

# Acts 1:12–14

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[ 0 : 00 ] Today's scripture reading is from the book of Acts, chapter 1, verses 12 through 14.

Thank you. Please stand for the reading of God's word. Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day journey away.

And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room where they were staying. Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon the zealot, and Judas the son of James.

All these, with one accord, were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary, the mother of Jesus, and his brothers. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Well, good morning. Good morning. I want to welcome you to Holy Trinity Church. This is your first time here. A special welcome to you.

[ 1 : 15 ] It may be the first time here for Micah David Weinberger, a new baby born into the midst of our congregation. And I love it when young ones come into the house of the Lord and join the assembly.

Praise God for new life. And also I want to thank Jim Palmore as he continues to direct us toward a gospel choir. Get this.

That work is not going away. I will be its strongest advocate. If you want to sing gospel music, we need your voice. This is going to continue to grow in our midst.

I look forward to the day when the platform is filled. 60, 70 voices strong doing gospel music. I just returned this week from Jacksonville, Florida, where I was at Shiloh Metropolitan Baptist Church and Joe Pace and his power pack set.

And one day we're going to bring Joe up here to take a look at what's grown in our midst. If you want to be in the gospel choir, where's Chandra Richardson?

[ 2 : 22 ] Chandra, are you still here? Chandra's right here. You just find her after the service and say, I want to sing. You can make a noise joyfully or make a joyful noise. But we need you.

Let me pray. Oh Lord, I now pray that you would help me to preach till heaven is happy. Until we who have come desire nothing more than to be healthy and holy in Christ.

Lord, I pray that you would forgive me of my own sins. That you would hide me behind the cross.

That the words of my mouth, the meditation of my heart would be acceptable in your sight.

Oh Lord, my rock and my redeemer. In Jesus name, amen. I want to title this message, The Recovery of Purpose.

The Recovery of Purpose. Allow me to begin simply by reading to you the impact of an event that took place in New York City 160 years ago, beginning this month.

[ 3 : 35 ] And I quote. In the middle of September 1857 in New York City, a tall man with a pleasant face and affectionate manner, shrewd and endowed with much tact and common sense, began passing out handbills that read, How often shall I pray?

As often as the language of prayer is in my heart. As often as I see my need of help. As often as I feel the power of temptation. As often as I am made sensible of any spiritual declension or feel the aggression of a worldly, earthly spirit.

In prayer, we leave the business of time for that of eternity and intercourse with God. If you had taken his handbill and turned it to the other side, you would have read these words.

A day prayer meeting is held every Wednesday from 12 to 1 o'clock in the consistory building of the church on the corner of Fulton and William Streets. This meeting is intended to give merchants, mechanics, clerks, strangers and businessmen generally an opportunity to stop and call on God.

It will continue for one hour. The man, his name was Jeremiah Lamphere. He was 48 years old. He was a businessman, not a pastor, calling the church to prayer.

[ 5 : 01 ] By mid-November, two lecture rooms had to be used. Both were filled. And according to those, within six months' time, these noontime prayer meetings in the city of New York were attracting over 10,000 workers weekly.

A Boston journalist found his way to New York and recorded this. The meeting has begun at 12 o'clock precisely. I like that.

And it closes exactly on the hour. You like that. The room is full and crowded. All sects are here. The formal, stately churchman and the impulsive Methodist who cannot suppress his groan or his amen. We like that. The sober, substantial Dutchman and the ardent Congregationalist. With all Yankee restlessness on his face. The Baptist and the Presbyterian joining in the same chorus and bowing at the same altar. By mid-February, Fulton Street was holding three simultaneous standing room-only prayer meetings on three floors.

[ 6 : 16 ] I'm done with the introduction. According to our text, three simple verses, the early church experienced something similar. And I'm struck by this fact.

Before the church was birthed. Acts 2. The praise and prayer meeting had already been put in place.

Acts 1. Think of it. Before the community of faith was established concretely under the apostolic gospel.

Before the prayer meeting was laid down and underway. They were praying in an upper room. It says there at the opening of our text.

