



Acts 1:1-8

Acts 4:23-31

If you were here last week you will remember that we had a little bit of a Star Trek theme as we considered a phrase “the undiscovered country”. Perhaps the most iconic phrase that came from Star Trek is the one behind me – “To boldly go – where no-one has gone before”.

I was actually going to give you another installment of Joshua this week, but as I was preparing I was directed to this world “bold”. It’s a word that is used in various forms – bold, boldly, boldness – quite a few times, but none more often than in the Acts of the Apostles.

Are you bold? Bold as in.....? Soap (slide of Bold washing powder)? I hope not. God I believe wants us to be bold and be strong as we go forward in Him, not all foam.

So what is bold like then? Like this?

Our story takes us to the city of Metropolis, a typical industrial city in the heartland of our great country. The young people were out of control but the hard pressed authorities knew they couldn’t cope. The police service was overwhelmed, social services understaffed and the youth service underfunded. What could be done? The Mayor held an emergency meeting with the Commissioner of Police, the Head of Social Services and a trendy bloke called Spike from the Youth Centre. It was a heated meeting as they discussed resources, manpower, funding but to no avail – there was nothing they could do with their wayward youth. Despair was setting in. The Mayor stood up and said “Friends, we have no other alternative. We must call him. We have no choice.” He opened a cupboard and brought out a bright red phone that lit up when he picked up the receiver. He pressed the button and waited for an answer,

Over in the suburb of Pleasantville, it was a routine afternoon for the Reverend Rock Solid. He was chairing a meeting of the Women’s Bright Hour at the Pleasantville Baptist Church. Mrs Smith was in full flight, discussing the arrangements for the Best Victoria Sponge Competition at the Spring Bazaar whilst the Reverend gently slumbered with his eyes open. Suddenly he sat bolt upright. His mobile had started vibrating. An urgent call was coming in. “Excuse me ladies, I have realised that there is an urgent pastoral matter I must attend to.” The ladies smiled to one another. Dear old reverend, his absent-mindedness was a source of mirth. He was always doing things like that. But it was part of his charm.

Leaving the church the Reverend Rock Solid, quickly took his call. “Mr Mayor, I will be right with you!” Diving into the nearest phone box, there was a blur and out of the box came a masked crusader wearing a red cloak and his pants on the outside. Grabbing his super-amplified Bible, the figure dashed into the air and streaked away towards City Hall. People looked up as the blue and red figure streaked through the sky. Was it a bird? Was it a plane? No, it was Super Christian!

Walking down the street was Christian sap, Elmer Crud, who had worked late and was going to miss his house group. He looked up and saw this marvelous sight as the caped crusader streaked away. He

then hung his head and looked down at the pavement and said "Gosh Super Christian, I wish I was like you"

Gosh, Super Christian, I wish I was like you. I hope not. That little monologue was full of really bad stereotypes – the Mayor in his 10 gallon hat, the Police Chief (that one was Chief Sours from Seattle Police), the fag smoking, beer swilling social worker, and the youth worker with his mohican. And then there is Super Christian. We all associate Super Christian with a super-spiritual person who we feel we ought to be as Christians, able to deal with any spiritual situation, always be there for God and for others, a person who knows his or her Bible, a great pray-er and a marvellous soul winner. And we say Gosh, Super-Christian, I wish I were like you.

Let me let you into a secret – Super-Christian does not exist. All we have is Christianity for the rest of us. It's messy. We have conflicts of time, conflicts of faith, conflicts of morality and the whole idea of telling anybody else about Jesus is... Well put it this way. I gave you Acts 1:8 for a reason. Let me remind you what it said *you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.* And we look at that and go Aargh! But that is a statement of Jesus made to the disciples and I believe it is one that still applies. You *will* be His witnesses in Walton, Felixstowe, Suffolk and to the ends of the earth. Our forefathers in the church over 200 years were and now it's our turn if we haven't already realised that. Does that fill you with hope or fear. You shall be My witnesses – that's all of us. "But I'm not an evangelist" Jesus didn't say, you'll be My evangelists. He said you will be My witnesses. And we look or feel a bit like that.

