

Acts 1:1-14

Good morning RCM. So very good to be with you this morning as we continue our time of worship through the Word of God.

For those of us that have been working through the Bible Reading Plan, you'll see kind of a shift starting in this week. We've been working through the Gospels, exploring the life and ministry of Jesus. This week we finished the Gospels, and we read and prayed through the Great Commission as recorded by each of the Gospel writers, all under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. And this actually led us into the book of Acts as Luke records the ascension of Jesus and the commissioning of the disciples in Acts 1.

Next week, we'll see some (hopefully) very familiar stories in the book of Acts as the group of people, empowered by God through the Holy Spirit, start turning the world upside down.

For today, I want us to spend some time in Acts 1. If you have a Bible, I invite you to turn to Acts 1:1-14. The rhythm we'll use is I'll read a few verses, talk through them, read some more, etc. And then we will close with a time of prayer together.

READ

Prologue

1 I wrote the first narrative, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach ²until the day he was taken up, after he had given instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. ³After 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.

So if you were with us last Fall, we started about a 6 month walk through the entire book of Acts, 1 chapter at a time. And we see the book of Acts as a Part 2 to the Gospel of Luke. V1 – The first narrative...he's talking about the Gospel of Luke.

And Acts picks up right after the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. And as a side note – the resurrection is actual, historical fact. In case the original reader was wondering – Luke lays out some of the facts of the resurrection in V3

- He was seen by real people
- He gave many convincing proofs
- And he spoke about the kingdom of God

Hear me – or better yet hear the Holy Spirit – the resurrection actually happened. And all of Christianity hangs on the fact of the resurrection. The physical, bodily resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Paul would say that if the resurrection weren't real, we (Christians) are fools to be pitied.

Luke transitions in the next few verses of Acts 1 to the promise of the Holy Spirit and the commissioning of the disciples.

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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."

V4-5 **the Father's promise – the gift of the Holy Spirit**. Now, this was a unique giving of the Holy Spirit that occurs in CH2 at Pentecost. Today, in accordance with the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit comes on individual believers at the moment of conversion. There isn't a 2nd baptism of the Holy Spirit. It happens the moment you confess faith in Jesus, the moment you first turn from your sin and trust in Jesus.

V6 – They had hoped that Jesus' agenda would be in line with their own agenda. Lord are you going to do this now? They desperately wanted to be free from Roman oppression.

V7 – Jesus gives them this great answer – when the Father has set it, it's going to happen. **You don't need to know the answer to your questions to obey** what I've asked for you to do. How many times are we like the disciples? We want to know all the answers, **but Jesus just wants our devotion and from our devotion, wants our obedience**. He wants us to trust in him, and lovingly obey him.

Then in V8 he gives them this promise – the promise of the Holy Spirit. The power of the Holy Spirit. But at this point, the disciples had yet to receive the Holy Spirit. And notice that Jesus tells them to wait. Wait until they receive the power of the Holy Spirit. Nothing good would come out of them trying to accomplish the mission of God in their own strength and by their own power. Because if you can accomplish it in your own power and strength, then you start to get some (or all) of the glory.

But...when God empowers you by the Holy Spirit, to the work that He has called you to, He alone gets the glory, honor and praise. **All kinds of messes get made when we try and do the work of God without the power of the Holy Spirit**. All kinds of messes.

Illustration: Like trying to use a phone without a SIM card. Not going to work.

But incredible things happen when we rely on the Spirit of God as we do the work of God, by the power of the Holy Spirit, take the message of the Gospel to our friends and neighbors and coworkers and family. The language that we use at RCM is sharing and showing. We share the news of Jesus, the greatest news in the history of the world that you can have peace with God through Christ; and we SHOW the compassionate love of Jesus. Sharing and showing. Not going to happen without the power of the Holy Spirit.

READ

The Ascension

⁹After he had said this, he was taken up as they were watching, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰While he was going, they were gazing into heaven, and suddenly two men in white clothes stood by them. ¹¹They 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.”

Imagine for a second what they'd just seen. Jesus was just with you, gives this incredible challenge to be witnesses of His, then he is taken up. And apparently they were just there looking up. Amazed. Unsure what to think about these things. Then suddenly two men appear to them he's going to come back in the same way...

So, having this promise of the power of the Holy Spirit, this instruction to wait for it, then just seeing Jesus ascend, probably afraid but hopeful (at least that's how I would have been), they pray.

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United in Prayer

¹²Then they returned to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, which is near Jerusalem—a Sabbath day's journey away. ¹³When they arrived, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying: Peter, John, James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of James. ¹⁴They all were continually united in prayer,^[b] along with the women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

Wouldn't you have loved to be in this prayer meeting? They were desperate for God. **They had no choice but to pray**, and if God didn't move, they'd be done.

I wonder what it would look like for us to unite in prayer the way the disciples united in prayer, and perhaps wondering why prayer isn't central to our lives like it was in the early church. Both our life as a church, and as individual families, and even as individual followers of Jesus.

Some of the things I've grown convinced of in my own life, and increasingly convinced in the life of the church are that:

- Prayer is something that we know we should do, but all of us at times struggle to do with consistency.
- Prayer can become an afterthought if we aren't intentional in our prayer life. We work through a Bible reading plan, and know when we've "done" it. We come to church on Sundays, maybe even part of a small group, but focused time in prayer is hard and will often get pushed out if we aren't intentional about it.
- Prayerlessness shows either arrogance or lack of faith. We don't think we need God to move, or we simply don't believe that He will.
- For me – it can be easier to teach on prayer than to actually pray – and I'm guessing for many of us it can be easier to read a book about prayer than to actually spend time in prayer.

Guided time of prayer:

1. Pray for yourself. Confess any known sin in your life. Ask the Lord for forgiveness. Take a moment to seek the Lord in prayer, that your doubts, fears, anxieties would be comforted by the Lord.
2. Pray for those you know (family, friends, neighbors, co-workers) that are hurting, or that don't know Jesus. That God would save them, and that you would be faithful in sharing and showing Jesus with them.
3. Pray for our church. For Matt and me as we lead. For others in key roles. For our kingdom impact in our city and beyond.
4. Pray for our city. For churches and pastors that are boldly proclaiming the Gospel.