

The Unwavering Church

Trusts in the King

September 7, 2025

Acts 1:1-11

Pastoral Prayer

Lord, You are great and highly praised; Your greatness is unsearchable (Psalm 145:3). From everlasting to everlasting, You are God. We bow before You in awe, lifting our hearts in adoration for Your majesty, Your holiness, and Your love that never fails.

And yet, Lord, as we stand in the light of Your greatness, we must confess our sins. Too often we have trusted ourselves instead of You, spoken words that wound, and pursued lesser loves. But You promise us in Your Word that if we confess our sins, You are faithful and righteous to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). So we come honestly, asking for Your mercy, confident that You wash us clean through Christ.

q thank You, Father, for Your kindness. We thank You for daily bread, for the gift of family and church, and most of all for salvation in Christ Jesus. Your Word calls us to give thanks in everything, for this is Your will for us in Him (1 Thessalonians 5:18). Even in trials, we rejoice, because nothing can separate us from Your love.

And Lord, we sbring our requests before You. Your Word tells us not to worry about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, to present our requests to You (Philippians 4:6). So we lift before You the burdens of our church family: those who are sick, those who are grieving, those who are lonely, those who need provision. Meet them with Your peace. Guide our church as we seek to be faithful witnesses in this community. Pour out Your Spirit so that we may walk in courage, unity, and joy.

We adore You, we confess to You, we thank You, and we ask of You—all in the mighty name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

In my years of leadership studies, I've long appreciated the work of Patrick Lencioni. He's written many books on leadership, and no small amount of his writings speak to the importance that trust plays on a leadership team.

Now, when I say "trust" in this context, I don't mean it in the sense in which you find someone reliable or dependable to do their work. Rather, I mean the kind of trust you find with someone who is very comfortable being transparent, honest, and vulnerable with each person on the team and with the team as a whole. You know you're on a team that has this kind of trust when, in private or whole group meetings, everyone feels comfortable saying things like:

- *I disagree with you and here's why*
- *I totally screwed up and I need your help*
- *Ooo, your idea is way better than mine*
- *I was wrong to have said that I ask you to forgive me*

When everyone on the team knows that everyone else is vulnerable enough to say and genuinely mean these kinds of things ... that no one has to hide weaknesses or mistakes ... a team develops a deep and uncommon sense of trust. They speak freely and fearlessly with one another, and they create a bond that makes it hard to ever leave.

Here, I think, is the money quote from Lencioni in his book, *The Advantage*. (SLIDE)

At the heart of vulnerability lies the willingness of people to abandon their pride and their fear, to sacrifice their egos for the collective good of the team. (Patrick Lencioni, The Advantage, p. 28).

In other words, ***a healthy organization presupposes a happy team.***

Segue

Having been studying the book of Acts and reading some good theology on the nature and purpose of the church over the last several weeks, I am convinced that this same principle played a critical role in the success of the early church. I know that the story of the early church is complicated and multi-faceted, and as we work through this book together, we will see many more things associated with the church's health and growth, but at the foundation of the first church, there was a group of disciples who had a deep and delightful trust in their King and therefore among themselves.

Beech Haven, we have great doctrine. We know our mission. We know our values. We know what we're driving after. We know how we're going about it. But hear this – **Christians who don't have a deep and delightful trust in their King can't and won't be on mission with their King.**

My goal this morning is to awaken within all of us, both as individuals and as a church, a deep and delightful trust in our King. The Unwavering Church has a deep and delightful trust in her King.

And in our text today, there are at least **three compelling reasons** we can have a deep and delightful trust in our King.

Body

The Certainty of Jesus' Work

The first of these is found in the first 3 verses of Acts 1 and it's this – **We can have a deep and delightful trust in our King because of his life, death, and resurrection.**

Look at vv. 1-3 with me.

I wrote the first narrative, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach 2 until the day he was taken up, after he had given instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. 3 After he had suffered, he also presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

The foundation of the Christian faith is historical reality—Jesus really lived, died, rose, and taught. And the certainty of His work validates every promise He has made, and makes him worthy of our deep and delightful trust.

