

Acts- Church Afire!
“The Empowering Holy Spirit, Acts 1:1-11”
By Rev. Paul Hudson
Sermon Summary & 5-Day Devotional Jan. 25th, 2026

Sermon Summary

As we begin the series “Church Afire!” I invited us to sit in Acts 1:1–11 and let Scripture reshape how we live as a people set ablaze for Jesus. I reminded everyone that God chooses to work through individuals—Luke wrote to one named Theophilus, whose name means “beloved of God,” and that name becomes our starting place: each of us is loved and belongs. That identity removes the strain of proving worth and reorients passion, so it burns for the right reasons, not out of legalism, coercion, or performance.

I walked through how the risen Christ proved himself alive to his followers over forty days, not to satisfy curiosity but to awaken the kingdom within them. Jesus didn’t send a timetable about when everything would be fixed; he gave a promise and a power: the Holy Spirit. The command to “wait in Jerusalem” isn’t an exercise in passivity; it’s an invitation to receive power that changes how we live now. The Spirit clothes us with power from on high—power sufficient for testimony, healing, courage, and kingdom work today, whatever tomorrow holds.

I stressed that obsession with timelines and “when?” questions can trap us into paralysis. The better question is not when God will act in the fullest sense, but whether we will receive the Spirit’s present power and allow it to shape our witness. The ascension scene ends with two angels urging the disciples to stop gazing up and to get to work: the same Jesus who ascended will return, but in the meantime his people are called to be living proof of his resurrection.

For those whose flames need rekindling—whether because of wounds, disappointment, or long seasons of dryness—this is a pastoral word of hope: God can bind, restore, and relight. The Spirit’s work often follows the slow work of healing, turning scars into stories that fuel compassion and witness. If we live from the conviction that we are beloved, and we receive the Spirit’s power now, the church becomes a radiant, resilient presence that points the world to the living King.

Key Takeaways

- You are the beloved of God

When identity is shaped by being beloved, performance-driven faith loses its grip. Resting in that belonging frees passion from fear and pride, so zeal flows from delight rather than duty. Belovedness is the soil in which authentic witness grows.

- Receive the Spirit’s power now

The promise of the Spirit is present-tense help, not merely a future hope. Power given now reshapes our decisions, courage, and compassion, enabling faithful work in the ordinary and broken places of life. Waiting is not inactivity when it results in being clothed with God’s strength.

- Passion rooted in beloved identity

When zeal springs from identity, it resists distortion into self-serving fire. Such passion pursues God’s kingdom—justice, mercy, and truth—without needing applause or dominance. It refines motive and sustains obedience even amid suffering.

- Stop staring; become a living witness

Fixation on timetables keeps us immobilized; action rooted in Spirit-lit conviction moves the church into mission. A living witness is transformed life lived before neighbors, workplaces, and families, testifying to Jesus by presence and deed. Our task now is to show, not merely to speculate.

5 Day Devotional Based on the Sermon

Day 1: Igniting Passion: The Church Afire for Christ

The vision for God's people is to be set ablaze with a fervent passion for Jesus. This isn't about a building, but about individuals radiating a warm, inviting glow that can melt cold hearts and dissolve disbelief in the community. When the Lord lights His people on fire, the church becomes a beacon, inspiring deep-seated faith, confident hope, and empowering love. This divine fire cultivates an unshakable belief in the God of the impossible, transforming lives and communities. It is a call to move beyond merely going through the motions of faith.

Acts 1:1-2

Luke wrote his first book, which told the story of all that Jesus began to do and teach, right up until the day He was taken up to heaven. Before His ascension, Jesus gave specific instructions to the apostles He had chosen, guiding them through the Holy Spirit.

Reflection: Reflect on your current spiritual journey. What aspects of your life feel lukewarm, and how might you invite the Holy Spirit to rekindle a fervent passion for Christ in those areas this week?

Day 2: Beloved of God: The Foundation of Passion

Before true passion for Christ can ignite, it's essential to grasp your identity as the beloved of God. This profound truth liberates you from the burden of striving to prove your worth or earn your place. You are not addressed as a sinner, but as one deeply loved by God, just as Theophilus was. Resting in this identity allows your passion to be pure and rightly directed, releasing you from the need to prove anything to the world. This truth keeps you aligned with Christ's heart, knowing you belong to Him and are worthy of His power working in and through you.

Acts 1:1-3

In his first account, the writer addressed Theophilus, explaining all that Jesus began to do and teach until He was taken into heaven. After His suffering, Jesus showed Himself to His followers with many clear proofs that He was alive, appearing to them over forty days and speaking about God's kingdom.

Reflection: In what specific ways does knowing you are "beloved of God" challenge any lingering feelings of shame or the need to prove your worth, and how can you actively embrace this truth today?

Day 3: Christ Proves He Is Alive

As the beloved of God, you are not tasked with proving Jesus' resurrection; the burden of proof rests entirely on Christ Himself. Just as He presented many convincing proofs to His early followers after His suffering, He continues to demonstrate His living presence today. He will first prove to you that He is alive, and then He will prove it through you, through your transformed life. This isn't merely about acknowledging His existence but understanding that His resurrection's purpose is the vibrant spread of the kingdom of God, which resides within you.

Acts 1:3-5

After His suffering, Jesus showed Himself to His followers with many clear proofs that He was alive. He appeared to them over forty days, speaking about God's kingdom. While eating with them, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem but to wait for the Father's promised gift, which He had spoken of. He said John baptized with water, but soon they would be baptized

5 Day Devotional Based on the Sermon

with the Holy Spirit.

Reflection: Where have you recently experienced a personal "convincing proof" that Jesus is alive and active in your life, and how might sharing that experience encourage someone else?

Day 4: Receive Holy Spirit Power Now, Not Tomorrow

It is natural to wonder about the future, to ask "when" God will act in our circumstances—when healing will come, when problems will resolve, when freedom will arrive. However, Jesus redirects our focus from knowing future times and dates to receiving the present reality of the Holy Spirit's power. This power is not for tomorrow's worries, but for today's burdens. The Spirit's presence and empowerment are a gift for you to know and receive right now, a greater assurance than any knowledge about what lies ahead.

Acts 1:6-8

The disciples asked Jesus if He was going to restore Israel's kingdom at that time. He replied that it was not for them to know the times or dates the Father had set by His own authority. Instead, He told them, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the farthest corners of the earth."

Reflection: What specific "when" question have you been caught in an endless prayer loop about, and what would it look like to shift your focus today to receiving the Holy Spirit's power for your present circumstances instead?

Day 5: Empowered to Be Living Witnesses

Jesus ascended to heaven, but He did not abandon His mission or His people. Instead, He sent the Holy Spirit to continue His work in and through believers. We are clothed with power from on high, not to passively gaze into the heavens, but to actively step into the world. This divine empowerment transforms us into living testimonies, witnesses to the truth that Jesus is alive. The church afire doesn't stand idly by but boldly testifies of Jesus through lives transformed by His power, reaching a lost and broken world.

Acts 1:8-11

Jesus declared, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the farthest corners of the earth." After saying this, He was lifted up before their eyes and a cloud hid Him. As they stared intently into the sky, two men in white robes appeared, asking, "Why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who was taken from you into heaven, will return in the same way you saw Him go."

Reflection: Considering the call to be a "living witness," what is one concrete, practical step you can take this week to demonstrate Jesus' active presence in your life to someone in your immediate sphere of influence?