

Acts 1:15–26

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[0 : 00] This text is taken from the book of Acts, chapter 1, verses 15 to 26. This can be found in the White Bibles on page 1007. Again, the scripture text is Acts, chapter 1, verses 15 to 26, on page 1007 of the White Bibles.

Please stand for the reading of God's word. In those days, Peter stood up among the brothers. The company of persons was in all about 120 and said, Brothers, the scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke 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 the ministry. Now this man acquired a field with 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, a caldemma, 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 time that 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.

[1 : 32] And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was called Justice, and Matthias. And they prayed and said, You, Lord, who know the heart of all, show which of these men, of these two, you have chosen to take the place in this ministry, an 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. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated.

Amen. Good morning. A brief prayer. Lord, thank you that this is the word of the Lord.

Lord, thank you that your will will be done as we sing. I pray, Lord, that you will reveal those realities in our heart, in our lives today, that your will and your glory will be the trajectory of our lives.

In Jesus' name. Amen. A word for witnesses. That's what I've titled the sermon today.

[2 : 54] A word for witnesses. Our text this morning comes off the heels of the ascension of Christ as followers of Christ, witness, this extraordinary event, and then are headed or have headed to Jerusalem upon seeing what happened and speaking to an angel.

Last week, we saw a prayer meeting that took place following this ascension as the disciples made their way to an upper room along with the women and the family of Christ, watching Christ ascend into heaven, into the heavens, remembering his words about how they would be witnesses when the power of the Holy Spirit came upon them.

Those two facts, facts alone were enough for a prayer meeting to break out. Seeing a guy fly away and tell him that you're going to get superpowers.

superpowers. But today, we get one of the outcomes of what happened in that upper room with the disciples just before Pentecost would arrive in chapter 2.

Now, not only did Christ's ascension and his words spark a prayer meeting, but it prompted a Bible study. two elements that would prove to be the reason that these witnesses would stay in business through the years.

[4 : 33] Devotion to prayer and commitment to Bible study. Commitment to the Word of God. And if prayer was the fuel for the early church, then Bible study is the engine of the early church.

Bible study and prayer fuel in the engine for the church even today. These witnesses would need to lean on the inspiration of the text, the inspired Word of God if they would remain steadfast, if they would remain true to the call that Christ had called them to, if they would remain sure even in their

own hearts.

And as witnesses of God, this engine would be just what they needed to even remain relevant in the world, the Word of God. If you want to remain relevant, stand on the Word of God.

Two ways in which the Word of God was brought forward in our passage today, a voice and a sign for God's witness.

a voice and a sign as a word to witnesses. And I'm going to cheat a little bit. The voice is broken up into two parts, so you get three points.

[5 : 56] But a voice and a sign. First of all, verse 15 through 20, lay your eyes on the text. Verse 15 through 20a, you'll notice, first of all, in those days, Peter stood up amongst the brothers.

Peter stands up, shows he's a leader who stands up for the call and stands up for what God has already placed in his heart.

He stands up in the middle of the prayer meeting to tell the folks what's to happen next. What are we to do? We're all here, we're praying, now this is what's going to happen next.

He's standing up amongst the rest of the ten apostles, amongst 120 people gathering, emphasizing two things. Look at verse 16. The scriptures had to be fulfilled, number one, and the Holy Spirit spoke.

Those are the two things he emphasizes in his first few words. The scriptures have to be revealed, verse 16a, and the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand through the mouth of David.

[7 : 06] This is the first of eight of Peter's speeches. you'll hear throughout the book of Acts, recorded in the book of Acts by Luke, as he addresses the crowds, brothers, the scriptures have to be fulfilled.

How's that for a thesis statement? Luke is quick to shift the focus, though. It's not just about Peter and his authority. He's quick to kind of shift the focus.

Peter's voice in just two verses is really the voice of the Holy Spirit. It's not Peter's voice, it's God's voice. Luke seeks to put the attention on God very early in our text today.

Shifts the blame, the responsibility, whatever you want to call it, the recognition to God so that the full observance of everyone listening after being in prayer with God is to now take a look back at what God has said.

Peter's voice is no longer Peter's voice. Peter's voice is the voice of the Holy Spirit. And what's the topic of what Peter has to say in verse 16? Look again.

[8 : 18] Brothers, the scriptures 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 amongst us and was allotted his share in this ministry.

The topic that the Holy Spirit is concerning with the 120 is concerning Judas. Judging by the parenthetical verses in verses 18 through 19 you'll see that well Judas it seems that the events that occurred with him would have been an embarrassment to the people.