Now let's look at the disciples. I'd say they were pretty ineffective people up to Pentecost. They scarpered when Jesus was arrested. Even when He was risen, they maintained a low profile. Now let's look at Acts 1:8 in its entirety as the observant amongst you will find that I left a bit out *8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

And what Jesus said came true. This band of people, once empowered by the Spirit had the words bold and boldness written all over them – and so did the people whose lives they touched. Suddenly bold came into fashion big-time.

What is it about Holy Spirit boldness that was so life-changing? Interestingly the Greek word for boldness can also be translated as confidence. Our confidence in God makes us bold.

I believe in 2008, our God wants by His Spirit to bring boldness to Maidstone Road big-time. The passage in Acts 4 brings out three forms of boldness, which reflected the power of the Spirit and that confidence the Spirit brought them.

- The spoke boldly to God

Look at what they had the nerve to say to God: *24 When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. "Sovereign Lord," they said, "you made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. 25 You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David: "Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? 26 The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his Anointed One.' 27 Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. 28 They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. 29 Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness . 30 Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus."*

If you were here last Sunday evening this is a great example of praying promises. They start off reminding God about all the things that happened in the past and finish off with the request of – now let's show 'em. And you bet that's exactly what God did. You are a child of God. Be ready to ask God to do through you that which you are totally incapable of. You have the same call as the apostles so you are entitled to pray for the same boldness and to ask for signs and wonders to accompany what you have to say. If you don't ask you don't get.

You may be saying “I can’t do that – I’m only ordinary. I’ve got this issue and that issue. This problem and that problem. I’ve no right to pray that sort of promise. Yes you have . And do you want to know why – because of that (the communion table). Listen to this verse: *Since therefore, brethren, we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh (NASB).* The word confidence is translated (correctly) in older translations: *9 Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus, 20 by the way which he dedicated for us, a new and living way, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh(ASV)*

We can boldly enter into the throne room of God by the shed blood of Christ. Your sin is dealt with. You are a child of God. Now live like one and ask like one!

- They spoke boldly to one another

On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. 24 When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God.

How can we be bold? Because God doesn’t expect us to face the world alone. We know we have His Spirit, but we also had one another. Peter and John didn’t just go home and talk to one another about their experience. They went back to the church and they encouraged one another and prayed together. Do we want to be bold? Then encourage one another to be bold. You may look at the whole idea of reaching out to people who don’t know Jesus, of admitting you’re a Christian, about speaking to someone about Jesus as something that’s difficult and you don’t feel bold. Then lean on one another and on those who don’t find it a problem – and find strength in that. In Woodberry Down I helped train people to share their faith. Two people I trained were middle aged ladies, Mercel and Yvonne. They had a real passion for Jesus, but just froze when they tried to speak to anyone about Jesus. They found the encouragement of one another vital and because they supported one another, they got really rather good at it and people responded well to them because they were friendly and motherly. In fact both retired to Chesterfield and have a ministry to unmarried mums. Why? Because they realised that God gives us one another to enable us to walk more effectively in Holy Spirit boldness.

- The spoke boldly to those they met

Last but not least: *After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.* They prayed – God responded and they spoke boldly – and the church continued to grow.

In the end, the bottom line is that we, the church, the people of God are the means by which people find a living relationship with the living God. Jesus didn’t command angels to speak His word to people. He didn’t say send leaflets to people. His last words to his disciples were – you will be my witnesses. The previous set of words are in Matthew – the Great Commission.

Why are those the last words? because that’s the mission of His disciples and therefore the mission of the church. It was then and is now.

So who has given the task to be witnesses and make disciples. You have – and I have. We are witnesses by our lives. We are witnesses by our works. How will people know that Jesus lives? Because they see Him in us.

Let’s pray. Be bold, be strong. For the Lord our God is with you.