

Acts 1:12-26

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[0:00] Turn to the book of Acts chapter 1. Our text for today will be verses 12-26.

! Beloved, this is God's word to us. It was written for His glory and our good. We would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises.

And obey its commands. I read from verse 12. Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away.

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.

All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer together with the women and Mary, the mother of Jesus and his brothers. In those days, Peter stood up among the brothers.

[1:08] The company of persons was in all about 120 and said, 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.

For he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry. 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.

And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their own language, Akaldama, that is, field of blood. 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.

So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the times of the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 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.

And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also called Justice, and Matthias.

And they prayed and said, You Lord, who knows the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.

[2:33] And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles. Now the text before us today, on first glance, may seem fairly insignificant.

It seems like a simple historic sidebar of inconsequential facts leading up to the great day of Pentecost. Last week we looked at the ascension of Jesus Christ, and we find ourselves in this ten-day waiting period.

The disciples are now waiting for the Spirit of God to come upon them, and some amazing things begin to happen in chapter 2. So, rushing past this, we can just see it as that.

Just some statement of fact. What was going on in those days? Well, here's some stuff that they did. Let's get on to chapter 2. But upon a more careful reading, we can note the very early activity of the church of Christ.

And there are a number of things that they were doing that are worth our attention. And so this morning, I want us to note five things together from verses 12-26.

[3:43] And the first of those is that they were obedient. They were obedient. Now, you may miss this if we don't back up to Acts 1, verses 4-5.

If you're just picking up in our study today with us, what were they obedient to? Verse 4 says, So they were told by Christ before He ascended to stay in Jerusalem and wait for the Spirit of God. Stay and wait. This was the command that was given to them. And this is the command that they are being obedient to here in our text. Verse 12, Then they returned to Jerusalem.

They were with Jesus on the mount called Olivet. They returned about a half a mile back to Jerusalem. And they stop and they stay in the upper room.

It was the place that they were habitating at the time. We get this list in verse 13 and 14 and into 15 of the people that were there.

[5:06] They were obedient. The they I speak of is recorded for us by Luke. Verse 13, The remaining eleven apostles.

Those who had traveled with Christ minus Judas. Eleven apostles left. We see that the women. And this is likely referring to Mary Magdalene. Mary the wife of Clopas.

Mary and Martha. And Salome among others. Likely other women that were part of the band of disciples. Not apostles. Disciples.

Might have been a troubling thing to have the name Mary in this day. Of special note amongst the women, we see that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was amongst them.

And I hope that hearing that blesses your heart. If I were the Messiah, I certainly would want my mother to believe the truth concerning me. And we see this evidence here that she is still counted amongst those who followed Christ.

[6:08] And it shouldn't really be a surprise to us that before Jesus' birth, Mary fully comprehended and understood who Jesus is. Her song of praise recorded by Luke in Luke 1.

Verse 46 and 47. This is the beginning of the Magnificat, which is Latin for my soul magnifies. So it's the magnification of Christ by Mary.

Verse 46 says, And Mary said, My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior. And here we see here, they're doing this very thing. We also see a special note, Jesus' brothers. There's a later mention of a total company of persons numbering 120.

But in the midst of that are Jesus' brothers. And Luke's not referring to his spiritual brothers, but rather his biological brothers. The brothers who had doubted who he was.

[7:11] You can read about that in Mark 5. Mark 6.3 gives us their names. James, Joseph, Judas, and poor Simon didn't get a J name in that mix.

James and Judas, later known as Jude, authored part of the New Testament. So his brothers have come to faith, and they are now following him.

And so this is the they plus some others, numbering 120. They were obedient to stay and to wait for what God had promised would come.

Many of us need to learn the incredibly important lesson of waiting on the Lord. The Lord's timing is impeccable.

He is never early, and He is never late. He is always right on time. We are often so impatient, and we will not wait on the Lord.

[8:17] What would you have done with ten days? They've seen Him ascended. He has given the command, stay and wait. And I just have to tell you, because I'm not a very patient person, I would have had a really difficult time doing nothing but wait for ten days.

It would have been very difficult for me not to go, look, He gave us commands, let's go. He said He's sending the Spirit, but it hasn't happened yet. We've got things to do. The time is short and urgent.

But they stayed, and they waited. And they were exactly where God desired them to be when He struck a match, placed it in their midst, and set a fire of gospel renewal ablaze.

