

Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

Date : 9 June 2024

Sermon Title : Don't Just Stand There

Speaker : Rev Eddie Ho

Text : Acts 1:12-26

INTRODUCTION

The Acts of the Apostles was recorded to show us how we could live out our faith as disciples of Christ by learning what the apostles (disciples of Christ) did in the Book of Acts. However, in doing so, we also need to consider the historical and cultural context that the apostles lived in. We need to differentiate between what is prescriptive and descriptive in what has been recorded:

- i) Prescriptive – we need to follow wholly, be a copycat
- ii) Descriptive - a narration, there is no need to be the same (e.g. Acts 19:11-12)

The book of Acts is a continuation from the resurrection of Jesus as seen at the end of the book of Luke, where Jesus commanded the disciples to go to Jerusalem to wait for the gift of the Holy Spirit before He ascended to heaven. As the disciples looked to the sky, they were instructed by two men in white, not to stand and stare but to go to Jerusalem as Jesus commanded.

Acts 1:12-26

- The disciples considered what was being said by the men against Jesus' instructions and realized they had not done what was right and so changed their actions from just looking into the sky to going to Jerusalem to wait in the upper room. (Acts 1:12)
 - We too should always consider what others tell us against Jesus' teachings and be willing to change if we have not followed or obeyed what Christ says.
- They did not know how long they would have to wait. While waiting...
They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers (Acts 1:14)
 - We too should be constantly praying while waiting for Christ's promised return.

Praying is:

- a. You pouring out your heart to God
- God wants us to pour out our hearts to Him and be truthful to Him in our prayer. God does not want us to hide our true emotions and wants to hear about our anger,

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frustration, laments, fears, disappointments and for us to tell Him the truth in our hearts. Praying is akin to pouring our heart out to our best friend, it is a safe place for us to vent our frustrations and share about our dreams.

b. God wanting to pour out His heart to you

If praying is like pouring our heart to our best friend, after doing that, we will turn our attention to our friend and ask, "How about you?" Praying is also God wanting to pour out His heart to us. We also need to ask God what He wants to say to us. God has so much to tell us, He wants to tell us how He desires to change or transform us to become more and more like Jesus. Have we been listening, or have we been hanging up after we pour out our hearts to Him?

- As the Apostles had gone through a tremendous journey of witnessing Jesus' death and resurrection, when they prayed in the upper room, they were pouring out their hearts to God and listening to Him. God spoke to the Apostles in the upper room through the scriptures in Acts 1:15-20. As Peter prayed, he heard God speak to him and searched the scriptures. He then stood up amongst the disciples to share about how God spoke to him regarding how Judas betrayed Jesus.

In those days Peter stood up among the believers (a group numbering about a hundred and twenty) and said, "Brothers and sisters, the Scripture had to be fulfilled in which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through David concerning Judas, who served as guide for those who arrested Jesus. He was one of our number and shared in our ministry." (Acts 1:15-17)

Searching the scriptures in order to apply biblical wisdom

Peter was able to recognize the fulfillment of the scriptures in Acts 1:20 by quoting Psalm 69:25 and Psalm 109:8. How did Peter know that these passages in Psalms indicated the fulfillment of the scriptures? Peter was just a fisherman, and not a teacher or a scholar and he had not yet been filled with the Spirit.

As we consider the Bible in its entirety, we know that Acts is the continuation of where the book of Luke ended.

When we look back at Luke 24:25-27, when Jesus was on the road to Emmaus, we see how Jesus explained to the disciples about Himself and taught them to read the Old Testament. Over the 40 days, Jesus showed the disciples how the Old Testament provided signposts, pointing to His coming, foretelling the work He was doing in Luke 24:27.

"And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself."

- The Holy Spirit was speaking to the apostles through the Word of God and spoke to Peter as he searched the scriptures.

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- He also remembered that Jesus had taught from Psalms 69 on two other occasions. The first occasion was when Jesus cleared the temple courts and said, *“Zeal for your house will consume me”* (John 2:14-17). On another occasion, Jesus also said, *“But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: They hated me without reason.”* (John 15:25)
- *“For,” said Peter, “it is written in the Book of Psalms:
“May his place be deserted;
let there be no one to dwell in it,’ and,
“May another take his place of leadership. (Acts 1:20)*

Biblical prophecy is not foretelling but forthtelling

Biblical prophecy is not predicting the future but telling the desired holy pattern of God.

