

ST ARMANDS KEY LUTHERAN CHURCH
SARASOTA, FLORIDA

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

Lesson Plan for Thursday – January 17, 2013

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

Chapter 2 – *“Preparing for the Church’s Birth”*

Our Objectives this week:

1. To become further acquainted with one another and value each person’s contribution to our Conversation on Acts.
2. To be able to describe the attitude and activities of the early church as it waits for the arrival of the Spirit in the first chapter of Acts.
3. To cite comparisons between the early church and our own congregation.
4. To state an understanding of the meaning of Jesus’ ascension for the early church and for the church of today.
5. To be able to summarize the qualifications of an apostle, according to Luke.

An Opening Act of Worship: *(distribution of Resource 2A will be made in Ogram Hall)*

I) WAITING AND PRAYING FOR RESTORATION - ACTS 1:1-14: *(“NRSV”)*

1 In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning 2 until the day when he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. 3 After his suffering he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. 4 While staying with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. "This," he said, "is what you have heard from me; 5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

PART A: *On the lines below, list the central people, events, and places in Acts 1:1-5*

6 So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" **7** He replied, "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. **8** But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." **9** When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. **10** While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. **11** They said, "Men of Galilee, 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."

PART B: On the lines below, list the central people, events, and places in Acts 1:6-11

12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey away. **13** When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. **14** All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.

PART C: On the lines below, list the central people, events, and places in Acts 1:12-14

II) LEADERSHIP IN THE COMMUNITY - ACTS 1:15-26 ("NRSV")

15 In those days Peter stood up among the believers (together the crowd numbered about one hundred twenty persons) and said, **16** "Friends, the scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit through David foretold concerning Judas, who became a guide for those who arrested Jesus— **17** for he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry." **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. **19** This became known to all the residents of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their language Hakeldama, that is, Field of Blood.) **20** "For it is written in the book of Psalms, "Let his homestead become desolate, and let there be no one to live in it'; and "Let another take his position of overseer.'" **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 must become a witness with us to his resurrection." **23** So they proposed two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias. **24** Then they prayed and said, "Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which one of these two you have chosen **25** to 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 added to the eleven apostles.

On the lines below, list the central people, events, and places in Acts 1:15-26

III) OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THESE PROLOGUE TEXTS:

In this first chapter of Acts the **church is doing four things** as it prepares to begin its mission:

1. Learning about God's reign (vss. 2-3)
2. Waiting for the gift of the Holy Spirit (vss. 4-5)
3. Praying (vs. 14)
4. Selecting a new leader (vss. 23-26)

IV) PERTINENT QUESTIONS FOR OUR CONVERSATION:

- a) How do most modern congregations prepare to make a major decision or to launch a new project?
- b) Which of the 4 items observed above do you consider most important in the process? Why?
- c) Does "SAKLC" typically prepare any differently to make a major decision or to launch a new mission?

V) A SPECIFIC FOCUS ON CHRIST'S ASCENSION –

a) Luke 24:33-51 - 33 That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. **34** They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" **35** Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread. **36** While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." **37** They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. **38** He said to them, "Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? **39** Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." **40** And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. **41** While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" **42** They gave him a piece of broiled fish, **43** and he took it and ate in their presence. **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, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled." **45** Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, **46** and he said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, **47** and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. **48** You are witnesses of these things. **49** And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high." **50** Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. **51** While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven.

b) ACTS 1:3-11 (*consult texts already printed out in Section I*)

c) An important observation by Prof. Wm Willimon in "ACTS"

(Interpretation Series Commentary -1988 – John Knox Press)

"Should we be concerned that Luke appears to report the ascension in two different ways? Did the ascension occur on Easter evening or 40 days later? ... Luke was an artist, not a newspaper reporter. The contradictions in the accounts are clues to the author's intentions. In Luke 24 the ascension is a conclusion, a dramatic finale to Jesus' earthly ministry. The one whom Pilate and Caiaphas sought to entomb is taken up in glory. In Acts 1 the ascension is the beginning presupposition on which the church is based. The end becomes the beginning as the story continues. Luke is looking at the same ascension from different points of view, drawing from it different implications for the community.

*In Acts two languages are used to describe what has happened in Christ – one, **THE LANGUAGE OF RESURRECTION VICTORY** over death; the other, **THE LANGUAGE OF ASCENSION**, sitting at the right hand of God and empowerment. These two motifs meet in Acts 2 at Pentecost when the life and power of Christ are given to the disciples through the Spirit."*

(Perhaps, more simply stated: Jesus is not only victorious over death; he is the exalted Son of God! Recall our own statement of belief regularly spoken in worship - the line about Jesus' ascension in the Apostles Creed!)

d) The Cloud as a biblical symbol of God's power and presence

1. Meriam Matthews – volunteer presentation!
2. In this regard see also –
 - a. Exodus 13:21-22
 - b. Exodus 16:10
 - c. Numbers 12:5
 - d. Deuteronomy 31:15
 - e. Luke 9:34-35
 - f. 1 Thessalonians 4:17
 - g. Revelation 11:12

e) Preaching the Ascension message –

(Resource 2C, a sermon excerpt by Barbara Brown Taylor, will be distributed during the session; time limitations may limit discussion; however, read Taylor's words and then consider the questions that come at the end)

*(FYI - **Barbara Brown Taylor** (born 1951) is an American Episcopal priest, professor, and theologian and is one of the United States' best known preachers. Ordained in 1984, she became the rector of Grace-Calvary Episcopal Church in Clarkesville, GA in 1992. In 1996, she was named one of the twelve "most effective" preachers in the English-speaking world. She later left parish ministry and became a full-time professor at Piedmont College in Demorest, GA. She has written twelve books on faith and spirituality.)*

A Closing Act of Worship: *(distribution of Resource 2B will be made in Ogram Hall)*

Preparation for our next meeting – Thursday, January 24, 2013

1. Resource Book – Chapter 3 – *“The Birth of the Church”*
2. In Scripture read: Acts 2: 1-47
Luke 24:25-31; 45-49
Joel 2:28-32
3. **Volunteers wanted:** with ability to read Acts 2:5-8 in any foreign language. Bring Bible printed in that language. *Text will be read simultaneously; therefore, perfect pronunciation is not required!*

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