Praise God, the apostles stayed and waited. And we get to see in chapter 2 what happens when the Spirit of God is sent upon them. So they were obedient.

They were also together. They were obedient, this is secondly, they were obedient together as a group, as a body.

[9:31] Beloved, this is the early church. Of all the thousands that had followed Christ around and heard His teaching, this is the faithful few.

And they are gathered together. Now, no one has ever been saved by someone else's faith.

By being a member of a Bible-believing congregation, you aren't necessarily a Christian. No one has ever been saved by someone else's faith. When we stand before God in the final analysis, we will rise or fall on the basis of our individual faith in Christ or lack thereof.

In that way, and only in that way, is redemption personal. But, when we are saved, we are saved into a body.

We become part of a global faith family. We are Christ's church. Is there an essence of which Christ died for you?

[10:41] Yes. But Christ ultimately died for His church. The notion of a Christianity apart from the life of the church is completely foreign to the pages of the New Testament.

And it is so for good reason. Beloved, we need one another. No one has grown to the point that they no longer need the church.

The church is a grace to us. It is a tool in the hands of the Almighty to help bring about our sanctification. To have us pursue holiness. We need one another.

I will not grow tired of saying this because we all need to hear it. The more I mature in Christ, the more aware I become of my need of the church.

Not that I ever didn't need it. I don't come to realize, hey, I now need the church. I've always needed the church. But the more I grow in Christ, the more painfully aware I become of my need of You.

[11:48] We need one another. And that need extends beyond mere attendance. Just coming in right at 10.30 or 5.

Sitting down. Hearing sermons preached. Hearing songs sung. These are good things and these are valuable things for the Christian life. But it is not the expression of what the church is meant to be doing together.

Afterward, you say a couple hellos and out the door you go. We need to be in life together. We need to be sharing what's happening in us by the grace of God. We need to be expressing those places in which we're challenged that we might be encouraged and sharpened to live more holy. We have to be sharing life together. College students, many of you have seen the need for this. You have planted yourself and you've stayed put. For those of you who are guests with us this morning and haven't heard me say it yet, you're in a transitional period of your time and I get that. I remember those days.

[12:53] But you were up here nine months out of the year. Get invested in a local congregation. Don't float from place to place to place for the next four years because I guarantee you your walk with Christ will suffer if you do.

Find a people to invest your life into for the mission of God. Be there and be with them and be sharpened by them. This reminds me of a story I once heard John MacArthur tell.

I've heard other people tell it too, but I've got to give somebody the credit. So John MacArthur gets it this morning. He does it like this. A member of a certain church who previously had been attending services regularly stopped going.

After a few weeks, the pastor decided to visit him. It was a chilly evening. The pastor found the man at home alone sitting before a blazing fire. Guessing the reason for the pastor's visit, the man welcomed him, led him to a big chair near the fireplace, and waited.

The pastor made himself comfortable but said nothing. In the grave silence, he contemplated the play of the flames around the burning logs. After some minutes, the pastor took the fire tongs, carefully picked up a brightly burning ember, and placed it to one side of the hearth, all alone.

[14:11] Then he sat back in his chair, still silent. The host watched all this in quiet fascination. As the one lone ember's flame diminished, there was a momentary glow, and then its fire was no more.

Soon, it was cold and dead. Not a word had been spoken since the initial greeting. Just before the pastor was ready to leave, he picked up the cold, dead ember and placed it back in the middle of the fire.

Immediately, it began to glow once more with the light and warmth of the burning coals around it. As the pastor reached the door to leave, his host said, Thank you so much for your visit, and especially for the fiery sermon.

I shall be back in church next Sunday. We need one another. We need to be preaching the gospel to one another that our hearts would stay warm to it.

And note that they were not just together, but in verse 14, they were together with one accord. This is modeled for us, the type of unity that they had, even before the Spirit of God is poured out on the people of God.

[15:20] They are so concerned with the mission of God in the world, the purpose of God in the world, that they're together, unified around that, just that teaching they're unified around.

It's better. It's higher for us today. Later, Paul writes to the Ephesians, chapter 4, verse 1 through 6, I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit.

Not create, but to maintain, which is a work, it's a discipline, but it's a maintenance of the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, which already exists in Christ.

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the hope, one hope that belongs to your call. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all, and through all, and in all.

So this is a discipline for us. It's not a thing that just happens naturally. We are to work to maintain the unity of the Spirit.

[16:40] It's a discipline. You've got to pick it up and you've got to practice it. And you've got to do this day in and day out. I know that church can be so frustrating.