- Peter gained a deeper insight, as he understood that God’s holy pattern was that God’s holy purpose could not be accomplished by sinful means. Hence Judas’s blood money which was used to purchase a property would therefore be declared desolate. In this way Peter was forthtelling a biblical truth and principle.
- Jesus had initially appointed 12 apostles for His ministry. Because Judas had died, the apostles needed to find another one to replace him. As the number twelve is highly symbolic in the Jewish culture, any group that wants to be legitimate in preaching God’s glory must represent itself as the true Israel, not only in its proclamation but in its symbolism. By choosing another apostle, Peter was doing what the culture required at that time. He was forthtelling, as seen in Acts 1:21-22 when he declared that they would have another replace Judas. They knew that they needed to choose someone who had been with Jesus from the beginning, from the time He was baptized, to the time he had been taken away, as the apostles needed to have credibility.
- After nominating two men, they prayed and listened to God. However, we see that they then proceeded to cast lots to decide whom to choose (Acts 1:26). Why did they choose to cast lots? In the days of Jesus, casting lots was a common practice before Pentecost. This is an example of a descriptive act as after Pentecost, there was no more mention in the bible regarding the practice of casting lots.

CONCLUSION

The apostles have modelled a pattern and posture for us to live out our lives. When they were rebuked, they considered what was said to them, and changed their action in obedience to Christ. As they waited in the upper room, they prayed and poured out their hearts to God and listened to God by searching the scriptures in its entirety to

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understand what God was speaking to them. As God spoke to them, they prayed and applied biblical wisdom in their lives while awaiting the gift of the Holy Spirit. May we always seek to act like the early disciples in God's prescribed ways, guided by His Word and led by His Spirit in all we say and do.

A. Review Sermon Application

Purpose: Reflect on how you have been embodying God's truth.

- 1a. How successful have you been in fulfilling what you/your group had committed to do for the last FaithWalk!?
 - 1b. What were some challenges you faced and what would you like to celebrate?
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2. Appoint someone to read Acts 1:12-26 slowly. How do these verses speak to you personally?

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B. Relate Sermon Content

Purpose: Relate with the Truth and Resolve for Transformation.

- 3a. Using a scale of 1-5, (1 – very difficult, 5 – very easy) rate how easy or difficult it has been for you to pour out your heart to God when you pray. Share the reasons for your rating.
- 3b. Why is it important for you to pour out your heart to God and how can you encourage one another in your group to do so?
- 3c. God desires to pour out His heart to you.
 - (i) Do you often 'hang up' on Him after pouring out your heart to Him?
 - (ii) What can you do to cultivate the right posture to help you listen to His heart?

- 4a. What was the outcome and impact on the apostles as they obeyed Christ by returning to Jerusalem and prayed while waiting upon God in the Upper Room?
- 4b. What does 4a. tell you about obeying God, hearing His heart and waiting upon Him?
- 4c. How can your group members encourage or help you to obey God, hear His heart and wait upon Him in the following week(s) until your next meeting?

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C. Testimonies, Prayers and Action

Purpose: Give glory to God, seek Him and embody His Word.

5. Share how you have been enlightened by God as you searched the scriptures in its entirety.

OR

Give thanks to God that He provides a holy pattern for us to follow Him through the Bible and has sent His Spirit to empower us.

6. With a prayer partner, pray for the action step/changes you have committed to in question 3c(ii) and 4c above, surrendering your fears and challenges to God. Pray for the Holy Spirit to help you as an individual, as a group and as a church to, “don’t just stand there” but commit and keep each other accountable in this journey of following God’s prescriptive holy pattern as revealed in His Word.

Optional items:

Suggested worship songs:

1. There is One Gospel – CityAlight
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4GZuSivURPk&ab_channel=musicmeetsheaven
2. This is Our God – Phil Wickham
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IC_el8B1qGI&ab_channel=PhilWickham
3. Spirit Touch Your Church – Kent Henry
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5L7MMs3qUG8&ab_channel=MusicMeetsFaith

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