

ST ARMANDS KEY LUTHERAN CHURCH  
SARASOTA, FLORIDA

**COME, JOIN THE CONVERSATION!**  
ON  
**THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES**

Lesson Plan for Thursday – May 2, 2013

**THE FESTIVAL DAY OF THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD**

Resource Book – Kerygma Series - *“into the world”*

Chapter 14 – *“Story Without End”*

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**Our Objectives for this final Session:**

1. To quickly review several stories of Paul’s trials before the Roman authorities, and to trace his ultimate journey to Rome.
2. To become more familiar with King Herod Agrippa II.
3. To recall to mind some of the unsung heroes in the Book of Acts.
4. To review major themes that we have encountered in the Book of Acts.
5. To do group “brainstorming” about the relationship of the contemporary church to the original community of faith.
6. To evaluate the course of study now being concluded and entertain thoughts and suggestions for future study.

**AN ASCENSION DAY OPENING DEVOTION:**

THE LESSON: LUKE 24:44-53

<sup>44</sup> Jesus 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 from Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” <sup>45</sup> Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures. <sup>46</sup> He said to them, “This is what is written: the Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, <sup>47</sup> and a change of heart and life for the forgiveness of sins must be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup> You are witnesses of these things. <sup>49</sup> Look, I’m sending to you what my Father promised, but you are to stay in the city until you have been furnished with heavenly power.”

<sup>50</sup> He led them out as far as Bethany, where he lifted his hands and blessed them. <sup>51</sup> As he blessed them, he left them and was taken up to heaven. <sup>52</sup> They worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem overwhelmed with joy. <sup>53</sup> And they were continuously in the temple praising God.

**THE PRAYER OF THE DAY** (*spoken in unison*)

Almighty God, your only Son was taken up into heaven and in power intercedes for us. May we also come into your presence and live forever in your glory; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

## PAUL'S FINAL JOURNEY

### **1) AN UNWELCOME RETURN TO JERUSALEM FROM JOURNEY #3; MOVEMENT BETWEEN JERUSALEM and CAESAREA**

#### **Acts 23:12-35 - DISCOVERY OF A MURDER PLOT**

<sup>12</sup> The next morning some Jewish leaders formulated a plot and solemnly promised that they wouldn't eat or drink until they had killed Paul. <sup>13</sup> More than forty people were involved in the conspiracy. <sup>14</sup> They went to the chief priests and elders and said, "We have solemnly promised to eat nothing until we have killed Paul. <sup>15</sup> You and the council must explain to the commander that you need Paul brought down to you. Pretend that you want to examine his case more closely. We're prepared to kill him before he arrives."

<sup>16</sup> Paul's sister had a son who heard about the ambush and he came to the military headquarters and reported it to Paul. <sup>17</sup> Paul called for one of the centurions and said, "Take this young man to the commander because he has something to report to him."

<sup>18</sup> He took him to the commander and said, "The prisoner Paul asked me to bring this young man to you. He has something to tell you."

<sup>19</sup> The commander took him by the hand and withdrew to a place where they could speak privately. He asked, "What do you have to report to me?"

<sup>20</sup> He replied, "The Jewish leaders have conspired to ask that you bring Paul down to the council tomorrow. They will pretend that they want to investigate his case more closely. <sup>21</sup> Don't fall for it! More than forty of them are waiting to ambush him. They have solemnly promised not to eat or drink until they have killed him. They are ready now, awaiting your consent."

<sup>22</sup> The commander dismissed the young man, ordering him, "Don't tell anyone that you brought this to my attention."

<sup>23</sup> The commander called two centurions and said, "Prepare two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen, and two hundred spearmen to leave for Caesarea at nine o'clock tonight. <sup>24</sup> Have horses ready for Paul to ride, so they may take him safely to Governor Felix." <sup>25</sup> He wrote the following letter:

<sup>26</sup> Claudius Lysias, to the most honorable Governor Felix: Greetings. <sup>27</sup> This man was seized by the Jews and was almost killed by them. I was nearby with a unit of soldiers, and I rescued him when I discovered that he was a Roman citizen. <sup>28</sup> I wanted to find out why they were accusing him, so I brought him to their council. <sup>29</sup> I discovered that they were accusing him about questions related to their Law. I found no charge deserving of death or imprisonment. <sup>30</sup> When I was informed of a conspiracy against his life, I sent him to you at once and ordered his accusers to bring their case against him before you.

