

How God Works Out His Plan

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Preacher: Pastor Ken

[0 : 00] Please take your Bibles now and open up to Acts chapter 1. And the other little church that did not leave already can go.

See what happens. I get excited about switching things up for service and whatnot. And the bulletin is changed and the order of things is changed and it throws everybody off.

Because usually during the hymn is when the kids leave and that's not what we had planned today. I just mess everybody's day up. You're welcome. Well my prayer now is that God's going to wreck your day with this study in the Word.

Not because I want your day to be horrible and ruined or anything. But because I want Him to convict you and guide you and direct you and lead you in righteousness. And for Him to lead us in righteousness means we have to be led away from our own unrighteousness.

And that is something that is hard for all of us to do. Oh, hey. Thank you. I see you, Jen. And I just remembered. I wanted to mention. So I got the word from Andy this past week that the church up in Bath.

[1 : 14] So I don't know how many of you know this. But I do. I just learned of it last week that Andy's been up in Bath preaching. I know he had preached several times before the New Year.

But he'd been preaching regularly up that way at a church up there. And they had asked him to consider coming and being their pastor. And so it was a decision that the church wanted to pursue. And so they did a lot of talking and praying and such. And the church has asked for him to come and be their pastor. It's a part-time pastoring. So he's up there, I think, three days a week.

And then back down home four days a week. But we're just praising God for that opportunity of ministry, of preaching the gospel, and hopefully impacting lives with the word of God.

And so we'll be praying for your family. And as I know, it's going to be a lot of stress. It's going to be a lot of work. It's going to be a lot of uncertainty. But God is in control.

[2 : 16] And that's one thing we can be certain of. So praise God for that opportunity and see where it takes you. So for the past couple of weeks, we've begun our exploration into the life of the early church as we seek to answer the question, how do we go about making disciples?

And Jesus, as we know, gave his disciples the Great Commission after his resurrection. Matthew 28, 19 and 20. So the Great Commission that Jesus gave his disciples is what we desire to be faithful in following.

They desire to be faithful in following it from the very beginning. And it is our desire even now in these walls with these people who are here today and those who can't be with us and those who are joining via Zoom.

It is our desire or it ought to be to be faithful to that command and that expectation that we would go. That we would not just be sitting in pews and getting spiritually fat and flabby.

But that we would go out. That we would serve. That we would make disciples. But how do we go about the actual process of making disciples?

[3 : 57] How does society, if at all, factor into that process? Another question that gets raised, how are we in the world but not of the world?

I think all these are very legitimate questions. And they will be answered in due time as we navigate through the book of Acts and understand the content within its context.

The easy thing, the American thing to do is to give you the question and then to give you the answer. But I raise the question and ask you to wait for the answer as we get into the text.

As I mentioned before, there have been endless books written and seminars hosted relating to the issue of church growth philosophies.

Everybody has their own ideas or their proven methods that they want to market and sell for a profit. It doesn't just exist in the hair growth world.

[4 : 57] We have a guaranteed formula to make sure you don't lose your hair. Okay. Everybody's got that guaranteed formula and it's different from everybody else's. And everyone throws their money into it and it fails anyway.

Right? So, well, churches have these types of things or Christians have these things as far as church growth philosophies go. They're proven methods and they market them and they sell them for a profit.

I've always found that very annoying and frustrating and in my eyes and opinion and accurate opinion at that, very hypocritical. So, if indeed a Christian or a church had the method to church growth and reaching people with the gospel and so on, that was so proven to be effective, why are they charging you \$500 to get the book to read about it?

Or to sit through the seminar. Why are they charging you so much money? I mean, shouldn't we all be in this together? Aren't we all called together for the Great Commission to go and make disciples?

So, that's always really annoyed me. And I hope it annoys you too. And that's what they do. They box it, market it for a profit. And these methods are not necessarily making disciples.

[6 : 17] Rather, they're trying to increase attendance numbers in the church. And we must be wary of so-called movements that promote or promise church success. Because the truth is, we are not looking for church success.

