

The Road Ahead

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Preachers: Gordon R, Luke R, Mike H

[0 : 00] This is a sermon from King's Church West William. What we're going to do this afternoon, guys, is a bit different to normal. You're going to hear from me just for a couple of minutes, and then we're going to hear from Mike, and we're going to hear from Gordon.

And as elders, we just really want to share with you something a bit different today. We want to just really share what we feel God has spoken to us as an eldership about the church and where we're going as a church.

And that sounds like it could be major things. It's not. But at the same time, it is. There's no shocks, there's no surprises, but it's important. You know, it's important what God is doing amongst us as a church, isn't it?

So I'm just going to just sort of introduce what's going on today, and then we're going to hear from Mike and go on a bit later. As I was saying, what we have to share today is it's nothing unique. And I know that sounds a bit boring, but it's not. It's not unique. I actually think every single church throughout this country and throughout the nations of the world will be wanting the same things as us.

[1 : 05] Do you know? And that's a good thing. Do you know? The Christian church wants to glorify Jesus. You know? And wants to get to know Jesus more. And wants to live for Jesus. Wherever you are in the world.

And we are here in Uphall today, but wherever you are, we all want the same things. And we, I guess, we've realised as an eldership that our church is actually just a small part of the big story of what God is doing.

You know, what God has been doing through generations and what God will continue to do. And our church plays its little part in that. And each one of us plays a part in that together. That's right. Everybody plays a part. But just to start, I thought, rather than straight away looking ahead to what God has for us in these next months, I just want to help us to look back just for a couple of minutes. I think it's good to be giving thanks and to be grateful and recognising what God has done amongst us. And this is probably something which is maybe a bit more unique to us.

[2 : 07] Because we're talking about things that happen to people in this room and things that we've all been part of, which is wonderful. And if I said to you, what do you feel God has been doing through King's Church, West Lodian?

What has he been doing in you and in me? I wonder what would spring to mind for you over this last year or so. For me, there were a couple of things that really stood out. And for both of these things, I think it's things that God has been doing in us.

And I think it's really about him working in us. Later, we're going to think about a different word. But for now, I think it's about what he's doing in us. And one of those is I definitely feel for many in this room that he has been deepening our walk with him.

Do you know? It might be that you have just become a Christian. Do you know? And you've gone on that journey of getting to know who Jesus is. Or it might be that you've been a Christian for a while, but God is just taking you to deeper, deeper levels with him.

That you're getting to know him more. In Colossians chapter 2, it says that to be a Christian is to be someone that is rooted in Christ Jesus. And I feel for our church.

[3 : 12] It's been a season of rooting us in him. In knowing who Jesus is. And knowing his purposes for our lives. And just knowing him as a friend, do you know? So deepening our walk with him.

I think that's one thing I've noticed and I'm very grateful for. And the second thing that I am grateful for is that he's not just doing that as individuals. But I feel he's doing that as a church.

We talk about family. A church community. A church body. The New Testament has lots of different pictures of what the church is. But I feel like we are really coming together as a church community. That God is doing something in that. And helping us. Again, in the New Testament in Ephesians. Paul describes that as the natural outflowing of what it is to be rooted in Christ as an individual. He then says from Jesus the whole body joined and held together by every supporting ligament. The body grows and builds itself up in love.

[4 : 09] And I really sense and I've seen that God has been doing that. He's been rooting us as individuals. But then he's been growing us in love for one another.

A unity. And growing us in building us together as a church family. And much of that is about what God has done in us. And you might be thinking about yourself.

About what God has done in you over the last few months. Over this last year. And that will look different for each person. But I hope there's some of that sense of being rooted in Jesus. And growing together as a church family.

But today we want to just think about something that is equally important. You know, it's so important that God does these things in us. But the word I really want to think about today is the word out.

God has done an amazing thing in us. But, you know, that has to flow somewhere, doesn't it? It's a bit like a river. You know, it can't stay where it is. It has to flow. And I think what Mike and Gordon are going to share a bit more in detail.