We don't know which upper room this was. Likely, the upper room that they had been in for the last supper at the time of the garden of Gethsemane prayers and groanings of God the Son.

[ 7 : 19 ] Before he spilled his blood on behalf of the world. But here they are. In an upper room. In prayer. And according to Luke 24. They were daily going to the temple to praise God.

In the temple. Daily praising the Lord. In the upper room. Daily in prayer. Before anything happened. That prayer was characterized by two things.

I want to talk about them this morning and leave my comments to that. This morning I want us to sit. And bathe. In verse 14. All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer.

In other words. The first characteristic of this gathering was ongoing devotion. Continuing resoluteness.

If you take this term in the world of physicality about being devoted. It's almost as though and it's used as a soldier who's constantly at the side of the commanding officer.

[ 8 : 26 ] In other words. A devotion to prayer was always at the right hand of this group. This gathering. This is surely something new for these followers.

These eleven. And the women. And the mother of Jesus. And the brothers. But it's an indication that there was some faith being exercised by them.

Their continuedness in prayer is an evidence of faith. You don't pray. Outside of an act of faith. In fact this word. Is used in part. Of Moses. In Hebrews 11. 27. Where it reads. By faith he left Egypt.

Not being afraid of the anger of the king. For he. Here it is. Endured. As seeing him who is invisible. That's what prayer is. And persistent prayer.

[ 9 : 33 ] Is enduring. And seeing him who is invisible. That's an act of faith. Who sits. For any length of time at all. Except those who believe God is.

God hears. Now. This. This enduring. This continuing. This persisting. This devoting. This is something that they had never had the power to persist in until now.

They had seen Jesus' persistence in prayer. Luke 5.12. But he would withdraw to desolate places to pray. Luke 6.12.

Then verse 28. Jesus all night in prayer. Before the selection of his disciples. Luke 3. At his baptism. Luke 9. At Peter's confession.

Luke 9. Again. At the transfiguration. Luke 22. In the garden of Gethsemane. Jesus. At every critical moment of life. Is in the midst of praying.

[ 10 : 33 ] While he was praying. He's baptized. While he is praying. Peter comes to know him for who he is. While he is praying. He is manifested in the glory of God. Comes out and says. This is my son.

While he is praying. The Lord says. And this cup. This cup of my judgment. You must drink. Prayer. They had seen him in prayer. In fact. They had asked Jesus.

To teach them the practice. And the pattern for prayer. They just never were able to do it. Till now. They had all failed.

In attempts. To prayer. Luke 22. In the garden. Jesus says on two occasions. Rise up. And what? Come on now. Rise up and pray.

You're still not home with me. Rise up and pray. Lest. You would not enter into temptation. And by the end of that evening. One had betrayed him.

[ 11 : 32 ] His greatest follower. Who pledged life to him. And to death. Had denied him. All had disbanded from him. And now days later.

We find that disbanded. Now re-banded band. Devoting themselves to prayer. Prayer is always at their right hand. How does this happen?

In fact. You're going to actually see. That this devotion. They were gaining perhaps. For the first time. Some measure of success. In prayer. I would go further.

And we will in a moment. They had regained. A recovery of purpose. They were persevering in prayer. By the time we finish this year.

In the book of Acts. You will see that they maintain. That persistence. All through the book. Twenty five times at least. You're going to see prayer. Through the lives of individuals. You're going to see prayer.

[ 12 : 27 ] In groups. You're going to see prayer. In homes. You're going to see prayer. In jail cells. You're going to see prayer. In the temple. You're going to see prayer. Along the way. You're going to see prayer. Through the most unlikely.

Of relationships. You're going to see prayer. For conversion. You're going to see prayer. For commission. You're going to see prayer. For selection. You're going to see prayer. For sending.

You're going to see prayer. For all kinds of occasions.

It is the hand. maiden of the congregation. Prayer. In a word, prayer was embedded as the singular manifestation of the mark of their community.

So that in Acts 2.42 they were devoting themselves to prayer and to the apostles teaching, to the breaking of bread in homes, to the celebration in the temple, devoting themselves, it says again.

This is an unusual church underway in the upper room. In Jerusalem at the end of Jesus' own day.