We should never, ever be looking for church success. That is such an American concept. Such a capitalistic concept. We shouldn't be looking for church success.

We should be looking for God's glory. And if God's glory is that there are four people that meet as a local body and assembly to be in the Word, to encourage each other, to live life for the glory of God, then that's a success.

I would rather take a group of four people who want to get together and encourage each other in the faith and encourage each other to become like Jesus than to take a church that has 4,000 people where 98% of them don't even care.

I'm telling you, we need to get our eyes adjusted on what matters and what it is that we're called to. What's the greatest purpose in life? And it's not church success.

[7 : 32] It's not numbers. It's not financial growth and stability. Would it be nice? Yeah, yeah, it would. Would I love to see not so many wooden backs to pews right now?

Sure would. I'd love it. But then I'd have to ask myself, is it because it's a pride thing that I would feel like I'm bringing people in? Why do I want to see people here?

Is it for God's glory? Is it for their good? Is it for your good? So we've got to be careful. 1 Corinthians 10.31, as I mentioned, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. 2 Corinthians 5.9, so whether we are at home or away, it doesn't matter where we are or what we're doing, we make it our aim to please Him. If there are two verses, like if you want to take as life verses, take those two verses.

1 Corinthians 10.31, we do everything to the glory of God. 2 Corinthians 5.9, wherever we are and whatever we're doing, we are seeking to please Him. We must seek to glorify God, and that's what we need to be doing, and that definitely includes making disciples, right?

[8 : 52] Because He's commanded us to go and to do that very thing. So up to this point, we've been looking at the first chapter of Acts, which is the setup for what's to come in the following 27 chapters.

Can you believe that? We've spent three weeks now in one chapter, and there's 27 to go. I make no promises of how long it'll take us to go through it. Somebody asked me, we're going through the whole book of Acts?

Like, that's going to take like five years. It might. I don't think it will. That's not the way I go. That's not the rate I go at. But we'll see. Let God work. So as we've gone through this and the beginning of this chapter, first and foremost, the centrality of the resurrection as it relates to our mission and our confidence.

We dealt with that a few weeks back, that the risen Jesus has made clear that there's more work to be done related to His story. The story of Jesus does not begin and end in the Gospels.

Right? In fact, it doesn't begin or end in the Bible, right? Because Jesus is God. But the point is, it's not like, okay, the only thing, and there are groups of Christians who say this, the only thing we really need to worry about and study is, you know, as followers of Jesus is the Gospels.

[10:08] Like, that's all we really need to be worried and focused on and learning from. Which is that much, by the way, of the Bible, are the Gospels?

Very important. Very rich. Definitely need to be in it. But then, if that's all we need to worry about, why did He give us all this? Why is there so much more in there?

Yeah. So, you know, we read about the birth of Jesus, the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, Matthew and Luke, and we learn about the death of Jesus at the end of those Gospels.

But afterwards, there's also the resurrection of Jesus. He didn't stay dead. He is not dead. He is alive. Very much alive. And so it's like, the Gospels is part one of His life in ministry.

It's what He began to do. Now we get into the book of Acts. It's what He's going to be doing now through His church. It's part two of the life and ministry of Jesus.

[11:11] And the fact that Jesus is indeed risen ought to provide us with the confidence to believe and preach the Gospel. If it is true that Jesus is God, if it is true that He is our Savior, if it is true that He died for our sins and gives us eternal life when we call on Him, for forgiveness, when we repent of our sins and we ask for forgiveness from God and He offers that through Jesus Christ, if that's true and He's raised from the dead, then we ought to have the most bold, confident preaching there is.

We should be unashamed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ because it is the power of God for salvation to all who believe. If He is raised from the dead, we ought to be proclaiming it confidently. And when we don't proclaim it confidently, then we need to check ourselves do we really believe it? Are we convinced of it?

Last week, we looked at the need for the Holy Spirit. The only hope the disciples had in fulfilling the Great Commission was by carrying it out through the Holy Spirit because the message that they had to preach was hard depending on the context, depending on who they were preaching it to, right?

