

Living In Expectation: The Acts 1 Church Part 2

Congratulations to all of our graduates. We honored our High School Seniors Wednesday night. How about our college graduates? Congratulations to all of you!

After a wonderful Mother's Day last Sunday we are returning to our series Living in Expectation: The Acts 1 Church. We said two weeks ago that in response to the revelation of the resurrected Christ and His promise and commands, the Acts 1 church was living in expectation. They didn't know exactly what was going to happen next, but they knew what Jesus said, they knew of his promise and they were living in expectation. It's not a bad way to live! Expecting the plan and purpose of God to be fulfilled in your life as you live in obedience to his commands, expecting his anointing and provision for your life. This is how the Acts 1 church was living and it produced some characteristics that I believe we need in the church of 2022.

Let's look again at Acts 1:1-11. **In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." Acts 1:1-11**

Two weeks ago we said The Acts 1 Church believes the work of Jesus continues through his body, the church. Like the disciples in this passage, we said the Acts 1 Church is a chosen

church. With all of the craziness of 2022 in America, God has chosen us for such a time as this. He has called us to be the church for these times. I quoted Winkie Pratney who said, “God has been waiting a long time for a generation like this one.” God is counting on us, his church, to stay focused on Jesus. The writer of Hebrews said “Fixing our eyes on Jesus!” Don’t get distracted! We are chosen to be his church for such a time as this. Finally...two weeks ago...

We said the Acts 1 church is a convinced church. Jesus showed them convincing proof of his resurrection. We said, we have seen too much and know too much to doubt him now. The German Theologian Wolfhart Pannenberg said, **“The evidence of Jesus’ resurrection is so strong that nobody would question it except for two things: First, it is a very unusual event. And second, if you believe it happened, you have to change the way you live.”...Wolfhart Pannenberg** The Acts 1 church believed it happened, they were convinced and it changed the way they lived. When persecution came their enemies couldn’t stop them or silence them because they were convinced! His resurrection changed the way they lived. They had seen too much to doubt him! We need that same conviction in the church for the hour in which we live.

The Acts 1 church didn’t have buildings, programs, clever, trendy names for their church, they didn’t have lights and projectors, paid staff and social media pages. There is nothing wrong with any of that, they’re all tools to communicate the gospel. We can use any and all of those things but we can’t forget or forsake the other things the Acts 1 church had: the belief that Jesus was still at work through them, the knowledge they were chosen and God had a plan and purpose for them, a conviction that would keep them and carry them through whatever the future might hold and an expectation of more to come from the Lord! Lord, give us those same things and let us live in expectation! Something else the Acts 1 church had that we need:

The Acts 1 Church had a fresh revelation of Jesus. Turn to Luke 24. It’s the story of two disciples on the road to Emmaus on the Sunday afternoon of the resurrection. These two, Cleopas and his companion, were disciples and followers of Jesus. They knew him, they knew his teaching, they had been with him, followed him, believed in him, but they had also seen him crucified and buried. Grief and doubt filled their hearts and blinded their eyes. Overwhelmed by the events of the past days, what they needed was a fresh revelation of Jesus. Luke tells us as the two of them walked along, talking to each other about all the events of the weekend, **“Jesus himself came up and walked along with them, but they were kept from recognizing him.”** **Luke 24:15-16** Jesus asked what they were discussing as they were walking along. Luke says

“They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, ‘Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?’” Luke 24:17-18

That phrase, “they stood still, their faces downcast” is a picture of a person or a church needing a fresh revelation of Jesus. Although these two disciples knew Jesus they needed a fresh revelation of the risen Lord. They stood still Luke said. They stopped making progress. Their faces were downcast, they were paralyzed by grief, despair, defeat and doubt. Are you feeling that way? You’ve lost hope, feeling overwhelmed, too much loss? You’ve stopped believing because you’ve been disappointed by life, by God, by others. Cleopas and his friend were feeling all of this. They needed a fresh revelation of Jesus and perhaps you do too.

The two disciples explained what they were talking about. **“About Jesus of Nazareth” they replied. “He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death and they crucified him: but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn’t find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see.”**

He said to them, **“How foolish you are and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?”** And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther. But they urged him strongly, **“Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.”** So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, and gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him and he disappeared from their sight. They asked each other, **“Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?”** They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, **“It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.”** Then the two told

what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.” Luke 24:19-35

How is it they had this **fresh revelation of Jesus**? A couple of things stand out. First, it was through the word of God as Jesus “explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.” If you want to know Jesus, if you want a fresh revelation and a greater understanding of Jesus, immerse yourself in the Word of God. Read the Scripture. Study, meditate, memorize, think about, respond to the Scripture with expectation. These disciples knew the Bible, the law and prophets. As Jewish men they had studied what we call the Old Testament since they were children. They probably had large portions of it memorized. But Jesus is the One to whom the Scriptures had been pointing and to which it had been testifying. As Jesus explained the Scripture to them, their eyes were opened in a new way. With new understanding they began to see Jesus revealed. Read the Scripture expecting to find Jesus and you will!