<sup>31</sup> Following their orders, the soldiers took Paul during the night and brought him to Antipatris. <sup>32</sup> The following day they let the horsemen continue on with Paul while they returned to the military headquarters in Jerusalem. <sup>33</sup> The horsemen entered Caesarea, delivered the letter to the governor, and brought Paul before him.

<sup>34</sup> After he read the letter, he asked Paul about his home province. When he learned that he was from Cilicia, <sup>35</sup> the governor said, "I will hear your case when your accusers arrive." Then he ordered that Paul be kept in custody in Herod's palace.

#### **Acts 24:1-27 TRIAL BEFORE FELIX; PAUL IS HELD IN CUSTODY**

<sup>1</sup> Five days later the high priest Ananias came down with some elders and a lawyer named Tertullus. They pressed charges against Paul before the governor. <sup>2</sup> After the governor summoned Paul, Tertullus began to make his case against him. He declared, "Under your leadership, we have experienced substantial peace, and your administration has brought reforms to our nation. <sup>3</sup> Always and everywhere, most honorable Felix, we acknowledge this with deep gratitude. <sup>4</sup> I don't want to take too much of your time, so I ask that you listen with your usual courtesy to our brief statement of the facts. <sup>5</sup> We have found this man to be a troublemaker who stirs up riots among all the Jews throughout the empire. He's a ringleader of the Nazarene faction <sup>6</sup> and even tried to defile the temple. That's when we arrested him. <sup>7</sup> By examining him yourself, you will be able to verify the allegations we are bringing against him." <sup>8</sup> The Jews reinforced the action against Paul, affirming the truth of these accusations.

<sup>10</sup> The governor nodded at Paul, giving him permission to speak. He responded, "I know that you have been judge over this nation for many years, so I gladly offer my own defense. <sup>11</sup> You can verify that I went up to worship in Jerusalem no more than twelve days ago. <sup>12</sup> They didn't find me arguing with anyone in the temple or stirring up a crowd, whether in the synagogue or anywhere else in the city. <sup>13</sup> Nor can they prove to you the allegations they are now bringing against me. <sup>14</sup> I do admit this to you, that I am a follower of the Way, which they call a faction. Accordingly, I worship the God of our ancestors and believe everything set out in the Law and written in the Prophets. <sup>15</sup> The hope I have in God I also share with my accusers, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous. <sup>16</sup> On account of this, I have committed myself to maintaining a clear conscience before God and with all people. <sup>17</sup> After an absence of several years, I came to Jerusalem to bring gifts for the poor of my nation and to offer sacrifices. <sup>18</sup> When they found me in the temple, I was ritually pure. There was no crowd and no disturbance. <sup>19</sup> But there were some Jews from the province of Asia. They should be here making their accusations, if indeed they have something against me. <sup>20</sup> In their absence, have these people who are here declare what crime they found when I stood before the Jerusalem Council. <sup>21</sup> Perhaps it concerns this one statement that I blurted out when I was with them: 'I am on trial before you today because of the resurrection of the dead.'"

<sup>22</sup> Felix, who had an accurate understanding of the Way, adjourned the meeting. He said, "When Lysias the commander arrives from Jerusalem, I will decide this case." <sup>23</sup> He arranged for a centurion to guard Paul. He was to give Paul some freedom, and his friends were not to be hindered in their efforts to provide for him.

<sup>24</sup> After several days, Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, and summoned Paul. He listened to him talk about faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>25</sup> When he spoke about upright behavior, self-control, and the coming judgment, Felix became fearful and said, "Go away for now! When I have time, I'll send for you." <sup>26</sup> At the same time, he was hoping that Paul would offer him some money, so he often sent for him and talked with him.