It could be heard one way or another. And ultimately, what you're telling people to do is to abandon their understanding, to abandon what they believe is true about life and their life and to trust in God who created them and has given them purpose.

[12:51] So the message is hard to preach and the global intent was hard to follow through on. Both needed the Holy Spirit's empowerment and we can say the same is true for us today.

We need the Holy Spirit to help us to preach and teach the truth of the Word of God and the gospel message of Jesus Christ. And He's the one who leads us to people, to opportunities.

You know, when we go out and about, you know, it happened to me last night after I got done shoveling and snowblowing and all that, I didn't want to go home and make my own food. So I'd rather just go spend money on food.

And so I did. I went to Subway and man, I went in there and that guy was such a chatter. He wanted to talk. Oh, hey, how are you doing? Like a very, very relational guy. You know, that's, that's awesome.

And he just, he wanted to talk about Xbox and talk about games and whatnot, whatever. I ended up messing up my order in the process. So I probably should have told him you should do less talking and more focusing on what you're doing.

[13:51] but I was good. I didn't want to be offensive, right? But that's an opportunity. That guy was ready to talk, right? An opportunity to encourage him, to talk to him about Jesus.

And we get those. God brings him up. We don't. I mean, sometimes, no, we shouldn't force it, I should say. And sometimes, like, our efforts prove fruitful and that God opens the door. But a lot of times, it's God just brings it up and you don't know what's coming.

God does some amazing things to get through the hearts of people with the gospel. It's possible. You never know.

It's possible. God may give you cancer so you can witness to a nurse or a doctor or a surgeon. You just never know. Right?

Isn't that crazy? And to tell an unbeliever that, for somebody to be sitting in a service like this and to hear a pastor say, God may give you cancer for, they would be out of their mind.

[14:54] How could a good God possibly do something so bad? It's because they don't understand. Because the spiritual thing, you know, the natural man cannot understand the spiritual things of God.

Right? They don't understand the things of God because they're spiritually appraised. But we can understand that. We can realize that our hardship, our trials, what we endure day in and day out, what we go through, who we engage with can be a divine appointment.

Are we ready? Are we bold? Are we confident? This week, I want to go through, I want to see that God's plans work, ultimately.

How does he carry them out? How God works out his plan. Right? And we're going to see that they work out. So let's go ahead and read and pick up in verse 12.

Our intention is to get to the end of chapter 1. My intention is to get to the end of chapter 1. I don't know what God's intention is. So I'm going to make that disclaimer.

[16:02] If you get angry, you get upset, and you get mumbling and grumbling, you grumble to God, not me. You understand that? One, what's that? Do not shoot the messenger, please.

Acts chapter 1, verse 12. Then they return to Jerusalem. So just to recap real quick, they just seen Jesus go up. They're watching him. It's probably awe-inspiring, like, oh man, there he goes.

And then you got the angels. It says two men in white, wearing white robes. We understand that to be angels because that's commonly how they're referred to in the Gospels and other places. And they're like, uh, so as you saw him go up, he'll come back, don't worry about it, and I'll go.

That's pretty much what they're saying. Verse 12, 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.

[17:12] All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer together with the women and Mary, the mother of Jesus and his brothers. So as we see how God works out his plan, we see first that his people are united.

His people are united. You would think this would be a, duh, yeah, churches are united. Not as thoroughly as you would like to think.

So after they see Jesus ascended into heaven, they're reminded that Jesus will return. And that's a promise that they can cling to while they wait for the Holy Spirit, which has also been promised.

So at that time where Jesus is getting ready to ascend into heaven, talking to his disciples, there are two promises that are given to them. That the Holy Spirit will come.

He's going to send the Holy Spirit. You've got to wait on it. He said, wait for the Holy Spirit. That's a promise that's going to come. And second is that Jesus will return.

[18:24] the second coming being promised from the very outset, from the very start of the church's ministry. Jesus will come.

And it's a promise they could cling to. It's a promise that we can cling to. And so they're clinging to it while they wait for the Holy Spirit to come and go about making disciples for the glory of God.

Luke includes the details of where they were with Jesus and where they're heading to now that he has ascended. It says, they were on a mount called Olivet with Jesus.

