

UNSTOPPABLE

Acts 1:1-12

Good morning RCM. It is so very good to be with each of you – for those that are joining us in person – so very glad that you are here and with us.

For those that are watching online through FB Live – again we are very glad to have the technology to have you connected with us at least through technology. I do want to encourage those that are watching online – to prayerfully consider at what point you plan to return in person – as great as it is to be able to connect through Facebook, it will never replace the gathering together as a family of God to worship through singing, praying, preaching, and taking of the Lord's Supper. A computer, TV or phone will never and can never replace the physical gathering of the church, which I believe is an essential activity for God's church. So that's my encouragement to you, specifically the online crowd – **prayerfully** consider at what point you will return to worship with the family of God.

This morning we start about a 6-month series through the book of Acts. We will take 1 chapter per week, for 28 weeks and work through this book together – similar to how we worked through the Gospel of John. I am encouraging everyone at RCM to read all of chapter 1 in Acts this week. Maybe even several times throughout the week – read the whole chapter. And later in the week, jump into one of our small groups that will discuss the chapter each week.

When I read the book of Acts – the word that overwhelms me is the word UNSTOPPABLE. The book of Acts is the story of God's Unstoppable Gospel, the Unstoppable Power of the Holy Spirit, the Unstoppable nature of the Church. So for the next 6 months we'll be seeing the unstoppable Gospel, Spirit and Church – how the Gospel spreads in like 30 years from a small group of misfits; a tax collector, a couple of fishermen, a Pharisee; how the Gospel spreads from a handful to millions of people.

As we look at this book, and take an extended period of time to walk through it 1 chapter at a time – couple of things we need to keep in mind. This is a story that unfolds over 30+ years. It's a narrative story, historical fact, of the Unstoppable nature of the Gospel, Spirit and Mission of the Church. It's important to keep in mind – not everything we read in the book of Acts happens still today – there is a difference between "DESCRIBING" what happened and "PRESCRIBING" what should happen. Said another way, some things are descriptive and other things are prescriptive.

But what we will see, in the next 6 months, we will see this incredible transformation of people that were running scared after Jesus's crucifixion to men boldly proclaiming the truth of Jesus as Messiah at the cost of their lives.

- We will see how, when a group of people, committed to the Word of God, committed to the Ministry of Prayer, empowered by the Holy Spirit turned the world upside down.
- We will see how churches handle conflict, and raise new leaders so that the church is able to maintain the priority of preaching and praying

- We will see how God used suffering, and continues to use suffering to advance His purposes in the World
- We will see how a group of ordinary, unnamed followers of Christ plant a church, that would then send out the greatest Christian missionaries the church has ever known (Paul & Barnabas)

Primary Goal: So why would we, Matt and I, choose to spend the next 6 months working through the book of Acts? Our goal, is that every single week, God would use His Word to push each of us individually, and our entire church as a group corporately to greater levels of obedience, to greater levels of relying on His Spirit, to greater level of involvement and commitment in His Mission, as we see it really is UNSTOPPABLE.

Because hear me loud and clear – each of us has a choice – we can CHOOSE to join God in His UNSTOPPABLE mission or we can be disobedient. Obedience will look differently for each of us, and that’s a good thing.

- For some, obedience will look like...
- For others, like...
- For Victoria and me, it looks like this...

But, the choice is clear – we either join God in His Unstoppable Mission, or we disobey.

So with all of this before us today as we step out into the book of Acts, looking at the Unstoppable Gospel, Spirit and Mission of the Church, turn with me to Acts 1, and I will read from 1-12

READ Acts 1:1-12

I wrote the first narrative, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach ² until the day he was taken up, after he had given instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen.³ After he had suffered, he also presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

The Holy Spirit Promised

⁴ While he was^[a] with them, he commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for the Father’s promise. “Which,” he said, “you have heard me speak about; ⁵ for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit in a few days.”

⁶ So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, are you restoring the kingdom to Israel at this time?”

⁷ He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

The Ascension

⁹ After he had said this, he was taken up as they were watching, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰ While he was going, they were gazing into heaven, and suddenly two men in white clothes stood by them. ¹¹ They said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up into heaven? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come in the same way that you have seen him going into heaven.”

United in Prayer

¹² Then they returned to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, which is near Jerusalem—a Sabbath day’s journey away.

PRAY.

I. The First Account of all that Jesus began to do and teach

So we have Luke, the writer of the Gospel of Luke – pointing us back to his first account. The first account that he wrote – the Gospel of Luke – was all that Jesus began to do and teach.