<sup>27</sup> When two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus. Since Felix wanted to grant a favor to the Jews, he left Paul in prison.

### **Acts 25:1-12 PAUL APPEALS TO CAESAR**

<sup>1</sup> Three days after arriving in the province, Festus went up to Jerusalem from Caesarea. <sup>2</sup> The chief priests and Jewish leaders presented their case against Paul. Appealing to him, <sup>3</sup> they asked as a favor from Festus that he summon Paul to Jerusalem. They were planning to ambush and kill him along the way. <sup>4</sup> But Festus responded by keeping Paul in Caesarea, since he was to return there very soon himself. <sup>5</sup> "Some of your leaders can come down with me," he said. "If he's done anything wrong, they can bring charges against him."

<sup>6</sup> He stayed with them for no more than eight or ten days, then went down to Caesarea. The following day he took his seat in the court and ordered that Paul be brought in. <sup>7</sup> When he arrived, many Jews who had come down from Jerusalem surrounded him. They brought serious charges against him, but they couldn't prove them. <sup>8</sup> In his own defense, Paul said, "I've done nothing wrong against the Jewish Law, against the temple, or against Caesar."

<sup>9</sup> Festus, wanting to put the Jews in his debt, asked Paul, "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem to stand trial before me concerning these things?"

<sup>10</sup> Paul replied, "I'm standing before Caesar's court. I ought to be tried here. I have done nothing wrong to the Jews, as you well know. <sup>11</sup> If I'm guilty and have done something that deserves death, then I won't try to avoid death. But if there is nothing to their accusations against me, no one has the authority to hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar!"

<sup>12</sup> After Festus conferred with his advisors, he responded, "You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you will go."

### **BRIEF PRESENTATION ON KING HEROD AGRIPPA II – See Resource 14B**

## Acts 25:13-26:8 KING AGRIPPA INFORMED ABOUT PAUL; PAUL'S DEFENSE BEFORE AGRIPPA

<sup>13</sup> After several days had passed, King Agrippa and Bernice arrived in Caesarea to welcome Festus. <sup>14</sup> Since they were staying there for many days, Festus discussed the case against Paul with the king. He said, "There is a man whom Felix left in prison. <sup>15</sup> When I was in Jerusalem, the Jewish chief priests and elders brought charges against him and requested a guilty verdict in his case. <sup>16</sup> I told them it is contrary to Roman practice to hand someone over before they have faced their accusers and had opportunity to offer a defense against the charges. <sup>17</sup> When they came here, I didn't put them off. The very next day I took my seat in the court and ordered that the man be brought before me. <sup>18</sup> When the accusers took the floor, they didn't charge him with any of the crimes I had expected. <sup>19</sup> Instead, they quibbled with him about their own religion and about some dead man named Jesus, who Paul claimed was alive. <sup>20</sup> Since I had no idea how to investigate these matters, I asked if he would be willing to go to Jerusalem to stand trial there on these issues. <sup>21</sup> However, Paul appealed that he be held in custody pending a decision from His Majesty the emperor, so I ordered that he be held until I could send him to Caesar."

<sup>22</sup> Agrippa said to Festus, "I want to hear the man myself." "Tomorrow," Festus replied, "you will hear him." <sup>23</sup> The next day Agrippa and Bernice came with great fanfare. They entered the auditorium with the military commanders and the city's most prominent men. Festus then ordered that Paul be brought in. <sup>24</sup> Festus said, "King Agrippa and everyone present with us: You see this man! The entire Jewish community, both here and in Jerusalem, has appealed to me concerning him. They've been calling for his immediate death. <sup>25</sup> I've found that he has done nothing deserving death. When he appealed to His Majesty, I decided to send him to Rome. <sup>26</sup> I have nothing definite to write to our lord emperor. Therefore, I've brought him before all of you, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that after this investigation, I might have something to write. <sup>27</sup> After all, it would be foolish to send a prisoner without specifying the charges against him."