You know how I know that? Because I know you guys. I'm not immune to that. I'm not unaware of the challenges that face you in your involvement with the church. The church is a magnificent mess. It's a mess because it's made of people. And it's magnificent because it is made of people who have been recipients of God's grace and who are growing in God's grace.

None of us have arrived. None of us are perfect. But if we are the church, we are pictures of God's redemptive purpose. I can look at you and I can see Christ because I see Him at work amongst you. The existence of the church is a miracle. And it should be viewed as such. The fact that any of us care at all about the things of God this morning is a miracle.

[17:51] We do not love the things of God or the work of God apart from His intervention. On the front of your bulletin there's a quotation from Martin Lloyd-Jones.

We must cease to think of the church as a gathering of institutions and organizations and we must get back to the notion that we are the people of God.

If you go to your favorite restaurant and you're treated rudely and the food isn't cooked well, go someplace else. I encourage it. I love the free market. It put bad businesses out of business.

That is not the church. We're a people called together by God's grace for His glory and we are in process. We need to love one another in that process.

Don't expect perfection from me or anyone else in this congregation because you will always be sadly disappointed. So they were obedient and they were together and thirdly, they were prayerful.

[18:59] They were together and they were, verse 14, devoting themselves to prayer. The Greek word for devoting is a very strong word.

Here in ESV, which I'm preaching from, it simply says devoting. The New American Standard Bible renders this continually devoting. The verb has a continual action. I would add to it continually and fervently devoting themselves to prayer.

This was the major part of their activity in this time of waiting. What were they praying for? Some have suggested the Spirit and that that becomes part of the equation for us as Christians.

A second baptism and we must pray that God would give us the Spirit. We are granted the Spirit of God when we place faith in Christ. And they were not told to pray for the Spirit. They were told to wait for the Spirit.

So what were they praying? And we cannot know for sure. We see some evidence that they certainly asked the Lord who should replace Judas. That's evidence of a specific thing that they prayed for.

[20:06] We don't know with confidence, but I suggest that they were praying the way that they were taught to pray. They asked the Lord, how should we pray? He said to them in Matthew 6, 9-13, Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Jesus was teaching them how they should pray. He wasn't saying pray this, He was saying pray like this. Which doesn't make praying the Lord's prayer wrong if your heart is in it and you desire these things to come to bear.

But what He was giving for them was a pattern of how they should pray. These are the things you should be concerned about and lifting up to me. If we don't view this this way, it's possible what, did they just recant this thing over and over and over again?

I don't believe so. I believe they were praying things in the will of the Father as outlined by the Lord's prayer. They were continually and fervently devoting themselves to pray for the things of God.

[21:23] That His kingdom come, that He bring about holiness in their lives, that they be able to resist evil. And rightly so, as they were the people of God. They were a church.

Again, on the front of your bulletin, another Spurgeon quotation, the condition of the church may be very accurately gauged by its prayer meetings. Let this sink into you.

The condition of the church may be very accurately gauged by its prayer meetings. So is the prayer meeting a grace-o-meter, and from it we may judge of the amount of divine working among a people.

If God be near a church, it must pray. And if He be not there, one of the first tokens of His absence will be a slothfulness in prayer.

Why do the people of God pray? The people of God pray because they desire with their very being all that they are, all that they want, is to see the purposes of God accomplished.

[22:31] And they know that this will not happen apart from the power of God. I'll say that to you again. The people of God pray because they desire to see the purposes of God accomplished, and they know that this will not happen apart from the power of God.

There's a thing that we want to see done, and we know it cannot be done unless God does it. And He gives to us the tool of prayer. He uses His people because He loves us to accomplish His will. So He moves us to pray that He will act. And that is why the people of God pray. Beloved, we have opportunities to gather and pray corporately.

Your personal prayer life is of vital importance to you. What this old saint called closet prayer, that quiet time, you and the Lord praying together. And I encourage that.

But now, in this text, I want to encourage corporate prayer. We pray in our community outreach group meetings. If you're not part of one, you should be. We have prayer meetings every Sunday morning at nine o'clock.

[23:38] That's not early. Six a.m. is early. Nine a.m. is not early. You can get up and make it to this. Come and join God's people in prayer.

Form prayer meetings. Do it any time. I don't care when it happens. You just can't pull it off on Sunday morning? Find another time that you can get a group of people together and pray that God would accomplish His purposes in our world.