It was something that they might have talked about. Everybody kind of knows yo Peter got it. I'm sorry Judas got it. Judas fell off the deep end.

It could have been an embarrassment. It would seem that if it wasn't known amongst the land at least it was known amongst these 120 people who at their dinner table might have mentioned it. At least for Luke he thought it was important enough to mention it to Theophilus but Luke decides to put forward that Judas had a bad rap.

[9 : 38] Peter points his audience to two verses out of the book of Psalm in order to show what is being fulfilled amongst them. You want to know what's next? Let me point you back to the text.

Two verses that would serve both as a judgment toward Judas but also a way forward for the congregation. Isn't that what the text does for us today?

It's either a judgment toward us or pushes us forward. He starts with Psalm 69 verse 26.

Interesting enough this chapter is quoted some 10 times in the New Testament. Psalm 69. It's concerning David's enemies. David's writing concerning his enemies.

And if you're reading through Psalm 69 you'll hear verses like let them be blotted out of your book oh God. Let their eyes be darkened oh Lord.

[10 : 37] Or when you get to verse 26 of Psalm 69 you get our verse in verse 20a referring to Judas may their camp be a desolation let no one dwell in their tents.

Peter puts forth this verse as if to say David wasn't necessarily talking about his enemies David was talking about God's enemies even if David didn't really know what he was talking about.

As Peter and the rest of the crowd break open the scriptures to see what God has said the voice of God here is spoken through Peter is a prophetic voice.

It's not foretelling what God has said. What's even more interesting is the fact that it's Peter speaking about Judas. It's kind of like the pot calling the kettle.

I mean think about it. Judas at least got some money for his betrayal. Peter on the other hand he just covered out.

[11 : 42] But isn't that just like God to take a man take somebody who's running the opposite way shape him and make him a vessel a mouthpiece for God.

God is in the habit of changing hearts wherever you are. Judas' death therefore does not take God by surprise in verse in chapter 69 of Psalm.

It doesn't take God by surprise. His first words to the people through Peter is to know that God has I dare I say divinely rigged the course of events so that people can get a glimpse of his glory.

The circumstances of life are not out of God's sight. He didn't forget. He didn't have to make up a plan B so that what is true about God will be made known in the world.

God that's what Judas serves as. Peter's pointing out of Psalm 69 to show us even today that all scripture is still useful still profitable.

[12 : 53] Psalm 69 gives us hope for what has happened but Peter goes on to shed light on a way forward. If Psalm 69 is pointing at what has happened Peter goes on to Psalm 109 to show what will happen.

You get a voice for Peter but you also have a voice for the witnesses. Verses 20b through 22 first of all he says let another take his place quoting from Psalm 109 the second passage he puts forth to the 120 is an answer to the issue of what to do in light of Judas' vacancy.

He points them back to Psalm 109 in contrast but also for an answer. May another take his office. Or even further translated may another seize his good. May somebody else take his stuff.

We're greeted with Peter's good news in the text that God already planned this. God already has the answer for it. He's better than Allen Iverson.

He is the answer. In Peter's sermon God has already planned this in accordance to what his will is which is the very reason he puts forth the qualifications of who will actually take the place.

[14 : 15] Look down again at verse 21 and 22. So one of them one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that 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 the resurrection.

First of all one who had accompanied us during the time of our Lord Peter is pointing out that they need to have relationship with God. They need to have already had relationship with this Lord.

They need to be a companion of Jesus Christ. They need to be called a disciple. Are you called a disciple today? This is what Peter puts forth for somebody who's going to be a witness going forward for the early church.

But then he doesn't stop there. He goes forward beginning from John the Baptist's baptism. See, he had to not only be a friend of Jesus, but he had to also be there during the duration of Jesus' ministry.

He had to know what Jesus did. He had to know what Jesus wouldn't do. He had to know Christ. John's baptism was recorded by Luke as the start of Christ's ministry.

[15 : 30] But again, he doesn't just stop there at the ministry of Christ. Look again, he says in verse 22, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken from us.

Crucifixion had to be something on his mind as well. It had to be something that he witnessed. But then lastly, he says, you know what?

Peter must become with us a witness to his resurrection. I find that part funny because didn't that already happen?

But for Peter, the importance falls here on the resurrection. The new witness must bear witness of the resurrection because under this one gets the full comprehension of God's ministry.

One gets the full comprehension of Christ's ministry on earth. Calvin says it like this, we have the end of redemption therein, speaking of the resurrection, and the accomplishment thereof, bringing with it the celestial government of Christ, the power of the Spirit, establishing justice, restoring order, abolishing the tyranny of sin, and putting to flight all the enemies of Christ.

