

1. Larry Walters was a man who always wanted to fly.

At the age of 33, he got his chance when on July 2nd, 1982, Larry tied 42 helium-filled balloons to a lawn chair in the backyard of his girlfriend's house in San Pedro, California.

With the help of his ground crew, Larry then secured himself into the lawn chair which was anchored to the bumper of a friend's car by two nylon tethers. He took with him many supplies, including a BB gun to shoot out the balloons when he was ready to descend. His goal was to get to 200 metres or so and then come back down.

Well things didn't quite work out for Larry. After his crew purposely cut the first tether, the second one also snapped which shot Larry into the LA sky like a cannon at over 300 metres per minute. Up up and Away! So fast was his ascent that he lost his glasses. He then climbed to over 5000 metres or 16,000 feet.

For several hours he drifted in the cold air near the LA and Long Beach airports. A TWA pilot first spotted Larry and radioed the tower that he was passing a guy in a lawn chair at 16,000 with a gun on his lap! Larry started shooting out a few balloons to start his descent but had accidentally dropped the gun. He eventually landed in a Long Beach neighborhood. Although he was entangled in some power lines, he was uninjured. Soon after he was safely grounded and cited by the police, reporters asked him three questions: "Where you scared?" Yes." "Would you do it again?" "No." "Why did you do it?" "Because," he said, "you can't just sit there."

2. They say a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.

But to make that step means you can't just sit there. Life is an adventure. Life is about taking risks – not that I want to see you all taking to the skies in your outdoor settings – but we do take all kinds of risks that aren't physically dangerous. Life is about continuing to step out of our comfort zones to have a go – to be fully alive. That's what the resurrection is all about. Resurrection is about new life, life lived in the promises and forgiveness of God. Jesus didn't die and rise again leaving His disciples without a common purpose! We've been called as a community of God's people to shine the light of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit – in our homes and wherever God has placed us in this life!

Let me ask you this morning:

- *Are you alive with the breath of God animating you?*
- *Does the joy of the resurrection pulse through your veins with vitality and purpose?*
- *Do you see your life as another day, another adventure?*
- *Or have you settled for something less?*
- *Are you stuck going through the motions?*

3. Let's hear again the angel's question to the disciples at the Ascension of Jesus. They said, **Why do you stand looking up into heaven?**

The disciples had just heard Jesus say, **You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8)**, Jesus issues a commission so huge – it was global and then he was gone - taken up and hidden from their sight - leaving them to gaze off into the sky.

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It had been a wild 40 days for them. From the lows of the Good Friday nightmare to the highs of the resurrection appearances. No doubt they were basking in those moments, remembering and talking about everything that had taken place ...wanting it to continue, to last forever.

Then “suddenly two men in white robes stood by them” – interrupting their special moment. ***‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven?’*** Or to paraphrase using Larry Walter’s comment – ***you can’t just stand there! What do you think you are doing?*** Get going – you’ve got your commission, there’s work to be done, there’s life to be experienced, you’ve been blessed so go.

You can’t just sit there. The temptation for the disciples – was to gaze at the heavens, to wait for a Second Coming, and forget their calling.

But Jesus left so the story could continue. He knew what he was leaving, he knew who they were; the eleven with a pretty ordinary track record, who were very human and imperfect people. The resurrection did not make them super people; they had no wings; even the angels had made sure they had their feet firmly on the ground. But they were now a people who had a purpose; a people who were called to live his-story, letting the power of God’s Spirit continue to write the pages of his-story through their lives, no matter how inadequate they felt for the task.

Jesus didn’t suffer and die for you to just sit there. He suffered and died, was resurrected and ascended so you could live LIFE, embrace LIFE, celebrate LIFE, share LIFE. Yes it’s good to stand on the Mountaintop of Easter and talk about what Christ has done for us – but it’s also time for action! It’s time for us as a Church and individuals to stop gazing into heaven and be the people God has called us to be. It’s an exciting commission!