<sup>26</sup> Agrippa said to Paul, "You may speak for yourself." So Paul gestured with his hand and began his defense. <sup>2</sup> "King Agrippa, I consider myself especially fortunate that I stand before you today as I offer my defense concerning all the accusations the Jews have brought against me. <sup>3</sup> This is because you understand well all the Jewish customs and controversies. Therefore, I ask you to listen to me patiently. <sup>4</sup> Every Jew knows the way of life I have followed since my youth because, from the beginning, I was among my people and in Jerusalem. <sup>5</sup> They have known me for a long time. If they wanted to, they could testify that I followed the way of life set out by the most exacting group of our religion. I am a Pharisee. <sup>6</sup> Today I am standing trial because of the hope in the promise God gave our ancestors. <sup>7</sup> This is the promise our twelve tribes hope to receive as they earnestly worship night and day. The Jews are accusing me, King Agrippa, because of this hope! <sup>8</sup> Why is it inconceivable to you that God raises the dead?

## CONSULT MAP OF PAUL'S FINAL MISSIONARY JOURNEY – See Resource 14C

### **2) THE SEA VOYAGE BEGINS: from CAESAREA to SIDON, MYRA, PATARA, CNIDUS, CRETE, GOOD HARBORS, SALMONE, FAIR HAVENS, CAUDA**

#### **Acts 27:1-12 PAUL'S VOYAGE TO ROME**

<sup>27</sup> When it was determined that we were to sail to Italy, Paul and some other prisoners were placed in the custody of a centurion named Julius of the Imperial Company. <sup>2</sup> We boarded a ship from Adramyttium that was about to sail for ports along the coast of the province of Asia. So we put out to sea. Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica, came with us. <sup>3</sup> The next day we landed in Sidon. Julius treated Paul kindly and permitted him to go to some friends so they could take care of him. <sup>4</sup> From there we sailed off. We passed Cyprus, using the island to shelter us from the headwinds. <sup>5</sup> We sailed across the open sea off the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, and landed in Myra in Lycia. <sup>6</sup> There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship headed for Italy and put us on board. <sup>7</sup> After many days of slow and difficult sailing, we arrived off the coast of Cnidus. The wind

wouldn't allow us to go farther, so we sailed under the shelter of Crete off Salmone.<sup>8</sup> We sailed along the coast only with difficulty until we came to a place called Good Harbors,<sup>[b]</sup> near the city of Lasea.

<sup>9</sup> Much time had been lost, and the voyage was now dangerous since the Day of Reconciliation had already passed. Paul warned them,<sup>10</sup> "Men, I see that our voyage will suffer damage and great loss, not only for the cargo and ship but also for our lives."<sup>11</sup> But the centurion was persuaded more by the ship's pilot and captain than by Paul's advice.<sup>12</sup> Since the harbor was unsuitable for spending the winter, the majority supported a plan to put out to sea from there. They thought they might reach Phoenix in Crete and spend the winter in its harbor, which faced southwest and northwest.

## 2) STORMS ENROUTE; SHIPWRECK; MALTA

### Acts 27:13-44 HURRICANE FORCE WINDS AND SHIPWRECK

<sup>13</sup> When a gentle south wind began to blow, they thought they could carry out their plan. They pulled up anchor and sailed closely along the coast of Crete.<sup>14</sup> Before long, a hurricane-strength wind known as a northeaster swept down from Crete.<sup>15</sup> The ship was caught in the storm and couldn't be turned into the wind. So we gave in to it, and it carried us along.<sup>16</sup> After sailing under the shelter of an island called Cauda, we were able to control the lifeboat only with difficulty.<sup>17</sup> They brought the lifeboat aboard, then began to wrap the ship with cables to hold it together. Fearing they might run aground on the sandbars of the Gulf of Syrtis, they lowered the anchor and let the ship be carried along.<sup>18</sup> We were so battered by the violent storm that the next day the men began throwing cargo overboard.<sup>19</sup> On the third day, they picked up the ship's gear and hurled it into the sea.<sup>20</sup> When neither the sun nor the moon appeared for many days and the raging storm continued to pound us, all hope of our being saved from this peril faded.