[16:50] Christ. You skip on the resurrection, you skip out on the one that can handle your sin. You skip out on salvation. The voice of this witness for Christ would need to testify to the fullness of Christ.

In other words, the voice of the witness would need to be able to preach, ladies and gentlemen. We see glimpses of this as the book of Acts goes on. Real quick, turn over to Acts chapter four, verse 33.

When you have a say, man. And he says, and with great power, the apostles were given their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.

You see, the grace came with the witness of the resurrection. As Peter stands, as a leader, he invokes the scripture as authority.

He invokes that the word will be the way forward for all who will be a witness of Christ. The word. He is saying to the people, this scripture, breathed out by God, is the answer, the way to which we know not only what is going on, but what to do in light of what's going on.

[18:11] Wouldn't you like to know what to do in light of what's going on? Peter puts forth that in order to know that, you have to stand on the written text. Tons of things that would draw our attention away, but I would implore that you run back to the thing that makes you relevant, God and his word.

In fact, everything works in relation to scripture, including how you witness. In case any of their hearts were troubled by the fact that the Lord was gone, or that an apostle was gone, and now they're down to 11, if there was any doubt to the direction of the church, the answer is, what has the Holy Spirit said?

The voice of these witnesses and the one to be chosen carried the weight of the world, carried the weight that it would need to take care of God's people, the word.

After seeing the voice of scripture, as proclaimed through Peter, put forth for the witnesses, we're also met with a sign. So yeah, you got the voice, but it's pointing to something.

It's actually the answer to who you're under, who, depending on who you're pointing to, a sign to the world.

[19:36] There's a sign that is shot up, a flare shot up as the witnesses of God submit to God's word. Verse 23 through 26, look at it one more time.

And they put forward two, Joseph called Barcippus, who was also called Justice, and Matthias. They put forward two men amongst the 120 amongst them to meet these qualifications, who they felt met these qualifications, Joseph and Matthias.

They would meet these qualifications by submitting to Scripture. They would choose these people by submitting to what Psalm has said. And with the absence of one apostle from the 12, there could be a sense of incompetence amongst the people, that because we don't have our full 12, maybe we're missing something, maybe they're unsure as the way to go because man, 12 meant that God was for us.

12 meant that it was more than just the morale factor of replacing somebody, it was the foundation that they were thinking of. What makes the early church secure?

Well, if we're thinking 12 would point back to the 12 tribes, 12 would point back to the promises of God, but then 12 also points forward to what God is going to do in the world.

[21:11] Not 11, not 13, but 12. Well, perhaps we get a cheat sheet this morning by being able to look around through the text, some of Christ's words regarding this 12.

John 17 22 says it like this, I like the way Christ prays, while I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me.

I have guarded them and not one of them has been lost, except the son of destruction, perdition, that the scripture might be fulfilled.

You see, when Christ is praying, he's already thinking that it's fulfilled fulfilled, because the plan is still going according to plan. The putting forth of these two individuals meant that as they awaited the promise of the Holy Spirit, God was actually still at work amongst them.

The voice of the Holy Spirit could be found even in their own Old Testament passages. The sign to the world is a sign that Judas isn't the end of the story, praise God.

[22:25] Judas isn't the end of the story for God's people. Take a look even at the prayer in verse 24. And they prayed and said, Lord, you Lord, who knows the hearts of all, show which one of these two have been chosen.

You got to check the faith they have. First, knowing that God knows. Do you know that God knows? Or do you doubt that he knows what's going on in our lives? God knows who he's chosen, and then they're expecting God to act.

There's an expectation in their prayer. Despite the circumstance surrounding Judas, their prayer would be that the person appointed by God would contradict the actions of Judas. This is hard because when you look above in our text at the description of Judas in verse 17, it says, for he was numbered amongst!

us! and was allotted his share in ministry. Judas wasn't somebody that you could just look at and be like, yo, that man's evil. Yeah, he gonna fall off.

Judas, for all intents and purposes, looked like us. You know how good we look today. Judas played the part. It's hard looking at Judas in the text because he doesn't look like anything will go wrong, especially amongst the disciples.

[23 : 50] Jesus asked them, he says to them, one of you will betray me, and they all look around like, who? Who amongst us? No hints of betrayal. So it seemed, but God knows the plan.

John 6, 69 says it like this, and we have believed and have come to know that you are the Holy One of God. This is the disciples speaking to Jesus, and Jesus answers them and says, did I not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is the devil?

Well, we may not know even amongst us who eventually will fall away. Or we may not be able to spot those amongst us whose lives are marred with sin, who's weighed down by Satan.

