

Acts 1:12-26

As with the gospel of Luke, Luke, the author, is writing to Theophilus. Theophilus was an influential person whom Luke wanted to provide a detailed account of what happened so that Theophilus could have certainty about the teachings he had received. We also are grateful that Luke provided this detailed account for us.

Brett taught on the Road to Emmaus where Jesus, beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, explained to Cleopas and Mary all the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures. And when He broke the bread their eyes were opened, they recognized Jesus and he vanished.

We will pick up the story after the Cleophas and Mary returned to Jerusalem and joined the other followers of Jesus who were in the upper room and while telling of their experience, Jesus appears in the room. He tells them to touch his hands and feet, he eats some broiled fish and then picking up in Luke 24:44.

Luke 24:44-49

⁴⁴ Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶ and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, ⁴⁷ and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

Jesus instructs his followers to “stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.

Can you imagine being there and hearing this from Jesus? What would he have said? He would have pointed out passages such as:

1. He may have cited Genesis 3:15 where Moses wrote about God's promise to send a savior to crush the serpent's head, that he would defeat sin and evil.
2. He could have talked about Abraham and the covenant promise God made to Abraham in Genesis 12:3 that God was going to provide a messiah through his offspring who would bring salvation to all people.

3. In Exodus 12 God provided Moses a system of sacrifice by the shedding the blood of a Passover lamb to cover us from his judgment. Jesus would explain how the sacrificial system, particularly the Passover lamb, symbolized his own sacrifice for the sins of humanity.
4. He would tell them of the prophecies of Isaiah, particularly Isaiah 53, which describe a servant who would suffer and die for the sins of the people, a clear prophecy of his own crucifixion and atonement.
5. The New Covenant: He would have explained Jeremiah's prophecy in chapter 31 about a new covenant written on the hearts of people and foretold of the new relationship with God that Jesus would establish through his death and resurrection.
6. He could have explained the prophecies like those in Micah 5:2, which foretold the Messiah's birth in Bethlehem, and Zechariah 9:9, which described the Messiah entering Jerusalem on a donkey that they would remember being fulfilled just days earlier.

So we pick up the story from Luke in Acts 1.

- **Acts 1:3** says he presented himself alive for 40 days teaching about the **kingdom of God** before he ascended. Pentecost would be 50 days from Passover. So they were there waiting for 10 days.

What is the Kingdom of God?

They had all anticipated the messiah to come and set up a political kingdom to rule and reign. When Jesus came in the flesh to this earth, Jesus inaugurated God's kingdom.

- John the Baptist prepared the way and called his followers to "repent for the kingdom of God is at hand."
- After Jesus' baptism and temptation in the wilderness He announces, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."
- When he performed miracles, He declared surely the kingdom of God has come upon you.
- When He sent out the seventy disciples to preach to the cities, he instructed them to say, "the kingdom of God has come."

- When Jesus told Pilate, “My kingdom is not of this world.” He was indicating that His kingdom is spiritual and reigns in the hearts of His followers.
- So what is this kingdom? It is not a political kingdom with territory and borders. The kingdom of God is anywhere that Christ reigns.
- When He ascended into heaven, He went there for His coronation, for His investiture as the King of kings and Lord of lords.
- He now reigns and is King of kings and Lord of lords.
- He will one day return to the same place where he ascended to judge the nations and establish his kingdom on earth.

Acts 1:4-5 picks up from Luke 24:48, ⁴And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, “you heard from me; ⁵for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

Acts 1:9 -11 And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold two men stood by them in white robes, and said, Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”

- So today we get to dive into what the small band of followers did during this time.
- They had seen Jesus risen, they had touched his hands and feet, seen him eat fish and reveal the Scriptures to them. Jesus taught them about the kingdom of God for 40 days, tells them the Holy Spirit will come upon them and they would receive power in not many days. He tells them they will be his witnesses to the world and then ascends into heaven. Can you imagine the awe and excitement they would have?
- During His ministry the disciples were clueless, but now they know. Just a few weeks earlier Peter rebuked Jesus when He declared that He would suffer, die and be raised on the third day, where Jesus replies, “Get behind me, Satan.” Now their eyes are opened and they see the big picture. Can you imagine the excitement and zeal they would have to tell the good news. It is like they had discovered a treasure and are being told to stay in Jerusalem

and wait. Don't go to your homes, families and communities to tell them just yet. But wait until you are clothed with the power from on high.