I don't want to get too detailed about this because then it just becomes an academic exercise. We translate it Olivet or this translation, my translation, says Olivet.

The word's literal translation is Olive Grove because at the time of Jesus, the mountainside was filled with olive groves which is why it was referred to as the Mount of Olives on Matthew 21.

[19:26] In Matthew 21. We know it was east of Jerusalem within sight of the temple because in Mark 13, verse 3, Jesus and his disciples sat down on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple.

So the temple was well within view of where this place was. And it is where Gethsemane was located and was commonly visited by Jesus.

Jesus. In Luke 22, verse 39, talking about after they left. So we were in Luke 22 for communion. So the Passover meal and the Lord's Supper being instituted, all that taking place.

And it says here, and he came out and he went and as was his custom to the Mount of Olives and the disciples followed him. Well, what do we know takes place after the Last Supper, after that time in the upper room there?

They go out and they go to Gethsemane. Right? And that's where he's in prayer and that's where he's sweating drops of blood and that's where in the Luke account he tells his disciples to pray. [20 : 33] But they're at Gethsemane. They're on the Mount of Olives. Now there can be no certainty as to exactly where on the Mount the disciples met with Jesus in Acts 1, but it certainly was a familiar territory to them.

It possibly could have been Gethsemane and what an interesting time that would have been. But the last time that they were in Gethsemane recorded for us in Scripture Jesus was betrayed. And now here he is telling them to wait on the Holy Spirit and to get ready to go and make disciples. We're told that where this is it's a Sabbath day's journey away.

Sabbath day's journey is a measurement of the distance that a Jew was permitted to travel on the Sabbath. Jewish rabbis not the law of Moses instituted this Sabbath day journey.

They figured out how far on average people had to travel from the furthest point so when the tabernacle it started from the tabernacle time when they would set up their camps around the tabernacle they took okay who's the furthest away?

[21 : 49] Alright Joe Smith's tent is the furthest away from the temple where they have to come and worship on the Sabbath. How far does he need to travel to get to where he needs to be and get home?

That's what they determined as the Sabbath journey and it was about a half a mile or so is what they had determined. for that distance.

So we know that the Mount of Olives is about a half a mile from getting inside the city gate of Jerusalem. It's not far away at all. Next we see that they have a place to stay.

They went to the upper room. Did you notice that? Verse 13 when they had entered into the city of Jerusalem they went up to the upper room where they were staying. the more with how frequently this term appears in the New Testament I wonder if the upper room was the name of the local hotel. They didn't have Hilton or Hampton or Marriott. They had the upper room hotel. Just being ridiculous. But we can't know for certain which upper room this was.

[22 : 58] There are likely many in that city that it could be. But it's interesting how frequently they're in the upper room. Now wouldn't it be something if it was where the Last Supper took place before Jesus was betrayed?

To leave the garden where Jesus was betrayed and to go back to where he shared his last Passover meal with them instructing them on how they were to treat one another by washing their feet in John 13 where he revealed that he was going to be betrayed by one of them and where he told them that the Holy Spirit was going to come.

In John 14 he talks about the Holy Spirit the comforter the helper. That would be something. And you talk about significant places in the lives of the disciples the upper room is one of them.

It would be interesting if it's the same one. That Jesus who instructed them told them about the betrayal told them about the helper coming this is the one that they're at. Or what if it's a room where some of the resurrection appearances took place?

I mean if that wasn't already the same room that would have been something. The resurrection appearances that filled the disciples with hope and joy as they encountered the risen Christ and to be reminded of that time as they wait for the Holy Spirit and Jesus' return.

[24 : 14] They promised that he'd return. So I don't know. Maybe there's nothing to the upper room. Maybe it just happens to be where they go. But I tend to think that this detail being given would have been somewhat common knowledge to some folks and was probably significant to the disciples.

disciples. And those who were there, the eleven and the women, says were with one accord. That's at the verse 14.