You recall that after Jesus cleared the temple of money changers, He reminded the people in Matthew 21-13, My house shall be called a house of prayer.

And He was not referring to this building or any other. He was saying, My people will be a people who pray. So they were obedient.

They were together. They were prayerful. And fourthly, they were scripturally concerned, or scriptural if you prefer.

[24:41] They were concerned about what it was the Scriptures had to say. They had already turned their attention to the Old Testament text.

Beginning in verse 16, Peter stands up and makes a speech amongst the 120

who are gathered there.

Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled. There's an element of which it has already been fulfilled. Judas has already betrayed Christ. And there is an action that's about to take place where it will continue to be fulfilled.

It has to be fulfilled. God does not lie. Everything that the Scripture says will come to pass will come to pass. And they're concerned about this. Which the Holy Spirit spoke before him by the mouth! concerning Judas who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. For he was numbered among us and was allotted to share in his ministry.

Now this man acquired a field with reward of his wickedness and falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all of his bowels gushed out. And it became known to all the inhabitants a lot about the particular nature of the way that Judas died but he died horribly.

[26:04] I also want to say that this account Luke's account in Acts does not contradict Matthew's account in 27.5 although it seems to on the surface 27.5 says in throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple he departed and he went and hanged himself.

So these two separate accounts we need to reconcile is that he hung himself poorly so that he did in fact hang himself but he did so in a rather shoddy manner maybe the knot broke or he picked a bad branch from which to hang himself MacArthur suggests that he hung himself on the edge of a cliff so that when whatever failed in the system failed he actually fell off the side of a cliff and he cites a relief in a cathedral who knows if this is true or not but it would seem that quite possibly if we're going to reconcile these two that he hung himself poorly and therefore fell when he was hung he fell and was split in half so that his entrails became his X trails sometimes

I don't think before I talk and tradition holds that the authorities use the money to buy a field in which Judas was buried so the field was purchased by him because it was purchased by the money that he was given for the betrayal so he tosses the money back they go and buy him a field and he's buried there in that field and so that's how we reconcile these two So!

Luke's! account doesn't contradict then but rather it just augments Matthew's account verse 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 So Peter cites from Psalm three different times Psalm 55 12 15 predicts the betrayal Psalm 69 25 tells of his removal from his apostolic office and Psalm 109 8 promises his replacement and that's where they find themselves so they knew what the scripture said concerning Judas that his betrayal removal and need for replacement had to be fulfilled so they set about the work of doing that let me ask how aware are we of the predictions and promises of God in the scripture how much time do we set forth to understand the promises of God in the scripture

I ask again what would we have done with those ten days I hope the answer would be that we would be here and we would be looking we'd be waiting but looking to the scripture what needs to be done how can we better equip ourselves in the waiting do do we do we believe that the Bible is a sufficient guide for faith and practice and beloved if we do if we truly believe that that's true we will treat it much differently than I fear we so often do it's a precious book a precious book to be read and believed we don't want to be an illiterate people you remember one of our goals for this study of the book of Acts is to better love and understand the scripture so they were scripturally concerned and then fifthly and lastly they were submissive to apostolic authority they were submissive to apostolic authority so this issue is before them that they need to replace

[30:00] Judas the scripture has said that he needs to be replaced and let me remind you that at this time there are only in this text there are eleven by the end of the text there are twelve who are considered apostles the rest of the people there are not at this point in time they're considered to be disciples of Jesus Christ there's a distinction made there and so as Peter stands up and states this case they are submitting to his authority!

in addition to that they're submitting themselves to this laid out criteria for apostleship here in our text so verse twenty one so one of the men who have accompanied us during all the times the Lord Jesus went in and out among us 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 so there's criteria laid out by Peter here for apostleship Firstly they must have been part of the band of

disciples from the beginning of Jesus' ministry that's what he's referring to when he talks about the baptism of John and remained with Jesus to the end of his ministry he didn't get to be one of the disciples that are recorded that blanked out on him he talks about eating!

Notice that none of Jesus' brothers are asked to be apostles Secondly they must have been an eyewitness to the resurrection at the end of verse 22 one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection they must have actually seen him physically post resurrection and thirdly they must have been commissioned by God Jesus selected the twelve Judas departs from his office Matthias chosen through the casting of lots verse 23 they put forward two they selected two men who fit these criteria there may have been more there but the apostles selected two they thought were worthy of the office Joseph called Barsabbas who was also called Justice and Matthias and they prayed and said you

Lord who know the hearts of all show which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place and they cast lots for them and the lot fell on Matthias and he was numbered with the eleven apostles now this morning for time and because I'm just not sure lots and it made me uncomfortable I wasn't so sure about it but historically we should understand why they did it here and R.C.