- Do you ever dream of digging in the sand and finding a lost pyramid containing the undiscovered tomb of an Egyptian king? Or exploring in the mountains to find a lost civilization like Machu Picchu? We had the opportunity to visit Cape Cod during the 4th of July and were adopted by one of Drew's friends whose family lived there. Their hospitality was amazing. While on the beach with Patrick's father he told me the story of a treasure ship, Whydah Gally that was found by Barry Clifford off the Cape in 1984. It was originally a slave trading ship, but later became a 28 gun pirate ship capturing 4 ½ tons of stolen treasure and sank during a nor'easter in 1717. Can you imagine if you were Barry Clifford and had discovered this treasure? Would you not want to tell everyone of the good news?

Acts 1:12 - 14 ¹²Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. ¹³And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. ¹⁴All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

- "They" – The close followers and disciples of Jesus that would be the church.
- "A Sabbath day's journey" – The distance allowed to travel on the Sabbath. About ½ mile.
- They had witnessed Jesus ascending into heaven. Jesus had ascended from Bethany which is adjoined to the Mount of Olives.
- This spot where Jesus ascends and sends the disciples to bless the nations with the gospel is the same spot where Zechariah described the future judgment of the nations.
- **Zechariah 14:4** On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives that lies before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley, so that one half of the Mount shall move northward, and the other half southward.

Acts 1:13-15 ¹³And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. ¹⁴All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers. ¹⁵In those days Peter stood up among the brothers (the company of persons was in all about 120) and said,

- These verses tell us who was present between the ascension and Pentecost. These verses capture the people who birthed the Christian church. These are the original followers of Jesus who changed the world. We often mark time with events that we all share that changed the world. Where were you on 9-11? For us, we may mark time after Harvey, when we accepted Christ or when we were baptized. This was the greatest of these days. It marked the beginning of the kingdom of God.
- The eleven minus Judas Iscariot. Peter, John and James are at the head of the list. Mary the mother of Jesus and other women. Luke also includes Jesus' brothers. Jesus' brothers were not believers until the resurrection caused them to join the disciples. Jesus' brother James authored the book of James and was the influential leader of the church in Jerusalem. He was stoned to death for his faith. Church history tells us that Jude joined Simon the Zealot in Persia where they were both martyred in 65 AD. Jude also authored the book of Jude that encourages us to "earnestly contend for the faith" against the ungodly teachers that had entered the Church and promoting false teachings.
- This Scripture tells us Peter stands up among the brothers and there was in all about 120. A small number to change the world, but shows the irresistible power of the Spirit working to reach one person at a time.
- The Scripture tells us they were devoted meeting together to pray. At this time they were concentrated in the upper room and PRAYING in "one accord." IN UNITY. They were changed people and were powerfully bound together in unity through Christ. No one was asking, "who is the greatest?"

I am personally convicted in both their dedication to PRAY and in their UNITY. Jesus demonstrated the power of prayer and we know that prayer connects us to the almighty God, yet we neglect prayer. Our prayers are not answered because we fail to lift them up.

Matthew 7:7-11 ⁷“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁸For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. ⁹Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? ¹¹If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

Pam Hanes. Pam and her husband Chip had prayed with another couple Sunday evenings for many years. They went on a trip to England and during their tour were at Devils Chimney which was a coastal landmark in Eastbourne. It was identified by the guide as the number one spot for suicides in England. Pam was disturbed by the sad statistic and suggest that the Lord has told us that we have the power to move mountains and she felt convicted to go and pray that this monument would be thrown into the sea. The two couples did just that and days later the 200’ tower fell into the ocean.

I confess this is my greatest deficiencies of my faith. I know the power promised to me by Jesus in Scripture, yet I so often fail to pray boldly and claim the power that is promised to me. How much more could we do for the kingdom if we would just tap into the power given to us in prayer.

UNITY

There is so much Scripture encouraging the church to be unified, yet Christians are divided by denomination, race, socio economic, and every other difference. Just a sample of verses encouraging unity in the church.

1 Corinthians 1:10 I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.

Romans 12:4-5 For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

Colossians 3:14 And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

Galatians 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

As these first Christians continuously prayed and worshipped together, they were being prepared for the work that was before them.