<sup>21</sup> For a long time no one had eaten. Paul stood up among them and said, "Men, you should have complied with my instructions not to sail from Crete. Then we would have avoided this damage and loss.<sup>22</sup> Now I urge you to be encouraged. Not one of your lives will be lost, though we will lose the ship.<sup>23</sup> Last night an angel from the God to whom I belong and whom I worship stood beside me.<sup>24</sup> The angel said, 'Don't be afraid, Paul! You must stand before Caesar! Indeed, God has also graciously given you everyone sailing with you.'<sup>25</sup> Be encouraged, men! I have faith in God that it will be exactly as he told me.<sup>26</sup> However, we must run aground on some island."

<sup>27</sup> On the fourteenth night, we were being carried across the Adriatic Sea. Around midnight the sailors began to suspect that land was near.<sup>28</sup> They dropped a weighted line to take soundings and found the water to be about one hundred twenty feet deep. After proceeding a little farther, we took soundings again and found the water to be about ninety feet deep.<sup>29</sup> Afraid that we might run aground somewhere on the rocks, they hurled out four anchors from the stern and began to pray for daylight.<sup>30</sup> The sailors tried to abandon the ship by lowering the lifeboat into the sea, pretending they were going to lower anchors from the bow.<sup>31</sup> Paul said to the centurion and his soldiers, "Unless they stay in the ship, you can't be saved from peril."<sup>32</sup> The soldiers then cut the ropes to the lifeboat and let it drift away.

<sup>33</sup> Just before daybreak, Paul urged everyone to eat. He said, "This is the fourteenth day you've lived in suspense, and you've not had even a bite to eat.<sup>34</sup> I urge you to take some food. Your health depends on it. None of you will lose a single hair from his head."<sup>35</sup> After he said these things, he took bread, gave thanks to God in front of them all, then broke it and began to eat.<sup>36</sup> Everyone was encouraged and took some food. (<sup>37</sup> In all, there were two hundred seventy-six of us on the ship.)<sup>38</sup> When they had eaten as much as they wanted, they lightened the ship by throwing the grain into the sea.

<sup>39</sup> In the morning light they saw a bay with a sandy beach. They didn't know what land it was, but they thought they might possibly be able to run the ship aground.<sup>40</sup> They cut the anchors loose and left them in the sea. At the same time, they untied the ropes that ran back to the rudders. They raised the foresail to catch the wind and made for the beach.<sup>41</sup> But they struck a sandbar and the ship ran aground. The bow was stuck and wouldn't move, and the stern was broken into pieces by the force of the waves.<sup>42</sup> The soldiers decided to kill the prisoners to keep them from swimming to shore and escaping.<sup>43</sup> However, the centurion wanted to save Paul, so he stopped them from carrying out their plan. He ordered those who could swim to jump overboard first and

head for land. <sup>44</sup> He ordered the rest to grab hold of planks or debris from the ship. In this way, everyone reached land safely.

### **Acts 28:1-10 On the Island of Malta**

<sup>28</sup> After reaching land safely, we learned that the island was called Malta. <sup>2</sup> The islanders showed us extraordinary kindness. Because it was rainy and cold, they built a fire and welcomed all of us. <sup>3</sup> Paul gathered a bunch of dry sticks and put them on the fire. As he did, a poisonous snake, driven out by the heat, latched on to his hand. <sup>4</sup> When the islanders saw the snake hanging from his hand, they said to each other, "This man must be a murderer! He was rescued from the sea, but the goddess Justice hasn't let him live!" <sup>5</sup> Paul shook the snake into the fire and suffered no harm. <sup>6</sup> They expected him to swell up with fever or suddenly drop dead. After waiting a long time and seeing nothing unusual happen to him, they changed their minds and began to claim that he was a god.

<sup>7</sup> Publius, the island's most prominent person, owned a large estate in that area. He welcomed us warmly into his home as his guests for three days. <sup>8</sup> Publius' father was bedridden, sick with a fever and dysentery. Paul went to see him and prayed. He placed his hand on him and healed him. <sup>9</sup> Once this happened, the rest of the sick on the island came to him and were healed. <sup>10</sup> They honored us in many ways. When we were getting ready to sail again, they supplied us with what we needed.