4. That picks up the behaviours we talked about last week.

Can you remember them? SHARE, READ, TALK, PRAY, BLESS! Witnessing in our context and living out the commission we’ve received from our ascended Lord. Starting in our homes and allowing the transforming power of the gospel to ripple outwards into the lives of those around us.

We are witnesses to Jesus! Jesus who revealed God’s glory and reign through his ministry on earth.

Now we get to join hands across the generations with Apostles and disciples who saw and heard Jesus in the towns of Galilee and in Jerusalem.

Through them we know the Gospel story which sets people free. We learned of the compassion of God, opening the door again to the outcast, embracing the lost son, listening to the women’s cries, taking the children and blessing them. The God who did not withdraw, the God who did not say enough, the God who offered forgiveness and reconciliation to the least loved and least loveable.

We are the witnesses of our Saviour who suffered death for us on the cross and we are witness of his resurrection.

We are witnesses of that vision in Acts of Jesus ascending in heaven. We are commissioned by the Ascended Jesus who comes to you and me today inviting us and commissioning us to go out from here

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and tell His story – to be His witnesses in the places God has called us. **You are part of the greatest call ever issued.**

There is no greater call than the one set by Jesus Christ in the first century, **'Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to everyone, everywhere.'** We call it the Great Commission – and we're honoured to be part of it.

It's a purpose in which we become part of something that is far bigger than us or any single congregation. But it's also a call that God has gifted each one of us to participate in.

5. And if God has called us to participate in His gospel ministry in our context, then he'll also protect and watch over us as we serve Him.

You heard Jesus praying for His disciples in the gospel lesson today. Jesus prayed all the time – and He is still praying for you and me now! The Ascension means that Jesus is at the right hand of God – the place of power and authority. The place where the bible says He lives to intercede for us – to pray for us! He is praying for all the things going on in our lives today as he did when he walked this earth...

Right now Jesus is praying for you, me and all his disciples collectively as we live out His great commission.

- He is praying for your protection today as you live in the promises of His death and resurrection at work in your life – right now
- He is praying that as people we wouldn't be divided and fighting each other, but that we would be one just as Jesus is one with the Father. United with a common purpose to glorify God where ever we are.
- Right now, Jesus is praying for your joy. Not happiness – happiness can be fleeting when trouble hits. But you can have a deep seated joy even in the midst of trials and temptations. Jesus is praying for your joy.
- Jesus is praying for your protection from Satan and evil spirits. SO he's praying that the power of your baptism would be at work in your life today. Satan hates nothing more than seeing people living in the new resurrection life we've received and walking boldly in what we've been commissioned to do. So Jesus is praying for us all right now.
- He is praying for your holiness when he says, "Sanctify them in the truth – your word is truth'. Jesus is praying for your time in His word and for the holiness you receive as you read it.
- Jesus is praying for our witness amongst our friends and family and the people we encounter through our week. I find this amazing - You may not even know who you're going to encounter and speak to this week – and Jesus has already prayed for them and for you.
- Jesus is praying that you will eventually be where He is – in the presence of the glory of God (the visible manifestation of God's presence) to rejoice in Him and with Him. He longs to be with you.
- And Jesus promises to continually reveal and make himself known to you so that we would know the depth of God's love personally in our lives and be able to overflow and share that same love with others.

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6. **So as we live in the power of his Spirit and creatively tell people of the life and hope and forgiveness that is freely available in Jesus' name, we go confidently.** We go knowing that Jesus is present with us in unique and mysterious ways. That Jesus is praying for us:

We go in the confidence of what Jesus has secured for us through the work of the cross. We go with the commissioning and promise of Jesus – that this doesn't depend on us – but on what He has already done. But we have the privilege of being involved in the ministry of God where ever we are and where ever we go. That is your purpose. That is your calling.

Are you ready for an adventure – living His story....' through your life?

Over two thousand years ago, Jesus issued a standing invitation: follow me. That call has not changed.

When you live for his purposes you never know where you are going to end up.

Will you be a part of Living His-story? Sharing HIS story?

May the Spirit of Christ fill you with the fullness of his power, his love and his hope that you may have the courage to take that next step. Amen.