[ 13 : 26 ] What accounts for it? It's worth thinking about. What accounts for it? I've come to think it's the return to first things.

Not the arrival of new things. It's the recovery of purpose. They didn't sit down in order to manifest power.

They waited for power to come from on high. But get this straight where we can all get it. Prayer was a recovery of purpose, not a method for power.

The reestablishment of purpose is an evidence of power. Whether that be the workplace, the home, your own personal life. reestablish your purpose, you will have recovered power.

That's what it was. Now I want to just look at that for a moment. In the Old Testament, when you go all the way back to the Garden of Eden, it said that God would come in the cool of the day. At the very outset, prayer, talking with God, was part and parcel of the purpose of the day.

[ 14 : 43 ] They're just recovering that here. Take Hannah. When Eli was the senior pastor and his wicked sons were all associates, she comes into the house to pray and he thinks she's drunk.

so much had he lost the very purpose for which the house stood. Think about it. Take a look at this. Go all the way back if you would to Isaiah 56.

I want you to see it. If you've got a Bible, I want you to lay your eyes on it. Because Jesus himself in his days said that the house of God stood what? For prayer.

Communication to God. In other words, you got up and went to church for the purpose of prayer.

Think of it. We sit in church sometimes and we can't handle more than three minutes of a congregational prayer, but that's the reason they got up and went to begin with.

Isaiah 56. Watch. Watch how this purpose emerges. I know you're very familiar with verse 7 where it says, For my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.

[ 15 : 56 ] But I want you to I want you to watch how it moves up to that point. Verse 1. Thus says the Lord, Keep justice and do righteousness for soon my salvation will come and my righteousness be revealed.

Blessed is the man who does this and the son of man who holds it fast. Who keeps the Sabbath not profaning it and keeps his hand from doing any evil.

Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the Lord say, The Lord will surely separate me from his people. And let not the eunuchs say, Behold, I'm a dry tree. For thus says the Lord to the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, I will give in my house and within my walls a monument and a name better than sons and daughters.

Imagine that. What a great word of encouragement for anyone who is single in the house of the Lord following Jesus. Wondering whether or not you will bear seed and fruit and anything outlive you. Here it is.

To the eunuch, to the one who is on their own, to the one who wonders, I'm a dry tree and God can do nothing with me. He says, You are going to get in God's house a monument and a name that is better than sons and daughters.

[17:12] I will give them an everlasting name that they shall not be cut off and the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord to minister to Him to love the name of the Lord and to be His servants.

Everyone, here's the phrase again, who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it and holds fast my covenant, these I will bring to my holy mountain and make them joyful in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples. The Lord God who gathers the outcasts of Israel declare, I will gather yet others to Him besides those already gathered.

Amazing! Stunning! The Old Testament prophetic word on the house of God was the people of God retaining covenant with God by arriving in His house on His day to give Him prayer and praise.

Oh, how far we have fallen. Amen. pastors go to church today to try to mobilize a movement.

[18:27] People go to church today in order to find their best friend. Others come to network to their own end. I see it every week.

Some dude came in here a few weeks ago wanted to make sure he introduced himself to me. I thought this is wonderful. A person coming into the house of the Lord introduced himself to me. Three weeks later he's outside trying to get me to sign a sheet so he can run for office. I felt used, abused, discombobulated all at once. Coming into the house of the Lord to find His way to get my name on His ability to run office.

I didn't say a word but I'm saying it now. That didn't make me feel good now that I saw the real thing. Pastors are coming to mobilize toward change.

They're not coming to pray. People are coming to figure out their purpose or their niche. We're not coming to pray. And yet the recovery of the house of the Lord as a house of prayer is exactly what was going on here in this room by way of devotion.

[19:42] Why do you go to church? I go to church to speak to God and to encourage those who are trying to follow Christ. That's it.

It's that simple. And that would be a meeting unlike any other gathering we put forward today. I was out as I mentioned this week I listened to a dear brother Hensworth Jonas who pastors the church in Antigua.

He just escaped there to find his way up to Florida and he's preaching to 700 African American pastors and a couple like myself in the room and he opened his sermon this way I would like to give you a sermon today entitled Provocative Prayer.