All these, so he lists them all by name. He says, all these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer together with the women and Mary, the mother of Jesus and his brothers. They were with one accord. That means they had, they were single-minded in their purpose. And they were continually in prayer. They were continually in prayer.

They were single-minded in purpose. They gathered for a reason. And they gathered to pray. Continually. They were together in prayer.

[25 : 30] prayer. Prayer is the fellowship of like-minded believers seeking the Lord's will together. If there is any discipline in a church body that is severely lacking today, it's prayer.

How often, I'm going to put us out there, how often does this body of believers get together to pray? How much time do we spend in prayer corporately? These guys, the 11 and the women, they were not like, they weren't in their little, you know, their personal prayer closets.

They were corporately together praying. How often does that happen here with us corporately? a lot of times. So we have, I can tell you one, worship through prayer every week.

[27 : 12] And what is it? prayer? Well, more often than not, it's an organ recital where we're praying for so-and-so's hip or knee or so-and-so's treatment or time in the hospital or what have you.

And these are things we should be praying for. But when was the last time we prayed for God's direction for this church body? When was the last time we were praying, God, bring us to people who need to hear the gospel?

When was the last time we had opened before us the word of God? And as we were reading it, we were praying specifically for people in the church body, specifically for this body of believers, as the word of God so dictates.

I'm ashamed to say I have no idea. Because we have the prayer time on Sunday morning, right?

But as you know, or maybe you don't, we don't want that to go too long, right? I mean, it's bad enough when the pastor preaches too long, but for us to be prayer as well as the long sermon?

[28 : 40] You're ruining lives, man. People are going to leave the church. So what were they praying for?

Well, they were probably praying for what was to come. The tremendous responsibility they had with the Great Commission. Do we see it as a great responsibility?

Clarity in an unknown future. That's something we pray for regularly. Clarity. So whatever they were specifically praying for, they were doing it together.

It was clear that God's people were united. Pick up verse 15. In those days, Peter stood up among the brothers, the company of persons wasn't all about 120, and said, brothers, the scripture 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 among us and was allotted his share in this ministry. 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.

[29 : 52] And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their own language, a kaldama, 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 how God works out his plan, his people are united, and his strategy is organized.

Luke informs us here that there were about 120 people gathered together in the upper room praying. There were 120 people praying, man, what a prayer meeting that was. That had to take a long time.

Get through all those prayer requests, and people talking, and it appears that they were kneeling or prostrate while in prayer, because it says that Peter stood up. They didn't have chairs like we do.

[30 : 56] You know, they were, if they're eating, they're laying down eating. If they were praying, it's probably either kneeling or prostrate, you know, face down before God.

This information, the fact that it says there are about 120 people, if things, shows that there was good record-keeping at that time. They may have kept a record of who was there. There may have been a scribe, a historian, like, okay, he's here, he's here, he's here, she's here, and so on and so forth.

I don't know. I think it's interesting that in 1 Corinthians 15, Paul mentions that Jesus appeared to more than 500 people at one time, and only 120 people were gathered together in prayer.

there. It just seemed to me that these who've seen the risen Christ would also want to be gathered together for the purpose of serving him. But now we come to a portion of this passage that I think warrants a little deeper looking into.

I was asked this past week concerning the betrayal of Jesus, did God make Judas betray Jesus, or did he have a choice not to? These are types of theological questions you don't even bother, because somebody's already got their mind made up on what they think and believe, and they're just trying to trip you up.

[32 : 19] But I engaged. First, we must notice what Peter says in verse 16. He says that the Scriptures had to be fulfilled. Scriptures had to be fulfilled.

This tells us that the betrayal of Jesus was an expected event, and it was not something that caught God off guard. Consider these verses. Psalm 41.9, Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me.

Going back and looking at passages in the Psalms and such where it's like, oh yeah, that's definitely a messianic application here. Mark 14.18, And as they were reclining at the table and eating, Jesus said, Truly I say to you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me. Jesus knew. Jesus knew when he chose the twelve that one of them was a devil, that one of them would betray him. He wasn't caught off guard, he knew.