[5 : 07] Is how God wants to flow from out of us to the neighbourhood. To your neighbours. To your colleagues. To your friends. To your family. And how God can do that as a church.

How he's going to be working in us as a church. To reach different people that we don't yet know.

And people who don't yet know Jesus. Mike's going to share in a moment from a key verse.

That is key for us. That's that again, it's key for every single church. And we're going to have a look at that in a minute. And then Gordon's going to talk more about this big mission of God. What does that look like?

And then we're all going to share a little bit more about how does that link to you and me? What does that really mean? You know, we've got a bit of the big picture first. And then some of the stuff that will affect us, you know, in other ways.

So I'm going to pass over to Mike. The verse that we felt drawn to as we were praying and thinking about the kind of next season for us as a church was Acts chapter 1 verse 8.

[6 : 09] It should come up in just a second. Now, this verse happens to be the final words that Jesus uttered as a man before he ascended to heaven.

I don't know if you're somebody who's ever thought about what your final words will be. I am the kind of person that thinks about these kind of things. And I've come up with a few good ones, but I'm still not quite happy with it yet.

But hopefully I've got a long time to go before I need to utter those words. But here's the thing about final words. Once you've said them, you need to shut up, right?

None of us get to decide when our final words will be, except Jesus. Because, of course, when Jesus uttered his final words, he'd already died and risen again.

And he got to choose the moment of his ascension to heaven. And here's the words that he said to his disciples. He says, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you.

[7 : 05] And you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth. Jesus made this extraordinary promise to 12 fairly ordinary men.

And what's even more extraordinary about the promise isn't that he made it. But it actually has come true. Or I should say, it is coming true. It is being fulfilled amongst us.

Because, of course, the 12 disciples, 12 apostles, as they became, they only lived for, I don't know, a few decades after Jesus died and rose again. But, of course, that mantle was passed on to new generations of believers.

And within 300 years, the story of Jesus, the gospel truth had been taken to throughout the Roman Empire, into India, into Africa.

It even reached a little-known, unimportant island on the northwest edge of Europe called Britannicus. Yes, it had even got this far.

[8 : 09] And that story has continued through generations and generations, sometimes up, sometimes down. But always the story of the movement of the faith of Jesus Christ being taken

from one generation to the next, from one town, one city to the next.

And now we're at a point where every nation on earth has some kingdom representation within it. Of course, there's much more to do. But nevertheless, the kingdom has reached every corner of the globe.

You see, the kingdom of God outlasts every other kingdom that has been around at the time and has risen and fallen since. And even the ones that we have amongst us, I know that the kingdom of God will outlast, whether it's the only one that we happen to live as part of or ones in foreign parts of the world.

Why is that? It's because Jesus left spirit-empowered witnesses. Have you ever wondered why, when you come to faith, when you put your faith in Jesus, that you weren't whisked off into heaven immediately?

Have you ever wondered why that is? Why did God leave you hanging around here for a few more years? Well, the reason is because he wants kingdom representatives in the here and the now on this planet to represent his kingdom to the world around us.

[9 : 37] We are spirit-empowered witnesses, he calls us, in a hostile environment. So what do witnesses do? That's a funny word to use, isn't it? Witnesses. What do witnesses do?

Well, witnesses, they just say what happened. If you ever, I don't know if anybody here has ever been into a trial or anything, maybe been on trial, I don't know. But you've probably all seen crime dramas.

The witnesses get brought forward. They're not asked to give a guilty or an innocent verdict. They are just told, they're just asked to say what happened as best as they've seen.

And for us as believers, that's really what we are asked to do as well. We are asked to say what has happened. Now, subjectively, all of us, if we put our trust in Jesus, we have a story to tell.

I was like this. Now I'm like this. Jesus has changed my life. But of course, it doesn't just happen from the point when you became a Christian.