The historical reality of Jesus ... the certainty of His work through his life, death, and resurrection ... **is the only logical explanation for the deep and delightful trust that the apostles had in Him and for the courage and boldness that the early church had.** Nothing of the book of Acts makes any sense if the disciples don't deeply and delightfully believe in the certainty of Jesus' work.

- Romans saw no need for a belief in bodily resurrection. Greeks and Romans did not believe that the material of this world had any value. They only saw value in a person's spirit. The idea of a physical, bodily resurrection was absolutely impossible and absurd.
- The Jews of Jesus' day believed there was good in the material world that God had made, and they believed that God was going to make it right or heal it one day in the future, and that would include a bodily resurrection, but no Jew had room to believe the Messiah would be resurrected or even that any one person in the "middle" of history would be resurrected.

So you see, nobody WANTED this and nobody EXPECTED this, which means the likelihood that the disciples did all that they did in the book of Acts because they WISHED it was true is simply nonsense.

No – the deep and delightful trust that the disciples had in Jesus was grounded in the certainty of his life, death, and resurrection.

The Promise of the Spirit

But there's another reason why the disciples had a deep and delightful trust in their King, and it's because of **the promise of the Holy Spirit.** Look at vv. 4-5, and verse 8 with me.

4 While he was with them, he commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for the Father's promise. "Which," he said, "you have heard me speak about; 5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit in a few days."

8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

As remarkable as it may sound, ***the presence of the Holy Spirit in us is better than the resurrected Jesus beside us.***¹ How incredible that the resurrected Jesus—who shattered everyone's worldview—would promise the Holy Spirit for the power we need to proclaim the truth regarding His resurrection.

The Holy Spirit is not a downgrade or a consolation prize; the Spirit is God Himself dwelling within every believer. When Jesus was on earth in the flesh, He was limited to being in one place at a time. But by sending the Spirit, His presence and power now live within every disciple, in every place, at all times. When Jesus was beside the disciples, He was the one doing most of the ministry. But with the Spirit inside them, every believer becomes a temple of God and a vessel of His power.

The church that believes in the resurrected Jesus but lacks the power of the Spirit is a pathetic church.

- **Regenerates and sanctifies** – It's the Spirit who brings new life and holiness so that believers truly experience the risen Christ (Acts 1:4–5; John 3:5–8).
- **Fills for specific challenges** – It's the Spirit who anoints individuals to meet opposition and opportunities in witness (Acts 4:8, 31; 6:10; 7:55; 13:9).
- **Gives boldness in witness** – It's the Spirit who emboldens ordinary believers to speak courageously about Christ (Acts 4:9–13, 31; 13:9–11).
- **Encourages and grows the church** – It's the Spirit who comforts and strengthens as the church multiplies (Acts 9:31).
- **Provides words to speak** – It's the Spirit who supplies words for witness in line with Jesus' promise (Acts 2:4; Mark 13:11).
- **Directs mission opportunities** – It's the Spirit who opens doors for witness (Acts 10:19) and sometimes closes others (Acts 16:6–7).
- **Calls and sends missionaries** – It's the Spirit who sets people apart for gospel work and sends them out (Acts 13:2, 4).
- **Guides doctrinal clarity** – It's the Spirit who leads the church to discern truth in matters of mission and practice (Acts 15:28).

You see, Beech Haven, we can have all the objective truth ... all the doctrinal clarity ... we can be true to our value to "Start with Scripture" ... **but without the Spirit, we cannot be the unwavering church we were called out to be.**

¹ JD Greear, original statement is similar.

We need to trust our King, not only for the certainty of His work, but also for the promise of His Spirit, for without the Spirit, we are a weak and pathetic church.

The Guarantee of His Reign

A final reason we can have a deep and delightful trust in Jesus is because of the **guarantee of His reign**. Look with me at vv. 9-11.

9 After he had said this, he was taken up as they were watching, and a cloud took him out of their sight. 10 While he was going, they were gazing into heaven, and suddenly two men in white clothes stood by them. 11 They said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up into heaven? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come in the same way that you have seen him going into heaven."