This fresh revelation of Jesus came not only through the Scripture as they found Jesus illuminating the pages of the Old Testament, but it was also at the table as he broke bread. For us, we find a fresh revelation of him as we come to the Lord’s Table in communion. As we worship, as we acknowledge the saving and atoning work he did for us on the cross, as we receive the bread and the cup and as we appropriate for ourselves by faith, his salvation, his mercy, his grace, his life, his blessings, his divine nature, we see him again and again. He meets us as we gather in worship at his table. He also reveals himself to us as we gather with one another in fellowship. As two or three gather in his name, he said he would be in our midst. Look for Jesus in communion at his table and in fellowship with one another and you’ll find him.

Something happened to these two disciples in their encounter with the risen Jesus. Their hearts burned within them, their eyes were opened. They knew Jesus in one way, but on that day, they had a fresh revelation of Jesus. They saw him in resurrection glory and power. We need a fresh revelation of the risen Christ. See him as John saw him in Revelation 1, this heavenly vision of the ascended, glorified Christ with hair like white wool, with eyes like blazing fire, his voice like the sound of rushing waters, his face like the sun shining in all its brilliance. It may sound weird, frightening even, but John is trying to tell us that Jesus is more, more than we knew, more than we imagined, more than we can describe. We form a certain picture of Jesus. We decide what he will and will not do for us, for others. We decide what we can expect and what we won’t expect. We create this image of Jesus from various sources, some accurate

and some not so accurate, but I'm telling you we need a fresh revelation of Jesus. The disciples had an understanding of Jesus from before the crucifixion, but after the resurrection, this was something else! Unprecedented. There was no one to compare him to. He is like no other. John lets us know we can't place Jesus in a certain category for he can't be categorized. He doesn't fit in anyone's religious box. He is greater and mightier and beyond imagination. To come to him in faith, to surrender our life and destiny to him is the greatest, scariest, most wonderful, liberating, glorious experience possible. We need a fresh revelation of the risen, reigning Jesus!

As big as the giants you are facing, Jesus is bigger and greater. As high as the mountains in your life, Jesus is higher, stronger, he is the waymaker and he will see you over or around or through those mountains and obstacles. Get a fresh revelation of Jesus. See him as the Acts 1 church did, as those disciples did, glorified, more than, surprising, able, faithful. Paul wrote of Jesus, **"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation."** Remember, this is the Jesus they knew, the Jesus they walked with and ate with, who chose them and who in Acts 1 convinced them he was the risen Savior and Lord. But with a fresh revelation Paul continues, **"For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross."**

Colossians 1:15-20

The Jesus you think you know is too small. Maybe the Jesus you heard about is too timid, too reluctant to engage, maybe you think he can't handle you and your problems. You need a fresh revelation of Jesus. You need to meet the Acts 1 Jesus, risen in power, ascending to heaven, sending the Holy Spirit to empower his church. You need a fresh revelation of the Jesus John saw in Revelation that I mentioned a moment ago. He is the one who said, **"Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead and behold I am alive for ever and ever and I hold the keys of death and the grave."** Revelation 1:17-18 He is the one who was and who is and who is to come. He is beyond expectation, but keep on expecting! Don't be afraid. He is more than that. Keep living in expectation. Keep looking to him.

Jesus isn't safe or tame as C.S. Lewis tells us in his Chronicles of Narnia. Speaking of Aslan the Lion, the Christ character in the story, Lucy asks, "Is he - quite safe?" "Safe?" said Mr. Beaver; "Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King, I tell you."

The Acts 1 church had a fresh revelation of this Jesus - risen, resurrected, ascended, ruling and reigning, Sovereign, in charge, in control, good, merciful, mighty. He wasn't safe. He was surprising. He wasn't calling them to safety, he was calling them to service, to sacrifice, but also calling them to life, to glory, to blessing, to power, to victory! We need a fresh revelation of Jesus and we need a fresh call from Jesus, not to safety but to service and sacrifice for his glory. Have you had a fresh revelation of this Acts 1 Jesus?

Mark Buchanan in his book, *Your God is Too Safe* writes, "**The safe God asks nothing of us, gives nothing to us. He never drives us to our knees in hungry, desperate praying and never sets us on our feet in fierce, fixed determination. He never makes us bold to dance. The safe god never whispers in our ears anything but greeting card slogans and certainly never asks that we embarrass ourselves by shouting from the rooftop...A safe god inspires neither awe, nor worship, nor sacrifice. But God isn't nice. God isn't safe. God is a consuming fire. Though he cares about the sparrow, the embodiment of His care is rarely doting or pampering. God's main business is not ensuring that you and I get parking spaces close to the mall entrance or that the bed sheets in the color we want are – miracle – on sale this week. His main business is making you and me holy.**" ...Mark Buchanan.

I want us to have a fresh revelation of Jesus. He isn't safe, but he is the bread of life upon whom our soul can feast. He is the living water that will quench your thirst as nothing else in this life can do. He may be fierce in his dealings and passionate in his calling to you, he is after all a consuming fire, but He won't leave you as you were when you came to him. He'll transform and cleanse and make you new. Walking with Jesus, knowing Jesus in fellowship is the greatest adventure anyone can have in this life. Lose yourself in him and discover what life is really all about.

How about you? Tired of a safe god? Are you hungry to have a fresh revelation of Jesus? Would you like to truly know him as never before? You'll find him as you surrender all to him. The fullness of God is found in Jesus. Come to him! Bring your life to him! The time for playing church is over. It's time for a fresh encounter with Jesus!