I was hit. I was in. I was with him. I sat down with him over lunch I said talk to me about this prayer. Talk to me. I need to learn this.

I don't know this. what you said for 40 minutes is beyond the purview of my spiritual experience. He said well we have a prayer meeting every Sunday evening for an hour.

[20:55] We have a prayer meeting every Wednesday evening for an hour and we open up our office to a prayer closet every day from noon to one and me still in that mode of what do you get from God by doing this had the foolish question on my lips that said pastor tell me how has prayer then shaped the ministry of your church to which he had a puzzled look on his face and I knew the corrective was coming and he said well David it has kept it a house of prayer.

That's how it shaped it. It kept it what it was to be and I knew then that I had to recover the purpose of prayer.

it's not power it's persevering prayer as evidence of its purpose. It was the greatest most gracious rebuke I could have received on a week when I had to come home and preach on prayer.

I said I've been worried about success though. What happens if I go home and call a prayer meeting and three weeks later we fizzle out? What happens if 800 people come over a couple weeks, 200 or even 100 in our church that would be unbelievable.

100 people show up at the same place at the same time for the purpose of prayer. 19 years we've never done anything like that I said. I'm afraid we'll peter out. I'd be afraid to do something once a week like you do let alone twice a week like you do let alone every day like you do.

[ 22 : 53 ] He said oh you misunderstand prayer. I said tell me some more. He said a lighthouse is a lighthouse not because there are a lot of people around it.

A lighthouse is a lighthouse because it keeps people that are not around it from shipwrecking their lives on the rocks. He said as long as you turn the lights on as long as somebody's home as long as one or two or even three are praying you are actually protecting the work of the gospel beyond your midst.

He says the mark of success is the devotedness to it it's the perseverance in it it's the ongoing nature of it.

Isn't that beautiful? I was freed up. Therefore I'm going to call a prayer meeting. And if you don't come I don't care.

Because it's going to be successful if I'm there and the light is on and words go forth to God for your protection while you out and on your way.

[ 24 : 08 ] This is it. This is it. The recovery of purpose the lights need to be turned on.

Oh this year this year I want to learn this. I feel like I'm the disciples before this meeting. I've walked with Jesus a long time. I really have.

I've asked with Jesus to teach me the pattern of prayer and he has. I've had some continuance and not. I want to learn this this year.

I want us to learn this. I want us just to put the light on and have someone home on behalf of our congregation, on behalf of our families, on behalf of whatever needs you find in your heart.

A place where you can call out to the Lord. A place where you can say, Lord, I am undone and I've come to talk with you about it. Like Hannah of old, weeping or joyful, full or empty, distraught or feeling as though you're living in all the joys of life.

[ 25 : 30 ] Holy Trinity Church, Hyde Park, the lights are going to be turned on because we do not understand prayer. Not only is that marked there, but notice not only is ongoing continuance a mark of that gathering, but the text says there, all these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer.

This one accord. There's an ongoing devotion and there's a collective union. That's my point.

The many were now as one and the same. The congregation now actually could be spoken of as one person in common.

This was a spontaneous meeting of the minds. Not that people were mobilizing for some methodological movement, but the meeting of the minds was simply the recovery of the purpose for which we had come to begin with.

Now first notice, it's the disciples, and eleven of them are mentioned in all because the twelve had already gone out from among them. But notice how it says all these, I love the way the order is here, you get all eleven, and notice even some of these brothers now which previously in other gospels are always paired together, are separated out.

[ 27 : 00 ] The bloodlines of the church are now separated out just into the followers of Christ, so you don't have Peter and Andrew, James and John, no you've got Peter and John and James and Andrew. Something is in play here, and these are with one accord, and notice the order of the language, you almost read verse fourteen as though it's the eleven who are with one accord, and then he drops in, oh and by the way with them are the women, the family, and even the mother of Jesus.

But think of it for a moment, the eleven, just take the eleven with one accord, that's an astounding thing. I mean, this hadn't happened, especially among these groups.

The men in charge, think of it, think of all these people lining up together, the men in charge, scary enough, the women who supported the work of Christ, and his bloodline family.

