

Acts: To the End of the Earth

Part 2-Acts 1:12-20,

9/27/2020

Last week, we launched our new series called *'To the End of the Earth'*, and if you didn't get a chance to listen to it, please do so and get caught up with the series

I talked with one of our many school teachers last week, who teaches 11th grade history. She has to teach the curriculum which includes the creation myth of the Iroquois Indians. She asked her class how many had heard of the biblical creation story with Adam and Eve, and out of all her students, 4 of them raised a hand.

Church, the need for people to hear of Jesus Christ is literally all around you.

In our country of 328 million people, there are 85 unreached people groups, meaning there are groups of people with no Christian community among them able witnessing of Jesus.

Did you ever hear that Americans spend more money on halloween costumes for pets than ministries that bring the good news of Jesus Christ to unreached peoples?

In fact 1 dollar of every \$100,000 Americans earn goes to these vital and needed ministries.

Church, are you ready to reorient your lives in order to be witnesses of Jesus Christ?

We return to **Acts 1** where we look again at the mission Jesus gave us: ***"you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*** **1:8**

We begin with **Acts 1:4**, where the resurrected Jesus was staying with the disciples, and He ***'ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father'***

Let's settle on that word ***'wait'*** for a bit, because in our culture, no one likes to wait.

Wait conjures images of being stuck at a stoplight when you are in a hurry, or an ER visit.

Wait is the agonizing 30 more days until your wedding, or the month before your baby's birth.

Wait is the hour to go before you can pass off your screaming toddler to your spouse who is on the way home from work.

None of these are pleasant, but here we have the disciples, told by Jesus to go back to the city, and ***'wait for the promise of the Father'*** **1:4**

Christian, did you know that there is nearly always a period of waiting between God's *promise* and God's *provision*?

That time of *waiting* is God's *preparation* for us.

Let me say it again so there is no possibility of me being unclear: *God's promise leads to God's provision, but not until after God's preparation*

My Father is giving you the Spirit, so that you can be My witnesses, now you must get ready.

I've seen couples in love skip marriage preparation and marry too soon or unwisely.

I've seen people sense a call to ministry, and plunge ahead without being made ready and trained.

Yet how common for a boss to create a plan for an employee to move into management, but to take months, even years to get the person trained and prepared for more responsibility.

40 days resurrected Jesus had been with them (**1:3**), a biblical number for training and instruction.

And now He tells them to go back to Jerusalem and wait for the promise to be provided.

What the disciples did provides us several helpful insights to our own times of waiting.

1-If we are to witness well of Christ, we must learn to trust and obey

Again, **1:3** tells us Jesus was with them 40 days, and at the end of that time, ***"He ordered***

them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait...” 1:4

‘ordered’, commanded them to wait

1:12-13 tells us what they did: ***“They returned to Jerusalem...and when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying.”***

He didn’t tell them how long to wait, which would have helped, and which He could have done
But this was preparation, they must learn to trust and obey God, even when they lack the details
It would be 10 days they would wait, until the Day of Pentecost

The time between the promise and provision is full of opportunity to learn patience, trust, and obedience, crucial characteristics of a witness of Christ

Imagine the Holy Spirit directing you to go to a person in your school, or workplace, to share the message of forgiveness in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, and you say no?

Imagine that God clearly calls you to leave your career and comfort and careful plans to serve Him in an entirely different place...how would you respond?

When the Spirit gives us an opportunity to tell of Jesus to your classmate, your coworker, a family member or neighbor, will we take it?

A year ago I went on a motorcycle trip with two guys who are not believers, praying that God would give me an opportunity to speak to them and you know what...He did!

With one of them I shared the gospel with him after, unbelievably, he asked me to

With the other, I invited him into a weekly bible study and he agreed!

When the Spirit gave me the opportunities, I had a choice, would I testify or not?

Trustful obedience to the Spirit’s call is critical if we are to be effective witnesses of Jesus

2-If we are to witness effectively of Christ, we must be often in prayer

“All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer” 1:14

Prayer is, for most of us, our achilles heel...let’s just humbly admit it

We miss opportunities the Spirit gives us because we are more focused inward than upward

We are often afraid, selfish, busy, apathetic, lacking confidence to say anything

Yet we share parenting advice, political opinions, insight into fitness and wellness, and somehow ground to a halt with the gospel

Could it be that beyond the fear and lack of confidence, we truly lack conviction and love?

But prayer is how God opens our eyes, emboldening and preparing us to share the gospel

Continual prayer constantly re-focuses us on the kingdom of God, enabling us to see that His will in heaven is being done on earth, right in our midst

If you learn to spend time with God in prayer, you will more easily *see* the opportunities He is giving you to tell others of Jesus

Friends, if you are in a season of time between the promise and the provision, don’t waste it by avoiding the preparation...pray

3. If we are to be effective witnesses of Christ, we must be in community

“All these with one accord...together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and His brothers.” 1:14

They were praying together in unity

Let me just say it right now...a church that lacks unity lacks the power of their witness

That's as true with our marriages and our families as it with the Board of our church
 We, the people of God, must be together in unity, reflected in Christian community
 It never ceases to amaze me that some think Christian community is optional in their
 spiritual life, that they don't need the church to walk with God
 That is like a race car driver saying they don't need a team to win the Daytona 500

If you want to effectively serve Jesus as His witness, be deeply involved in Christian community
1:15 tells us 120 men and women were together, praying, in one accord
 Prayer is powerfully critical for our witness and we see that in the ministry of the Apostle Paul
 He asked the church at Ephesus, ***“pray for me, too. Ask God to give me the right words so I can
 boldly explain God’s mysterious plan that the Good News is...pray that I will keep on
 speaking boldly for him, as I should.”*** Ephesians 6:19-20
 He asked the church at Colossae, ***“pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the
 word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison—that I may
 make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.”*** Colossians 4:2-4
 Do you see the power of being in a church, a growth group of Christians, who will pray for you
 to have the right words and boldness to speak for Jesus, exactly what a witness does?

4-Finally, an effective witness of Christ studies God’s Word

Two things go together in the Christian life: *prayer and study of God’s Word*
 The disciples must have remembered that Jesus said He ***‘will sit on His glorious throne, you
 who have followed Me will sit on twelve thrones’*** Matthew 19:28
 So Peter stood up in the gathering, and quoted **Psalm 109:8**, a prophecy about Judas, the one
 who betrayed Jesus: ***“May his days be few; may another take his place of leadership.”***
 This community of believers studied the scriptures, and none of them were rabbis, or scholars
 If you are responding in this series with a sudden and greater desire to be used by God to lead
 people to Christ in salvation, then you must get serious about bible study
 Again, get into a Growth group, with other believers, praying together, studying together

The Father’s promise was the Holy Spirit, and the provision would come as they would be
‘clothed with power from on high’ (Luke 24:49), given power to be witnesses of Jesus
 Yet the time between the promise and provision is always the preparation
 They had to learn the need for obedience, prayer, community and bible study

It is no different for us today as it is now our turn to testify of Jesus in our generation
 Imagine our church multiplying and growing because each of us are testifying of Jesus and the
 unsaved are receiving life, and joining us in the work of being Christ’s witnesses to the
 end of the earth!
 A church full of obedient, praying, unified, scripture-knowing Christians is a church where the
 Spirit is constantly giving opportunities to witness what Jesus Christ has done to give life
 I want us to be that church...Amen?
 Pray