Sproul wrote this concerning it in choosing lots they were following an ancient tradition in the Old Testament involving the use of the urim and thumim which were symbols on the breastplate When Old Testament priests were unable to discern the will of God they prayerfully cast lots the outcome of which was determined by the providence of God so the apostles used this old practice which they still believed and apparently it was otherwise I believe God would have intervened in the process an appropriate practice in this case and this is the way that God showed them whether they should select between these two men Joseph called Barsabbas also Justice and Matthias and the lot falls let me say that we often use the term disciple and capital A apostle the office of apostle interchangeably in referring to the twelve we preach through Mark's gospel and

[34:03] I believe I did that a lot I'm guilty of doing so just interchanging disciple apostle back and forth but this can be a mistake it's possible that this is a mistake disciple the Greek for it simply means a student or a learner the idea of apostle uppercase is much weightier an apostle uppercase Greek was an ambassador commissioned by a king so it has a greater deal of weight to it so all of the capital A apostles were disciples but not all of the disciples were or are capital A apostles so you hear me clearly there now there is a sense of which we now as Christians are ambassadors for Christ we've been made ministers of reconciliation there is an apostolic sense to what we do but we are not and never will be anybody today capital A apostles okay so here's these criteria

I've laid out for you the three find them here in this text what about Paul the thirteenth we refer to Paul as an apostle capital A as he does so himself in fact he takes great labor and Luke takes great labor a number of times in Acts to present him as an apostle capital A for the sake of his apostolic authority to speak on behalf of God amongst the churches of the Gentiles one example him stating this Galatians 1:1 Paul an apostle capital A not from men nor through man but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead Paul did not possess the first two criteria he had not been with Jesus through the entirety of his ministry in fact he had not been with Jesus during any of his earthly ministry and he had not been an eyewitness to the resurrection he had not seen Jesus post resurrection pre ascension he sees a vision of him on the road to Damascus but he didn't see him in the flesh post resurrection pre ascension however he did possess the third he was commissioned by God by Christ himself on the Damascus road and told to go take the gospel to the Gentiles so those are the criteria for Paul right why can no one today if those are the criteria he meets one of the three why can no one today claim to be an apostle why can I not come to you and say I had a vision on my drive from here to my house Jesus Christ told me that I am an apostle and I now speak!

on behalf of God and be very very very wary beloved of anyone who does this the reason is because Paul was confirmed by other apostles Galatians chapter 2 verses 1 through 10 I'm not going to go to the text or read the text but I want you to get these notes down and look at the text together!

Again here for the sake of time but I want you to note the following verse 2 Paul did this to be sure that is received the confirmation that he was truly teaching and preaching the truth.

[37:48] So God tells him go to Jerusalem make sure get this confirmation from the elders. In verse 6 the elders in Jerusalem did not add anything or take anything away from the message that Paul taught or preached.

Verse 7 the elders recognized that God had entrusted to Paul the preaching and teaching of the gospel to the Gentiles. And then in verse 9 James, John, and Peter confirmed God's call upon the life of Paul.

So this is how Paul, a single person in history, gets around those first two requirements because he was confirmed his teaching and everything he was doing, his ministry to the Gentiles was confirmed by living, capital A apostles.

He was confirmed by those with higher credentials and no men of that caliber are alive today. No capital A apostles live anymore. Therefore, we can't be confirmed by them.

That's an impossibility now. And so capital A apostles no longer exist. So, they were submissive to apostolic authority in the selection of Matthias.

[39:02] And further, in Acts 2.42 we see the church devoted to the teaching of the apostles as messengers, those who spoke with authority on behalf of Christ.

And today, because we don't have those men walking amongst us today, we have the canonized Scripture before us. This book, God's 66 books written for us, for His glory and our good, we should listen to it in order to believe His promises and obey its commands.

We should devote ourselves to the study of it. This is the right and proper activity of the church. In the first chapter of the book of Acts, before things just blow up in chapter 2 in the most glorious way, we already gain a glimpse of the work of the early church which sets forth patterns for us to observe and to follow.

They were obedient. They were together. They were prayerful. They were scripturally concerned and they were submissive to apostolic authority.

Let's pray together.