made one of the quickest and most dramatic pivots in our nearly 300 years of history. Within 6 days we moved our worship from "in person" to "on video, recording our worship services and sending out the video on Sundays. Dr. Chris Keenan was amazing, spending thousands and thousands of hours editing video to make it right for Sundays. The Rev. Randy Shirley then got the staff vestry and volunteers online over zoom to continue our witness to the world. With wonderful volunteers and others, we began a massive spring summer project to move our worship from video to live streaming—where we could go live with worship and not spend all those hours editing. The balcony-re-wired. The balcony reconstructed with an added cockpit to run the live stream technology. Computers, robotic cameras, discreetly installed. Flower teams, altar guild teams, musicians, pressing in as witnesses! Re-working service times, each of you saying if that's what it takes, I'll be in worship at 7:30am! Why? To claim that authority as witnesses to the

world! Worship Task Force. Buildings and Grounds Task Force. Vestry. All working fearlessly as one! And From here on out we will be worshiping in person, but to reach out to our seekers, shut-ins, and those in other states we will continue to be online with the rescue mission of Jesus! The disciples say who? Jesus says you!

Claiming authority in Worship. And second, claiming authority in Life-On-Life Discipleship. Being witnesses for Jesus Christ one heart at a time. We have seen even in Covid this year, an explosion of ministry to women, men, and children! Mary Ables, Normandy Updyke reaching the hearts of women, meeting inside, outside, boldly pressing in! I think of ladies who are mentoring young moms, including Lori Moore, Nancy Hardwick, Pam McKinney, and Cindy Philbeck! I think of David Booman and his team reaching dad after dad on weeknights! George Klein, Mark Fitzpatrick, and Jim Smith relentlessly reaching into the hearts of Wednesday morning men! Danielle Lindstrom, Taylor Daniel reaching into the hearts of our youngers. One heart at a time, life on life! Claiming authority!

And who can forget the authority claimed during our fall PODZ: Parish outreach dedicated by Zipcode. Groups, pods of St. Michaelites and friends meeting in backyards all over the lowcountry!! Hosts claiming authority...

- Joe and Liz Good on James Island!
- Ann and Jed Kelley in Mt. Pleasant
- Michael and Callie Lallich in West Ashley
- Wade and Eunice Logan Sullivan's Island
- Gene Massamillo Downtown

And Teachers teaching on Acts with Boldness claiming authority, teachers like:

- Pat and Pam McKinney
- Martha and Park Dougherty
- Bill Hyer
- The Logans

With Linda Prince boldly coming up with the curriculum! Claiming Authority! The disciples say who? Jesus says you!

As we taught through Covid, we also taught our way through civil unrest and riots, launching Wednesday God Corner with guests on zoom like:

- Britt Hume
- Ken Boa
- Os Guinness
- Bill Hewitt,
- all claiming authority!

Claiming authority in worship, discipleship, and mission evangelism! With a renewed strategy to tell all right here in the shadow of St. Michael's Church about Jesus! The Rev. Ted McNabb, claiming the authority of Christ launching the Michaelmas Institute. Teaching scripture to our Judges, and Lawyers right across the street! You will hear from one of those judges at our annual meeting! I also think of ten St. Michaelite volunteers led by David Richardson claiming authority by sharing Christ under our portico! Yes, the Mustard Seed Ministry! I think of Betty Schaffer, and her team, sending nearly 500 cards of encouragement to St. Michaelites and friends along with hundreds of phone calls to check in.

I also need to call out our Mission task force, who made an emergency grant request which as approved by the vestry of 5,000 and matched by the Anglican Relief and Development fund to provide oxygen cylinders, sanitizer and masks to Bishop Dutta and our Gospel partners in Calcutta India! Yes, claiming authority in worship, discipleship, and mission evangelism! The disciples say who? Jesus says you!

Covid will not stand in our way! But my friends, there is one thing that can. And it's thinking: I could never do it. It's just not in me to claim that authority. If that's you, YOU'RE TOTALLY... RIGHT. Without the Holy Spirit we have no authority. Without the Holy Spirit it is not in you or me to be an agent. Here is the eternal truth: my friends, you will only find yourself, you will only find contentment, you will only find your true purpose when THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT, YOU CLAIM THAT AUTHORITY CHRIST DIED TO GIVE YOU. YOU SEE, ONE OF THE main evidences of the existence of Jesus Christ is you! Don't reject the authority you have! Call on the Holy Spirit.

Here's the good news. We're not ALONE! At the end of Mark 16, Mark tells us: "Jesus worked with the Disciples after the launch and confirmed his word by signs." Meaning Jesus is with us! We have Jesus through the Holy Spirit and each other. So, Right now...If you're already claiming that authority at full throttle, be encouraged and fill up today for a new season! If you're on the sidelines staring like the disciples? Claim the authority of the Spirit with me today by saying Holy Spirit use me as your witness to the world! Oh, I'm so excited I can't stand it, So can I end with a praise report?

In our eight-person men's group on Wednesday mornings, two men had to drop out mid-way. I asked the group should we go forward with 6? Ellis Lesemann a youngish attorney in our group said no way, let's get more men. Ellis, claiming authority, I loved it! His words weren't empty promises! Ellis invited another lawyer colleague named Taylor Stair to the group. Two months later, Taylor is asked to lead one of our meetings. Taylor began that morning with words I for sure will never forget. He opens the session saying: "I'm 39 years old. I've never prayed in public.....and today I'm leading this group!" MY HEART LEAPED FOR JOY!!!! It's happening! The Holy Spirit is at work!

Dear friends...

- Come from behind the pillars
- Come out from behind the computer screens
- Let's together through the power of the Holy Spirit claim the authority Christ died to give us...

The disciples say who? Jesus says you! To do what? Transform hearts through Jesus Christ! Amen.