- Now, Luke is writing what Jesus continued to do and teach, through the Spirit, through the church, through the Apostles, in the book of Acts.
- Really, we need to see the book of Acts as a continuation of the book of Luke. It’s part 2
- Part 1 focused on Jesus life and earthly ministry. Part 2 focuses on the Unstoppable nature of the Gospel, Spirit and Mission of the Church

V3 – After he suffered, he also presented himself alive...

- We have to see this – that Jesus was completely dead, but God raised him to life.
- He appeared to many people
 - READ 1 Corinthians 15:1-8
Now I want to make clear for you, brothers and sisters, the gospel I preached to you, which you received, on which you have taken your stand ² and by which you are being saved, if you hold to the message I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. ³ For I passed on to you as most important what I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve. ⁶ Then he appeared to over five hundred brothers and sisters at one time; most of them are still alive, but some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸ Last of all, as to one born at the wrong time, ^[a] he also appeared to me.
- The resurrection isn’t a fairy tale – it really happened at it’s how and why Jesus can offer life to all who repent and believe.
 - Chuck Colson – Watergate proved to me the resurrection was true

II. The Promise

Re-Read V4-5

The promise of the Holy Spirit. Sent to the apostles in just a few days – now swelling within every single believer. The moment of conversion, the Holy Spirit takes over – Paul would later write that God has given us His Spirit as a guarantee – deposited in us.

But, as of this writing, the Holy Spirit's ministry had yet to be unleashed individually to the people of God. Jesus had promised them time and again that the Father would send the Spirit – and he tells them to wait for it, because He's coming in a few days.

If they tried to complete God's mission, apart from the Holy Spirit, they'd have failed. Let me tell you, some times the hardest things we have to do is wait. These guys, this group of people, no chance they'd last a day without the Spirit – Jesus says, wait for it. I've promised Him to you, and the Father will send the Spirit – He's coming. Wait for it. Don't get out ahead of it. Wait for Spirit to come.

Christian – if you have turned from your sin and are trusting in Jesus – let me tell you, you have the Spirit in you. You have been immersed in this same Spirit as that the apostles were told to wait for.

III. Still Some Confusion

We see in V6 – still some confusion – they didn't understand the kingdom of God. And part of it's understandable – they would have been familiar with the prophecies of Ezekiel 36 and Joel 2 connecting the coming of the Holy Spirit with the Kingdom of God. But they still didn't quite understand that God's Kingdom, as Jesus said to them, is not of this world. That he's not ushering in a military political kingdom, but instead a spiritual kingdom – the rule and rein of Jesus through the Church (the family of individual believers).

And in responding, Jesus gives them this incredible mission

IV. Powered for a Purpose

Re-Read V7-8

Powered for a purpose. I usually don't alliterate in sermons – because I've always found it cheesy and forced. But here, I think it works. Powered for a purpose. God the Father would send the 3rd person of the trinity, the Holy Spirit, to power the church on His mission. To be witnesses. Interesting to me, this word witness, comes from the same word that we get 'martyr'.

The promise of God's power – the Holy Spirit living inside of you – leading and guiding you – it's there for a purpose. And hear me church, you and I aren't given the Spirit so we can coast out our lives in comfort. You and I are given the HOLY SPIRIT – The same spirit that raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, if you are a believer. And it's not so we can set our life in cruise control. Nonsense. You are given the HOLY SPIRIT FOR A PURPOSE → TO SHARE AND SHOW JESUS TO PEOPLE, PEOPLE IN OUR NEIGHBORHOODS, IN OUR SCHOOLS AT OUR WORKPLACES → TO SHARE AND SHOW JESUS. TO BEAR WITNESS TO JESUS.

Think about that role of witness. The witness's role, is always just to testify to the facts. Nothing more, nothing less. In the context of the early church, it would cost many their lives to bear witness to Jesus.

You and I don't need to know all of the answers, have all the answers, be able to debate and give the historical evidence for the resurrection → we simply need to be willing, powered by the Holy Spirit, to tell of the facts of your life with Jesus. In John 4, there's this lady that Jesus meets at this well. Lady was an outcast. But then she meets Jesus. And she goes and tells people about him. Simple. My English translation says her witness was: "Come see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?"

Your witness – is about Jesus. My witness is about Jesus. Doesn't have to be complicated, simply share and show Jesus to people with the power of the Holy Spirit.

Because hear me – God's mission is unstoppable. Will you join him in it? By the Power of the Holy Spirit, will you join God in His mission?

That first step – getting on team Jesus. A few months ago, I had this incredible privilege of baptizing a young lady in our church. And the language we used, was that she has turned from her sin, and is trusting in Jesus, and is ready to tell the world she's on team Jesus. See, the starting point in joining God in His mission, is making sure you're on his team.