[10 : 36] I mean, for me, that was quite a long time ago. I was 15 years old when I became a Christian. I'm now a little bit older than that. But do you know what? All the time, God has been faithful to me.

He has given me a story to tell. In fact, I thought it might be a little bit fun, actually, as soon as we're here, to do a little bit of a poll. To see who's been a Christian for the longest.

Hands up if you've been a Christian. If you've been following Jesus for more than a year. Let me hand up if that's you. Yes, that's most. Okay, let's say more than five years. Still many of us.

Ten years. A few hands start to drop. Fifteen years you've been following Jesus. Still quite a few hands up. Okay, I'm going to go for the big one here. 25 years. Who's been following Jesus for more than 25 years?

Oh my goodness. Right, okay. Forty years. My hand's dropping. Okay, we've got, I think we've got four. Okay. Okay, 50 years. Dorothy?

[11 : 37] 50 is right. Give us. How many years, Dorothy? She doesn't even know. That's not long. So, Dorothy, here's a question.

I'm going to put you on the spot. If somebody said to you, I'm thinking about following Jesus, what would you say to them? Best thing you ever thought about. Best thing you ever thought about is what she said. Now, we've recounted here, although Dorothy's been following Jesus probably longer than most of us has been alive.

Actually, that's only one person. When you add up all the decades of following Jesus, and I'm sure many of us would have a similar thing to say. He is faithful. You are talking about centuries of faithful witness.

Even just in a little room like this. That is witnessing. That's important. This is my story. And of course, it doesn't just stop with when I became a Christian to now. Actually, God is faithful as we go.

All of us will have stories about how God helped us through an illness. How God helped us through a rocky marriage. How God helped us through bereavement.

[12 : 47] All of us will have stories of various kinds. We know that he is faithful. And that is what we witness to the world around us. You will be my witnesses to the ends of the earth.

But you know, the truth is that as anybody who is a fan of crime drama will know, the first thing that the opposition lawyer is going to try and do is what?

Discredit the witness. Of course. And the fact is that I could probably tell you a story about how God has been faithful in my life. And somebody who wasn't following Jesus might say, Well, your story is too subjective.

It's too dependent on you. You've been brainwashed to think that way, they might say. They might even say, as some people have said to me in the past, The reason you think that is because you are a little bit thick.

And hey, there may be some truth in those things. But here's something that I can say without a shadow of a doubt. We are witnesses to something that has happened.

[13 : 55] And it is this. Jesus has died and risen again. That is a historical fact. Now, you won't find many sort of professional historians who would be happy to use the phrase historical fact.

Because they would probably put it in the realms of religion. They'd probably say it's something that faith is dependent on. But the fact is that I'm a bit of a history fan. I read a lot of history. It's just a pastime of mine.

The fact is that the evidence for the resurrection, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, is overwhelming. It is a historical fact in just the same way that, I don't know, Henry VIII had.

How many wives did he have? Six. Six wives. Christopher Columbus crossed the Atlantic in 1492.

Julius Caesar invaded Rome in BC 30 or whatever.

All these things are historical fact. Because there's massive amounts of evidence to say that these things happened. In the same way, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, it happened.

[15 : 00] And I'd be more than happy to go into detail with you on that if you want to. I haven't sadly got time to go into it now. But we witnessed. How do we witness? Now the apostles, they literally witnessed it.

They saw it. It happened. They met him on the day he rose again. We, along with billions of other Christians around the world, we meet with Jesus every day through the power of the Holy Spirit.

But, you know, even then, the truth is that we can get fearful. We can get doubtful. We can get passive in our desire to witness the truth of the gospel to our friends and neighbors, colleagues.

We need power. We need supernatural power. And this is where the promise comes in. You receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you.

The Holy Spirit is a promise to all believers that's given. We put our trust in him. It is God dwelling amongst us.

[16 : 04] It is God dwelling inside each one of us so that we can fulfill the big mission that God has for us on this earth.