The ascension of Jesus was not "space travel," as if He rocketed off into the stratosphere, but an enthronement. To "ascend" is to be lifted into a new position of authority, like an heir ascending to the throne of England. Sitting in the chair matters less than **the change in relationship to the whole kingdom**. So when Jesus was "taken up," it signified that He now **reigns at the right hand of the Father, with authority to apply everywhere the benefits of His life, death, and resurrection**. The cloud that enveloped Him was not incidental—it echoed the cloud of God's glory on Sinai and at the Transfiguration, showing that He had entered into the very presence of God.

Luke emphasizes that the disciples saw this happen. Their eyewitness testimony underscores that the ascension was a real, historical event with deep theological meaning. It was public to show them that this time Jesus was not simply disappearing for a while; He was gone to reign from Heaven until His return. The angels made this clear, redirecting the disciples from staring at the cloud that enveloped Jesus to living out their mission on earth. The ascension means Jesus is not more distant but more present—through the Spirit, He is with His people everywhere and always, until the day He comes again in glory.

It's kind of like when a student graduates. They don't just walk across a stage—they step into a new role. The ascension is Jesus stepping into His role as reigning King, applying all the benefits of His life, death, and resurrection to His people.

Conclusion

My goal this morning has been to awaken within all of us, both as individuals and as a church, a deep and delightful trust in our King. The Unwavering Church has a deep and delightful trust in her King, and that trust is due to:

- The certainty of Jesus' work
- The promise of the Spirit
- The guarantee of Jesus' reign

Very quickly, recognizing that we have the entire series to make multiple points of application, let me highlight one point of application that is relevant for those of you who are maybe not Christians but also relevant for those of us who are.

I pointed out earlier that the deep and delightful trust that the disciples had in Jesus was grounded in the certainty of his life, death, and resurrection. Nobody WANTED this and nobody EXPECTED this. The disciples were compelled to believe and do all that we're going to see in Acts because Jesus actually rose from the grave.

This got me thinking – Why do people in our culture express interest in Christianity? Broadly ... culturally ... what is it that drives interest these days?

And, broadly ... generally speaking ... The answer to that is: **community, belonging, and moral clarity**. That's generally the research in a nutshell.

Now, God often uses those desires as the first crack in the door. Jesus Himself often met people at the point of their hunger, hurt, or fear. But what these first few verses in Acts teach us is that while those needs can draw us closer, ***they cannot hold us there when following Christ costs us. Only a deep and delightful trust in the real, historical, resurrected Jesus can hold us close to Him when it costs us something.***

The disciples in Acts 1 didn't devote themselves to Jesus simply because He gave them friends or met their needs. They had witnessed the risen Lord, and they believed He was enthroned at the right hand of God and would return in glory. ***That conviction reordered their lives. They didn't risk prison and persecution for the benefits of Christianity but for the truth of Christ's lordship.***

Community, stability, or moral clarity may draw us toward Jesus, but only allegiance to Him as the risen King will sustain us when obedience costs us. Curiosity may start the journey, but conviction about Christ carries it forward.

Christianity isn't true because it works. It works because it's true.

Luke does not say to Theophilus, "Theophilus, I want you to know this has worked for me, and I think it might work for you." NO. He says, "Jesus lived, died, and rose again. EVERYTHING IS DIFFERENT NOW."

So my invitation to those of you who don't know Jesus but are curious ... my invitation isn't to a system, but to a risen person. After the service today, I invite you to the tables outside where a member of our team would love to talk with you and pray with you about starting to walk with Jesus today.

And congregation, this informs how we do everything around here, this 70 minutes included. **Our goal every Sunday is to awaken and deepen within all of us a deep and delightful trust in God. We do this community a grave disservice if we use this time together to do something other than make much of Him because of the gospel. If we do not sing the**

songs, pray the prayers, and preach the Word that proclaims the risen Jesus with clarity and compassion and in the power of the Spirit, we will fail in our mission.

Michael Reeves writes, "Those who bask in the sunshine of this loving and generous God are the happiest Christians and the happiest missionaries."

Is that your mindset this morning? Sunday mornings? Any morning?

I pray that it will be.