These are three groups that had lots of reasons to distrust one another in the past. These are three groups who always perhaps were angling along the way.

These are disparate groups which did not always see things eye to eye on any, no, on every given day. Now these three groups weren't heading outside to eat ice cream together.

[ 28 : 28 ] These three groups go their own way. Now get what I got in my ice box and you go home and get what you got in yours. We're not going to share the same mind in the same moment toward the same end.

And yet here they are. There was an internal common priority. Restoration then must be taking place.

I mean can you imagine shutting these people up into one room for any length of time? After what they just went through? Peter, how you doing? How you doing old big man?

How you doing? You the one who said you were on for the full ride. What's life like today Peter?

Wow, there's some people that had to come back together.

Family, ruptures, relationships. Let me bring this thing in. Let me land this while we have time. Let me talk about us for just a moment.

[ 29 : 36 ] I want to talk about what it would be like to be one family. I want to talk about what it would be like when the spirit of Christ that dwells in you makes every other person who has that same spirit your brother, your sister, your mother, your father, your son, your daughter.

so many things would happen. So many things in history have happened.

I read you at the beginning and I'm coming in now to close about what's called the Fulton Street Revival in New York City. And it's a, as you can expect, kind of an Anglo-sized businessman, Jeremiah Lamphere, who everybody knows their name.

Before that, there's a story you don't know about. 1857, Charleston, South Carolina, in the south, on the front end of the Civil War, where ruptures were emerging, where relationships were destroyed, where families had all gone their own way.

At Anson Street Presbyterian Church, they had 48 black members and 12 white members and they began to pray together.

[ 31 : 24 ] And they began to petition God for an awakening of their own spirit to the realities of their union with one another.

After some time, the preacher did get up and every night for eight weeks began to preach. Don't worry, I'm not trying to relive that.

there were crowds of 1,500 to 2,000 people that came out of that little mixed race church on the threshold of a country at war on race.

And it says that many whites as well as blacks were converted. with one accord.

Ongoing continuance, single-minded unanimity, a recovery of the purpose for the church.

[ 32 : 34 ] church. You leave today, I'm going to leave you with three thoughts. We bought a book for you.

It's on the back. We got 150 copies. It's called It Happens After Prayer. If you promise to read it, take it.

If you don't promise to read it, don't you dare take it. We're not here to fill up your shelves. We're here to feed your soul. It's free, one per family, or individual.

All you got to do is say, I'm going to read it. Two, I hereby, as your pastor, do solemnly call a congregation-wide prayer meeting to commence on the first Sunday of every month for nine months beginning October 1st.

For all who would like to come, it will be at the loft from 730 to 830 p.m. with the intention not to secure power, not to mobilize citywide change, but to speak with God as a gathered family.

[ 34 : 00 ] family. You're invited the first Sunday of every month from October through June, Sunday night, 730 to 830.

Third, Pastor Jackson started a Bible study at Park Shore Rehabilitation and Nursing Facility at 61st and what, Keith, about Kenwood or Ken Bart?

Kenwood. We've been running a Bible study there for years. We have a number of members who have actually come from there. And we have an invitation from there that if we can find the right way to just go floor by floor and pray for somebody else.

You want in on that? Keith, raise your hand, brother. You're going to have to get this down on paper if they come to you, my man. Name and email.

See Keith or TJ or myself. Read a book. Come to a gathering. Extend yourself before God on behalf of somebody else.

[ 35 : 12 ] Recover the purpose of the Christian faith. He has spoken to us in his son. May we praise him and learn how to speak to him in return.

Our heavenly father, we give ourselves to you asking that you would help us. We have so much to learn as a church. Not just about one another, but about you.

We have so much to learn on what it means to be a disparate people, a distrustful people who find themselves all at once behind the same doors calling out to you.

Help us to do this, not for some gain, but that we might know you better. In Jesus' name, amen.

Amen. Amen. On your feet, when Jesus left the Last Supper, he went out with a song. We're going to leave this place today with one as well.

[ 36 : 25 ] Let's sing together. Ž Ž Amen.