And it is to this that Gordon will now turn. Thank you. Okay. Well, the big mission.

Have a look at those names up there for a second. Those places mentioned there. You will be my witnesses, as Mike's helped us explore, in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth.

Well, I guess one of the questions is, well, are they kind of favorite places? Should we all be picking one of those? Well, fortunately, we are on the ends of the earth, so we're okay there. We can be as witness here.

But we could move to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, one of those places. But if you were listening to this, you probably wouldn't be thinking, when Jesus first said these words, you wouldn't be thinking, gosh, that makes perfect sense.

[17 : 02] What a great plan. You know, what a great idea. Because some of these places, you'd be thinking, what on earth? Like, if you were one of his followers thinking about Samaria, you'd be thinking, there? Really?

Like, this is quite a wide range of places that he's mentioned. But what he's doing here is painting a big, kind of painting a trajectory of what he's going to do. That his death, his resurrection, his message, and his great love for us, an invitation to his kingdom, is going to spread, not just from the very local, but to the pretty awful in the eyes of most Jewish people, and through to the totally unknown.

You couldn't even imagine, I'm assuming, if you're one of Jesus' followers, that there'd be a crowd of us sitting here, now, in Uphall, West Lothian. Because I'm assuming there was no clue that Uphall, or West Lothian, or even this part of the world existed for these disciples.

And yet, that's the big spread that Mike's already started to paint, and that Jesus here says to his followers, here's the plan, you're going to be my witness. And just begin to imagine what's going to happen.

So let's have a look at what Jesus sees as the road ahead for what he is saying is going to happen in the future. What's the road ahead? Well, you've got Jerusalem and all Judea.

[18:22] That's probably the equivalent of Edinburgh, in terms of distance. Or if you are taking into account the effort that it takes when you don't have a number 21 bus to jump on, or a train, or a car, you're probably talking more like the distance between here and Aberdeen.

But he's saying, it starts in Jerusalem. Sorry, I've got myself muddled up there. It starts in Jerusalem. That's not Edinburgh. That's right where they are.

That's, in fact, home base. That's where the crucifixion has happened. The resurrection has happened. The church is born. And Jesus says, it starts here. And then it starts next door.

Like, in the next county across. In the next leap. But he's saying, we're a placed people. Like, his mission was placed. He could have, I mean, in all the plans the Lord could have had of how to announce his kingdom.

I mean, he's in charge of the whole cosmos. He could quite literally have written it in the stars. But he chooses to place himself amongst 12 people. He chooses to be with them and to eat with them and to grieve with them at times and to celebrate and to challenge.

[19:33] And all the things that Jesus did. But he places himself locally. And he's saying to them, you're going to witness locally. It's going to start somewhere. It's going to start here.

We're not going to leapfrog away from where we are and to bigger things or better things. Or, you know, we're not going to go straight to Rome and see the kingdom expand that way, which it eventually does.

Because place matters. And also proximity matters. Jesus knows that he's going to put these people in messy situations where the kingdom is going to break in.

And he knows that you and I, reading this, need to know that he puts us in a place. And place matters for us. And who we're alongside matters to us.

I find myself, whenever we as elders are going to kind of say, we're going here. We believe in God for this. I find myself challenging myself and saying, well, listen, if I'm going to ask you guys to join us and to continue on the adventure of announcing the kingdom, well, I better get ready to be used in that way.

[20:39] Like, get myself kind of warmed up in advance. And some months ago I prayed and said, Lord, would you give me some opportunities to talk about you? I feel like I've had none for ages. And now, listen, what I'm about to tell you is not a massive boast.

And none of them I've seen massive transformation in yet. But very recently I got a new boss. And he has not been able to stop asking me about church. Like, he comes to my room for various, I just thought he needed some new pencils.

By the way, how's church going? And I'm like, what is going on? It's like the Holy Spirit's working in advance of me. And it's him doing the work and not me. Oh, but proximity and place matter.