### **4) THE JOURNEY ENDS: SYRACUSE, RHEGIUM, PUTEOLI, FORUM OF APPIUS, THREE TAVERNS, FINALLY ROME**

#### **Acts 28:11-16 Paul makes it to Rome**

<sup>11</sup> After three months we put out to sea in a ship that had spent the winter at the island. It was an Alexandrian ship with carvings of the twin gods Castor and Pollux as its figurehead. <sup>12</sup> We landed in Syracuse where we stayed three days. <sup>13</sup> From there we sailed to Rhegium. After one day a south wind came up, and we arrived on the second day in Puteoli. <sup>14</sup> There we found brothers and sisters who urged us to stay with them for a week. In this way we came to Rome. <sup>15</sup> When the brothers and sisters there heard about us, they came as far as the Forum of Appius and the Three Taverns to meet us. When Paul saw them, he gave thanks to God and was encouraged. <sup>16</sup> When we entered Rome, Paul was permitted to live by himself, with a soldier guarding him.

### **5) MINISTRY WHILE IMPRISONED IN ROME**

#### **Acts 28:17-31 Paul meets Jewish leaders in Rome; his ministry there**

<sup>17</sup> Three days later, Paul called the Jewish leaders together. When they gathered, he said, "Brothers, although I have done nothing against our people or the customs of our ancestors, I'm a prisoner from Jerusalem. They handed me over to the Romans, <sup>18</sup> who intended to release me after they examined me, because they couldn't find any reason for putting me to death. <sup>19</sup> When the Jews objected, I was forced to appeal to Caesar. Don't think I appealed to Caesar because I had any reason to bring charges against my nation. <sup>20</sup> This is why I asked to see you and speak with you: it's because of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain."

<sup>21</sup> They responded, "We haven't received any letters about you from Judea, nor have any of our brothers come and reported or said anything bad about you. <sup>22</sup> But we think it's important to hear what you think, for we know that people everywhere are speaking against this faction."

<sup>23</sup> On the day scheduled for this purpose, many people came to the place where he was staying. From morning until evening, he explained and testified concerning God's kingdom and tried to convince them about Jesus through appealing to the Law from Moses and the Prophets. <sup>24</sup> Some were persuaded by what he said, but

others refused to believe. <sup>25</sup> They disagreed with each other and were starting to leave when Paul made one more statement: “The Holy Spirit spoke correctly when he said to your ancestors through Isaiah the prophet,

<sup>26</sup> Go to this people and say:

You will hear, to be sure, but never understand;  
and you will certainly see but never recognize what you are seeing.

<sup>27</sup> This people’s senses have become calloused,  
and they’ve become hard of hearing,  
and they’ve shut their eyes  
so that they won’t see with their eyes  
or hear with their ears

or understand with their minds,  
and change their hearts and lives that I may heal them. <sup>[a]</sup>

<sup>28</sup> “Therefore, be certain of this: God’s salvation has been sent to the Gentiles. They will listen!” <sup>[b]</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Paul lived in his own rented quarters for two full years and welcomed everyone who came to see him.

<sup>31</sup> Unhindered and with complete confidence, he continued to preach God’s kingdom and to teach about the Lord Jesus Christ.

## 6) THE WORK OF PROCLAMATION CONTINUES.....

*(...consider this concluding footnote at the end of Acts,  
printed in the Oxford Edition of the New English Bible)*

*“Although we would like to know the outcome of Paul’s imprisonment, that information is not essential for the author’s purpose. (Luke) has had in mind a story that remains incomplete until the fulfillment of God’s plan in the remote future. Meanwhile, men will be proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching the facts about the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

### For further discussion as time permits: UNSUNG HEROES IN THE BOOK OF ACTS (See Resource 14A)

1. Who were they?
2. What was the nature of their contribution?

## MAJOR THEMES ENCOUNTERED IN THE BOOK OF ACTS

*(direct quotations from Dr. Carol Miller, author of Resource Book: “Into the World”)*

**A) UNIVERSALITY:** *“Luke sees Jesus and the church as the fulfillment of the promises made to the people of Israel. One of those promises was that Israel would be ‘a light to the nations...’ Luke’s interest in Jesus’ love for the Gentiles ... is magnified in the spread of the gospel into the Gentile world. This interest is highlighted in Acts 1:8 which describes the task of the church in terms of witness ‘to the ends of the earth.’”*

**For Recall:**

- 1) What were some of the obstacles encountered in Acts that could have put an end to the Good News?
- 2) By the end of Acts. How far has the Gospel extended into “all the world?”