What we need to know is that Peter, in verse 17, tells us that Judas was not only amongst the ministry, but he was allotted a portion, meaning what fell upon him was what God wanted to fall upon Judas.

You see, the sign to the world from Peter, according to Peter, and the disciples, was that they were hoping to claim, for righteousness sake, someone who would carry this forward, who would help carry this message forward.

[25 : 14] But the sign also didn't come without a sign of judgment. God also has, in his giving of grace and his mercy bestowed upon the world, he also just as much has a sign of judgment.

In other words, he doesn't just sweep sin under the carpet. He's not just letting Judas's go away. God deals with unrighteousness in his most perfect manner.

God cast lots for the choosing between Matthias and justice. This was a manner that was common amongst Near Eastern times.

It was common amongst the people. You'll find casting lots throughout the text of the Bible. You'll see it amongst Jonah. You'll even see in the Old Testament where people like Aaron would decide between goats to offer for sin offering by casting lots to see which one it fell on so that God would be pleased with the sin offering.

So casting lots was something that was common amongst them. And we're not necessarily sure exactly the way they cast lots in this instance. In verse 26, some say they possibly wrote their names down on something and put it in a bowl and whichever one fell on the ground, that's who they chose.

[26 : 37] Or maybe they wrote their name on a rock and whatever came out is who they felt God was actually pushing forward. But we're not sure how this happened.

But the point is that they wanted God's sovereign hand in the midst of their choosing. They wanted God to be the ultimate choosing of who would push this thing forward.

They wanted to have hands off in a sense. They wanted God to tell them what was next. We also know that once the Holy Spirit comes after Pentecost, you don't see lots cast any longer because the Spirit of God dwells in people.

He's the one leading them and guiding them. Again, back to John 16, 13, when the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears, he will speak and he will declare to you the things that are to come.

As the lots fell, they fell on Matthias, the Bible says nothing about him later, goes silent, but I love what Luke says about him.

[27 : 59] He was numbered amongst the eleven. Very simple, very clean, not nothing to write home about. are you numbered amongst the brothers.

That's what this table is about today. That's what the sign of a witness is about. Not for our own glory, not to us, but to your name be the glory, oh God.

God. The sign that we shoot up is that, Lord, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. And to be a sign to the world that as witnesses of Christ, we live under the word, the written word of God. Craig Keener says it like this, preparing united witnesses for the purpose of when the spirit would come. That's what they were doing here. They were preparing for what God is going to do next week in chapter two.

As I close, I think about some of American history. First black church, Petersburg, Virginia, called the First Baptist Church.

[29 : 23] It used to be called the First African Baptist Church. They're now today called the First Baptist Church, still one of the largest growing churches in Virginia. But this church was founded by a group of slaves under William Byrd, the second or the first and then the second and then the third.

As these people decided we need to meet together as itinerant preachers would come to the slave farms and preach the gospel and then the hearts of the slaves, even though some of them, most of them couldn't read, couldn't speak well, they would be converted by the power of the Holy Ghost because of what the preacher would say, but then they would get together and they would have meetings.

And in that time, slave owners, they felt indifferent about slaves meeting because, well, they didn't even know if they had souls, let alone if they wanted them meeting in case they in fear of insurrection.

One slave said it like this as they would get together and slave masters would implant spies amongst them or maybe they would send a preacher to do the preaching so that they weren't doing their own preaching.

But one slave said it like this, the preacher came and he'd just say, serve your master, don't steal from your master, don't take his turkey, don't take his hogs, don't steal his meat, do whatsoever the master tells you.

[30 : 44] Same old thing all the time. Sometimes we would have church at my father's house and that's when they would want real meeting and that's where we would hear real preaching and it was different because we didn't know whether they were Methodist or Baptist because we would sing in whispers and we would pray in whispers.

See the point of that meeting was the fact that they knew something was happening different from what they were experiencing. Imagine praying and someone coming in beating you because you're praying to the Lord.

Interesting enough as William Byrd III commits suicide, the church still lives on today. They still meet today.

They're still under the power of the Holy Ghost today. They're still under the written word today, still seeking God's voice today. And isn't that true for the state of God's church in the world?

That no matter what circumstance you live under, there's a word for witnesses who still seek the voice of God.

[31 : 51] the question I would have for you is what is your witness like? Whose word are you living under? Whose word are you standing on? And what is the sign that you are displaying for the world?

And asking us to live under his written word, one other sign he's asking us to do is to share in a meal together, a sign to the world that we belong to Christ as witnesses, as disciples, as brothers. I'm going to ask Pastor Helm to come and lead us in communion. Amen. Thank you.