He's put me here. And I get to share with this guy. Today I was loading a new tumble dryer. You've probably heard that water's been a bit of an issue in the Ralph's house recently, where the kind of flood that we've had and things, and now we just need to dry our clothes a bit better.

So he bought a tumble dryer today. And as me and this guy are heaving it out to the car, he says to me, you mentioned earlier you work for a church. What's that about? And I'm like, oh, come on.

[21:38] Like, seriously. And in fact, when we did have a minor flood in our house last week, the first thing I did was I went to buy some industrial equipment, or not buy, sorry, to rent it. And I'm there at half seven in the morning, and the kingdom of God is not honestly in my mind at this point.

I am thinking, I just want the waters to part and to kind of, you know. Well, that is the kingdom. Yes, that would be a great thing. I want these waters to go away. And as I'm hiring the equipment for this guy, from this guy, I'm saying to him, he says, you're not a builder.

What are you doing here at eight in the morning? I'm like, my house is flooded. I just need some equipment. And he says to me, so what do you do if you're not a builder? I said, I'm a church leader, and I teach as well.

And he said, tell me about your church. And I was like, sorry? Sorry, what? And he said, tell me about your church. I used to follow Jesus. I haven't since I was about 12. Like, tell me about that.

And honestly, it was one of those moments where I was like, yes, Lord. Okay, I need to get back and deal with this flood. But right now, I'm going to invite him to church. I'm going to talk to him briefly about Jesus. And I saw him again this week, which was great.

[22 : 40] And I'm praying for him. And some of you are too. Place matters. Jerusalem is mentioned here because where he puts us matters and who he puts us alongside matters. And we often think it's about smart programs.

And honestly, I bet you, if you're thinking about how you came to know Jesus, it probably, my guess is, it wasn't a clever program that got you.

It might have been a leaflet you got that someone then talked to you on top of. It might have been a church service. But I bet you it was someone who ultimately shared Jesus with you. We're all learning that.

And our life will be a journey itself of learning to be sensitive to who he's working in and who he wants to reach. But I think it starts here in Jerusalem.

Or it starts here in Uphall. Or it starts for you when your houses hopefully don't flood. But when you're going to the shops and someone says, tell me about that. Like, what are you doing? But I think it is, this is both descriptive.

[23 : 40] It's telling us, this is, Jesus knows this is the plan of God. It's about to move on to be Paul's missionary journeys. And then the gospel will spread around the world. So he's telling us what he knows is going to happen.

But it's also, it's telling us what we should be getting in on. He's saying, come on, do this with me. It's not written in the stars. It's actually changed in your heart.

And you're placed. And you're given people around you. So the big picture is it starts local. And then it does, it spreads. In fact, it spreads, we see there, to Samaria.

Which, as I said before, if you were hearing this, when Jesus spoke this word, the people around you would certainly think, or some of them would think, that Samaritans were half-breeds or outcasts or religious compromisers.

So it doesn't just start with proximity, people we're comfortable with. The gospel spreads to the difficult and the downtrodden and those who are really different to us.

[24 : 42] And depending on your leaning, you might be happier with the big mission of God being right close and personal in your life. Or some of us, we're probably a bit more happy if it's at a distance and we're paying someone else to go to some unknown people over there.

It seems to be both and. The Lord's plan is that, and we've seen it, that the gospel is spread from the small and the local to the regions where other people wouldn't dare to have gone.

The gospel challenges us. But that's his plan. It's going to go to the bits we can't yet imagine. The bits we're less comfortable with. The people like us. And the people not like us.

And then he says this, And to the end of the earth. Jesus plans for everyone in the whole world to have a chance to hear the good news about Jesus and put their hope in him.

And Mike's painted a great picture of how we've seen that happen so far. But every generation again, in every area of the world, needs that invitation to find hope, to know him.