**B) WOMEN:** *“When Luke names the apostles in Acts 1:13-14, he also mentions ‘certain women including Mary the mother of Jesus.’ We also meet Priscilla the woman pastor, Lydia the merchant, Dorcas, Rhoda, Sapphira....”*

**For Recall:**

- 1) From your remembrance of the role(s) taken by women in the gospel narratives, how does that compare with the role(s) of women in the early church?
- 2) Have there been changes?
- 3) If so, what kind of changes?

**C) THE HOLY SPIRIT:** *“Many have said that the Acts of the Apostles would have been better named ‘The Acts of the Holy Spirit.’”*

**For Recall:**

- 1) What major events in Acts emphasize the significance of the Holy Spirit for the church?
- 2) How does Luke connect the work of the Spirit with Jesus?
- 3) Does the importance of this theme continue in the life of the church today?

**D) THE OLD COVENANT FULFILLED:** *“Much of Acts takes place in the Gentile world and among Gentile believers. But the Christian faith is, for Luke, rooted and grounded in Judaism and the promises of God to the people of Israel...”*

**For Recall:**

- 1) How has Luke shown the church to be the fulfillment of God’s promises to ancient Israel?
- 2) How did Paul’s actions and preaching emphasize this theme?
- 3) How significantly does the contemporary church continue to proclaim this theme?

**E) THE NATURE and MISSION OF THE CHURCH:** *“Luke’s main focus in Acts is not simply the history of the early church, but what it means to be the church, and therefore what the church’s mission is.”*

**For Recall:**

- 1) How well did Luke accomplish his intention?
- 2) What does Acts show the nature of the church to be?
- 3) To do?

- 4) A challenge: Try your hand at writing a brief statement that summarizes the nature and purpose of the church!

**F) GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND OF PAUL'S TRAVELS: *"It is difficult to read Acts without maps, for Luke details the journeys of Paul and others in length travel narratives. Paul himself did not lay out his trips in diary fashion in his letters. . . . It is Acts that gives us a more comprehensive picture. The time line and travel narratives in Acts do not always match with what Paul says in his letters. Luke is concerned to show the fulfilling of the church's mission through Paul's work. Luke is not first and foremost concerned with historical detail."***

**For Recall:**

- 1) What new insights have you gained into the world of the early church as the result of the use of maps and pictures during this study?
- 2) How significant was the existence of the Roman Empire to the rapid spread of Christianity?
- 3) What advantages did the Empire provide?
- 4) What were the major obstacles?

**A CLOSING LITANY: *"Go into all the world"***

Leader: "Why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven"

People: *When we are feeling lost or abandoned in a world that doesn't seem to care much for our gospel message, give us strength and courage to keep believing that Christ is present among us, until He comes again.*

(L) "You will be my witnesses ... to the ends of the earth."

**(P) *Our tongues are slow and thick. What can we say? We are empty shells without your Spirit to fill us!***

(L) "Amazed and astonished, they asked ... how is it that ... in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power?"

**(P) *We wait upon your Spirit to renew us today, Lord! The world needs the Good News of your Son Jesus Christ more than ever!***

(L) "Now, when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said . . . What should we do? Peter said to them, Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

***(P) May the words that you give us have the power to cut to the hearts of all who hear them. Too often our churches are echoing with lofty words that bounce off walls and never find their mark in the lives of worshippers. We pray for the spark to be rekindled and nurtured gently into full life by the soft breeze of the Spirit among us.***

(L) “For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.”

**Concluding Pastoral Prayer**

SAKLC—“Conversations” 2013.05.02 per hjm