Acts 1:15–20 – Peter’s speech to what became the pioneers of the early church

¹⁵In those days Peter stood up among the brothers (the company of persons was in all about 120) and said, ¹⁶“Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus.¹⁷For he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry.”

- The gang was gathered together with one glaring exception. In the 40 days since Passover Jesus was betrayed, tried, crucified, buried, raised from the dead, appear to Cleophas and Mary, the disciples and many others preaching the kingdom of God. **Matthew 16:18** Jesus says, “You are Peter and upon this rock I will build my church. V 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.
- Peter, who Jesus identified as their leader, now addresses the elephant in the room. Jesus selected 12 disciples to be His Apostles, but one is missing. Clearly Jesus had explained the Scriptures and Peter addresses the Scriptures related to the betrayal in the garden Judas was missing. He was chosen as a disciple and participated in the ministry, but Judas did not choose to believe Jesus as His messiah.
- Judas was one of the disciples and participated in the ministry, but he betrayed Jesus and became a guide for his accusers. He never accepted Jesus as his messiah. When verse 16 says, “The reason Scripture had to be fulfilled” was two-fold.
 - First there the prophecies in Exodus, Deuteronomy, Isaiah, Zechariah, Psalms describing the death of the messiah had to be fulfilled.
 - Secondly it was prophesized that Judas belonged to the number of the twelve and had his appointed share in the task of ministry instituted by Jesus. Someone had to take up the appointed role to witness at

Pentecost to the twelve tribes of Israel and to sit on the throne to judge the twelve tribes. They were the appointed ones to witness to the Jewish people.

- It is interesting to note that when James was martyred they did not replace James because the witness to Israel had already been accomplished and the message was spreading. The fire was set and the flame was spreading.

Acts 1:18-19 ¹⁸ (Now this man acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness, and falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out. ¹⁹And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their own language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.)

- Acts 1:18-19 – Notice the parenthesis. These verses were inserted as a parenthesis by Luke and were not part of Peter’s original speech but were inserted to describe the death of Judas providing a fuller picture of the teaching. The account is slightly different from Matthew’s account but both emphasize Judas’s sin, his punishment and that it was foretold by the Spirit.

Acts 1:20 ²⁰ “For it is written in the Book of Psalms,

“May his camp become desolate, and let there be no one to dwell in it”; and “Let another take his office.”

- Peter quotes from the messianic Psalm 69:25. “May his camp be desolate,” the “camp” is the field purchased with the blood money, become desolate and no one will live in it. The potters field became a cemetery for the poor, unknown or criminals. and Psalm 109:8, “And let another take his office.” These statements are curses the psalmist writes against the enemy of the Messiah wishing that somebody else would take over his responsibility. This is used as justification for handing over the office of Judas to somebody else.

The qualifications to become an Apostle

Acts 1:21–23 ²¹ So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, ²² beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection.” ²³ And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also called Justus, and Matthias.

- An Apostle had to be someone who had accompanied Jesus during his ministry since the baptism of Jesus.
- An Apostle had to have been an eye witness to Jesus' resurrection and ascension
- An Apostle had to have received a commission to be His witness.

Acts 1:24-26 ²⁴And they *prayed* and said, "You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen ²⁵to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place." ²⁶ And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

- They first committed their decision to prayer.
- This is the last instance in the Bible in which casting of lots is mentioned.
- Should this be an example to us, that the casting of lots is a way to know God's will? No, prior to the closing of the biblical canon, there were prescribed methods practiced by the priesthood to determine the will of God. Now, we have the Word of God and prayer, we are exhorted to search the Scriptures to know God's will.

What does Jesus want me to know?

- The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel. We have discovered the treasure, our eyes have been opened. We see the complete story from Genesis to Jesus. Jesus is currently seated at the right hand of the father and is King of kings and Lord of lords.
- These 120 believers changed the entire world through the power of the Holy Spirit. What impact for the kingdom can this small body of believers at VCC accomplish through the power of the Holy Spirit?
- PRAY. We have access to the power of the king of kings and Lord of Lords, but we fail to Ask, seek or knock.
- Be of one accord. **John 13:34-35** ³⁴A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. ³⁵By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”
- We have everything we need. We have the Word of God. We have the power of the Holy Spirit and prayer.