[25 : 44] And, you know, this looks like the end of the earth. It looked like Paul's sending to Greece and Turkey. It looked like the early church, eventually the gospel eventually reaching Rome. It looks like for us, we're a church in a family of churches.

It looks like for us, a church in the north of Edinburgh. The gospel's been shared there before. But again, generation after generation, people need to hear. And we see that in the Newton St.

Boswell's church plant from the Borders Church, Hope Church, that we're also in family with.

As we work for every person, in every group, in every language, ultimately to hear the good news of Jesus. My neighbours, your neighbours, your workplaces, the people around this building.

But also the places we can't even imagine. I do wonder, I was thinking, actually Mike and I have clearly been thinking about some, well, we've been preparing for this, some similar things. So I was thinking, if each of us shared the gospel with two people who went on to follow Jesus every ten years.

I don't know how that sounds to you. Like, if that sounds, how that sounds. But it's two people. So let's say the building merchant guy goes on to follow Jesus and then he tells other people about Jesus.

[26 : 57] And let's say Tom will dry a guy, he goes on to, and those are the only people I share about Jesus within ten years. The interesting thing is, if I were to live for 40 years, and quite frankly it's not happening, but that's how I worked out the maths, optimistically, okay?

If I were to live for another 40 years, then I told two people every ten years, they told two people every ten years. Does anyone want to guess how many people in four years' time? A random guess, I know that's a really quick maths, isn't it? So every ten years, I tell two people the gospel and they go on to put their hope in Jesus and do the same thing. Okay, hands up if you think 50 people would know.

Judy's like, Gordon, maths, what have you done to me? Okay, I'll move on, I'll move on. You all look terrified. It's going to make sharing the gospel much easier, isn't it? If you, like, I won't inflict maths on you if you're going to tell people about Jesus.

How about that? Okay, 140 people from me sharing with two people every ten years. I mean, I picked ten years because I reckon you'll probably get more opportunities than that, right?

[27 : 58] So if we then say, well, ten of us did that, that's 1,400 people living a life of hope with Jesus. And some of them are going to go places.

Some of them are going to go to other parts of the world. And the ends of the earth suddenly doesn't seem so impossible when you think, is he asking me to share with a couple of people, to witness, to just say, this is why I have hope.

I mean, the Holy Spirit does a lot of the rest, right? Discipleship takes a lot of investment, but the Holy Spirit is at work. I just want to encourage you. The ends of the earth, totally impossible for us. But not for the Holy Spirit when we just do our bit of that. Now, if you check my maths and you think I'm wrong, I'm pretty certain I'm right. Come back and challenge me. I think that's quite encouraging. Here's two things that I think the end of the earth tells us, and I need to speed up. I'll finish on these. I think Jesus is saying and reminding us the gospel is for everyone. Like the ends of the earth, the bits we don't yet know, the people we don't understand.

[29 : 00] It's for everyone. And we see that started with Abraham, the promise to Abraham in Genesis 12. That was always God's plan. He first created a people for himself and he said to them, through you, all nations will be blessed.

All. His grand plan and the one we're a part of when we meet here, when we seek him, when we continue to grow, as Luke said we are. And we see it, you know, when we grow in depth with him. We're joining in that massive plan that everyone should get the chance to put their hope in Jesus and live a life after him. And to fulfill that promise that he first gave to Abraham, through you, all nations will be blessed.

He's calling us to be caught up in his massive, massive plan of sharing hope with the world and calling them to follow him. And that work isn't finished.

It's going to be ongoing until the day each of us dies. And, you know, until Jesus finally returns, that work is unfinished. And he calls us to it and he says, come on, get in, get involved.

[30 : 03] It's both descriptive. Here's what I'm doing. It's a bit prescriptive for us. He's saying, come on. I want you to share with your neighbours. I want you to invite people that have put you alongside.

I want you in some way to be involved in the people we don't yet know. And through the Holy Spirit, the ends of the earth are the limit. We've purposely done this, that that sounds quite theoretical at the moment, I guess, in some ways.

