

Sent | Continuing Jesus' Mission in the World

The Way – this was the name of the movement that became “Christianity.” The Big Story of the Bible is a story of people on a journey. God called Abraham – Jesus called his disciples – and the apostles called Jews and Gentiles to follow a Risen Lord. These first believers in Jerusalem knew that they were sent by Jesus to continue his mission in the world. All this spring we will continue this journey and this mission of witnessing to the Good News in word and action on the way...

This Week Along the Way | Jerusalem to Antioch



More about Jerusalem

The movement called “The Way” began in Jerusalem on Pentecost when thousands of Jewish pilgrims were gathered in the city to observe the Festival of Weeks. Jerusalem was not only the largest city in Palestine (some estimate the population as 100,000 or more – which of course swelled during major religious festivals) but also described by the Roman naturalist Pliny the Elder as “the most famous city in the East, not just in Judea”. King Herod, who reigned from 37-4 B.C.E. had created the largest temple complex in the Roman world when he renovated the temple. This Second Temple is the one that Jesus said he could replace in 3 days – and it is the temple destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE at the end of the Great Revolt. (The “wailing wall” in contemporary Jerusalem is what remains of the Second Temple.) The Second Temple was not the only impressive building in Rome. Josephus reports that Herod the Great built a theater in the city and an amphitheater ‘on the plain’. There was even a hippodrome by the 60’s CE! What would not have been found, however, were statues of emperors or deities or the temples to various gods that were commonplace in other cities throughout the Roman Empire.

The temple features prominently in the early stories of Acts. The first believers still worshiped at the temple together (Acts 2:46). Peter and John healed on temple grounds (Acts 3-4) and preached in the temple (Acts 5). The story of Acts moves pretty quickly away from the temple and Jerusalem at the center, however, out into the whole world. Jesus told his disciples to expect this – that they would be sent as witnesses from Jerusalem to Judea, Samaria and the whole world (Acts 1:8). It’s a pretty great description of what the prophet Isaiah had described generations earlier as the word of the Lord going out from Jerusalem to the nations (Isaiah 2:3).

Readings for the Week of April 4

This week’s readings in Acts follow that progression, taking us from Jerusalem up to Antioch – the city where the followers of the way of Jesus were first called “Christians.”

Why?

Because Jews and Greeks worshiped together – and this person called “the Christ” seemed to be the only explanation for this happening (Acts 11:26).

Next Sunday we pick up the controversy this multiethnic mission caused in Acts 15 & Paul’s letter to the Galatians. This week, though, let’s hit the road with the early believers!

Monday | Acts 3-4

Tuesday | Acts 5-6

Wednesday | Acts 7-9

Thursday | Acts 10-12

Friday | Acts 13-14

Saturday | Acts 15

The first generation of believers met in homes. Their gatherings included **welcome, worship, the word and witness** (their mission focus!).

Our guides this sermon series offer a pattern you may want to try this spring when you gather in Connect Groups or as Spiritual Friends.

WELCOME

- 15 minutes
- Ice Breaker/Opening question

WORSHIP

- 20 minutes
- Enter the Presence of Jesus through worship, reading a Psalm or prayer with and for each other

WORD

- 40 minutes
- Discussion of the Bible text and sermon

WITNESS

- 15 minutes
- Mission focus: witnessing to the good news in word and action

Connect Groups and Spiritual Friends

WELCOME (15 minutes)

What sort of a traveler are you? Here's some descriptions to get you started...

Local... National...
International...

Pleasure... with a purpose...
only for work...

People focused...
destination focused...

Cities... Beaches...
Roadtrips... Cruises...

Yeah, I don't really travel!

Any news to share on things that we have been praying for each other?

WORSHIP (20 minutes)

It may take some trial and error to work out how to worship as a group, especially over Zoom. Each week we'll make a suggestion for ways to gather together into Jesus' presence.

For this first week in the Easter season here are a few ideas for your group:

- Share screen with a YouTube video for a worship song (be sure that you check the box "share computer sound" –as host you'll want to sing in your heart or everyone hears you ;-)!)
- [HERE](#) is a Living Room worship video that is very inviting.
- Share an Easter Expression of faith from Acts 2:22-29 found [HERE](#).

*We believe in Jesus of Nazareth,
shown to be from God by his signs and power,
handed over to us in the plan of God,
crucified by our sinful hands.*

*We believe in Jesus Christ,
raised by God from the dead,
freeing him from death's power:
for death could not hold him.*

*We believe in Jesus the Exalted,
ascended to the right hand of God,
who received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit,
and has poured this Spirit on his people.*

*We believe, we repent,
we receive God's forgiveness.
We believe, we rejoice,
we receive God's Holy Spirit. Amen.*

- Pray together for one another in follow up to the welcome question.

WORD (40 minutes)

These questions will be the same each week.

Read aloud Acts 2:21-39

What strikes you in what the passage says?

What struck you in the sermon on this passage?

Where does this passage apply to your life right now?

What is a faithful response to this passage this week?

WITNESS (15 minutes)

This week our focus is on Peter's words "for you and for your children." Most of us at West Side don't have children living in our home anymore. Many of us are single. Some of us still long to have children. All of us remember what it was like to be a child and know how important our families were to who we are and who Jesus is transforming us to be.

Families are central to our mission at West Side because Jesus made children central to his ministry. We don't have to be raising children ourselves to recognize how inhospitable cities can be to families – and we can all sympathize with what a huge challenge parents have faced during this pandemic!

So our **Mission Focus** this week is families. How do we witness to the special focus that Jesus gave to children? How do we encourage and communicate to parents raising their children in our city that the good news is "for you and for your children"? Here are some questions to discuss as a Connect Group:

- If you don't have children at home do you have one family that you know (and to whom you are not related) that you can be praying for / encouraging / connecting to this week? How?
- If you have children at home do you have another person or couple without children who are important / included in your life and the lives of your kids? Pray for the gift of another adult or couple that encourages and invests in you.
- This summer our backyard VBS has places for your family to invite another family's kids to participate as a way to witness to the good news that Jesus is "for you and your children." Connect with Stacy Kutz (stacy@wspc.org) to learn how to extend this invitation.
- As a Connect Group, if you do not have a common mission perhaps discuss partnering in one of our ministries to families (Young Life // Young Lives // Olive Crest // Host & prayer team for a summer backyard VBS // Highland Park & City Serve) You can find more information on these [mission partnerships](#) on our website (and more information will be added as we get closer to summer).