

## **“Empowered and United”**

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At times in our lives we're faced with many different tasks. As believers we're privileged to know our role is to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with the world. Sometimes we forget the urgency for this task!

Open to Acts 1. There can be times, because of all the things the world says about us, we don't know exactly who we are or whose we are! Verses 4-5, *“And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, “you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”*

As you've come to the fount, you've been **Baptized with Water**. You've been baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit for the forgiveness of sins. At that moment, God says to you, *“I have called you by name, you are mine!”* You're no longer your own, you're His! But that's not the end! At that very moment you're also **Baptized with the Holy Spirit!**

This part of Baptism is very important. It's at that moment, God gives the disciples and us, a clear picture of exactly what we are to do. He says in verse 8, *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”*

Jesus has been very consistent as He talks to the disciples after His resurrection about what they are to do now. As we're filled with the Holy Spirit, we're **Empowered for Witness**. It's incredible to see that the same thing Jesus said to His disciples over 2,000 years ago is the same thing He says to us! We're to be out there living and showing Him to everyone we meet.

As we're filled with the Holy Spirit, we're **Empowered for Ministry**. Think of the 11 disciples after the resurrection. Where were they? They locked themselves in a room with the doors shut, shaking in fear. They really weren't talking to anyone! But then Ascension happened and Jesus told them again what they were supposed to be doing for Him.

After they watched Him ascend, ten days later they preached and proclaimed Jesus to everyone they saw. They were bold and filled with power on the first Pentecost, but that's next week's story!

Look at verses 9-11, *“And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”*

At that moment, **Jesus left Earth. Jesus Went Home.** They knew that from that standpoint things were going to be different! Just like after the resurrection, they again felt alone and abandoned. But Jesus didn't keep them that way. They weren't listening closely as He gave the Great Commission, and His words before His Ascension. Jesus said He was still with them, and **Jesus is Still With Us!** We're never alone, ever!

Open to John 17. In today's Gospel, Jesus prays to His Father and proves we're still on His mind and He loves and cares for us deeply. Verses 21-22, *“I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one.”*

When our purpose and mission is clear, it's easier for us to have unity between us. **We're All Different,** but **We're United in Christ!** We're like the strings in a piano. Each string has a different sound and a different vibration. But Imagine when we're played by our master pianist, Jesus Christ, we can play incredible music! When we have the purpose to being in the mind of God and to be used by Him, then there is nothing that we as Christians or the Church as a whole can't accomplish!

Elizabeth Pitcarin is an incredible violinist! She's played in Carnegie Hall in New York, Tahoe, Reno, and all over the world. She's even performed in this sanctuary! She owns and performs on the Red Stradivarius from 1720. It's valued at about \$15 million! The instrument sings as it's in her hands! And that's just like you and me!

When we're United Together in Jesus Christ, it **Equals Beautiful Music!** And finally we see the purpose of the unity: to let the world know about Jesus and the love that God has for us! Now that's some purpose! Some may say that the church now has a mission. I think like to say that the mission now has a

church! This mission should remain at the forefront of the church and we should work in unity to accomplish God's purpose in this world!

Look at verses 25-26, *"O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."*

Jesus ends His prayer with the acknowledgement that there's still more work to be done! The world doesn't know about Jesus and His love. The church has often sent mixed messages to the world because we haven't been united in purpose to share this love. We've often demonstrated hate instead of love! There have been times that we've remained silent when others around us are lost and in desperate need of love, forgiveness and God's grace!

Empowered by the Holy Spirit, may we be united in Jesus Christ and make Him known so that the entire world may be one in Him!