And so for the next few minutes, we're going to each of us just share on a few of the things that we think this looks like over this coming kind of season for us. And kind of nuts and bolts. What does it look like? But before we do that, just to go right back to the beginning, our hope really is that this isn't a kind of to-do list.

Okay. They're saying, let's reach two people in 10 years. I mean, hey, the Holy Spirit's at work. Let's join them. But really, it's a picture of what the Lord is doing and welcoming you to.

It's not another thing to put on your back, another load of things to do on your to-do list. It's an invitation for us to continue to be, hopefully, as every Bible-believing church before us has been caught up in what the Lord is doing.

[31 : 13] That big trajectory of the end of the earth hearing the gospel. So, Mike, you're coming up next, aren't you? Let's hear some practicalities for us, the church.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Another quick thing. I don't know. I loved hearing Gordon's stories of these conversations he's been having. Kingdom conversations. You might have had conversations like that recently. But when I

hear about conversations, I get really excited and I get really nervous because they're a bit terrifying, aren't they?

They're exciting because God's at work, but they are also a bit terrifying. And one thing we'd love to do as a church is on Sundays in the new year, and I think in home groups too, is to really look at kingdom conversations in the Bible.

[32 : 54] You know, the conversations that Jesus had, the conversations that Paul had, other characters too. How did they share the good news? What actually happened when they spoke to people? And I think we'll find that there's all sorts of different things happened.

It doesn't look like one thing. It looks like many different ways of sharing the gospel. I think that's good news for me. It's good news for you because actually it means all of us can be part of that. So if you're thinking, ooh, I'm a bit scared, we're going to be looking at that in the Bible, learning from Jesus.

How did he do it? And I think it's going to be really important for us as we seek to do that with the people around us. Gordon's just going to finish off for us. And it comes to putting roots down here that Mike's described and creating opportunities for us to invite people along, like the quiz night, which I know loads of you are coming along to.

It's going to be a brilliant night, I think. And then exploring what those kingdom conversations look like. But another one, the road ahead, looks like this. It looks like us inviting, maybe challenging one another to be a people who worship in giving.

And because as an act of trust, sorry, and an act of sacrifice, of one saying, I'm all in with you, Jesus, and what you're doing with our church family. And also along with that, it covers kind of how we run as a church in terms of running things like Messy Church or things like quiz nights, employing our staff team.

[34 : 19] And also, if I'm really honest with you, the building here is just going to cost us more money. Like we pay almost nothing to be here at the moment. I mean, like honestly, you can't get an office for what we pay to meet in the building at the moment.

So we are going to invite you to sacrificially consider your giving. I know many of us give very generously already. But one of the things is to say, well, what does that look like for you?

So you'll see an invitation from us, whether you're already a giver or from the first time, to consider sacrificially giving again and continuing to do so towards all that God's called us to.

So at the moment, I'm just asking you to have a prayer about that. Seek the Lord on it and say, Lord, what do you want me to do about my giving? We'll get in touch with you as elders in the coming weeks to chat with or to let you know what's happening about that.

Okay. Here's what I'd like us to do just before we finish. I'm going to pray for us. And we're going to ask the Lord to help us continue to be caught up in all that he's doing. Let's pray, shall we?

[35 : 29] Father, what a promise. You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes. You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth.

Father, I'm so glad you met with us in these messages of hope at the start of this meeting.

Because, man, that's big. But our hope is in you.

And we take a moment to declare that in our hearts. You are our hope. This is your plan. Father, we choose to be with you in that.

We ask you to help us in that. We ask you to use us in kingdom conversations, in where you've placed us, even to the ends of the earth. Father, fill us with your spirit.

Help us look to you. And I do pray you keep helping us see the massive, massive story we're a part of. What a joy it is to be your people.

[36 : 38] And for you to choose to bless others through us. Use us, Lord. In Jesus' name, amen.