The betrayal itself with Judas approaching the Jewish leaders and being paid is also provided for us in the Old Testament, Zechariah 11 verses 12 and 13. Then I said to them, if it seems good to you, give me my wages, but if not, keep them.

[33 : 34] And they weighed out as my wages, thirty pieces of silver. Then the Lord said to me, throw it to the potter, the lordly price at which I was priced by them. So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the Lord to the potter.

That's what Judas does. Right? He gets really guilty for having betrayed Jesus, an innocent man. And he said, no, let him go, here's your money back.

No, we can't take that. You see to it yourself. And he threw the money in and ran off and he ended up hanging himself. So God knew that Jesus was going to be betrayed.

It was part of the plan. But did he force Judas to carry out the plan without giving him a chance or without giving him a choice? And to answer that question, you must consider these verses.

John 13, 2, during supper when the devil had already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him. It was already in the heart of Judas to betray Jesus.

[34 : 36] Now don't get too caught up on the verbiage there that the devil put into his heart to betray Jesus. Because it's because the devil, the accuser, puts it in your heart to disobey Jesus very frequently.

And would you think that you're being forced to do something that you shouldn't do? John 13, verse 26 and 27, Jesus answered, It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it. So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him, and Jesus said to him, what you are going to do, do quickly.

I always wondered why if Jesus said that, then he gave the morsel to Judas, why didn't the rest of them attack him? Tackle him and stop him? Well, it's because he was dipping the morsel and giving it to everybody.

He was serving. So he was making a broad statement. He was saying, it's the one that I'm giving the morsel to. It's one of you, is what he was saying.

[35 : 48] So we see from John 13 that Satan was very influential on Judas. But that's not to say that Judas was a saint, because he wasn't. He had a terrible reputation of greed.

John 12, 6. Judas said this. I'm talking about the perfume that was broken for Jesus. He said this, that it could have been sold and money given to the poor. Not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief.

And having charge of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it. He didn't care about the poor, he cared about himself. Judas was a self-centered sinner.

So Satan probably saw that Judas was already hardened against Jesus. So it would have been easy to influence him to seek a payday for the betrayal. And Satan entering Judas would have given firmness and resolve to do what he was already plotting to do, and to do it sooner than he was anticipating to do it.

Judas wanted Jesus dead. Satan just firmed the resolve in his heart to do it.

[37 : 02] So did God force Judas to act? No, and yes. No, because he did not divinely force Judas to do something against his will. He didn't, you know, it wasn't like a pawn on the chess board where he's moving Judas along and okay, no, he's moving over here and forcing him to go and do.

But yes, because he permitted Satan to influence and ultimately possess Judas for the purpose of carrying out this task. Horrible task. How could a loving God allow such a thing to happen?

And as God continues to fulfill prophecy, replacing Judas was also part of the plan. Psalm 109, verses 5-8, so they reward me, evil for good and hatred for my love.

Appoint a wicked man against him. Let an accuser stand at his right hand. When he has tried, let him come forth guilty. Let his prayer be counted as sin. May his days be few. May another take his office.

So yeah, someone's going to come along, take Jesus out, but their days are going to be few, and they're going to be replaced. So yeah, his strategy was well organized.

[38 : 14] God knew what he was doing. God understood what was happening. Jesus understood what was happening. That's how God works his plans out. His people are united.

His plan, his strategy is organized, and it's going to come about. It's going to happen. Let's read verses 21-26. So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, so this is Peter still talking, 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.

And they put forward two. Joseph called Barsabbas, that is not Barabbas, don't get that confused. Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also called Justice, and Matthias. And they prayed and said, you Lord who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place. And they cast lots for them and the lot fell to Matthias and he was numbered with the eleven apostles. So God's choice is perfect.

His choice is perfect. Judas gave up his spot in the ministry when he chose to betray Jesus and then go hang himself out of the extreme guilt that he felt for betraying an innocent man.

[39 : 44] He was so heavily convicted. Now it's time for the spot to be filled and Peter makes it very clear that the fellow who steps in has to be an eyewitness of the life and ministry of Jesus, an eyewitness of the resurrection and chosen by God.

These requirements tell us that Jesus traveled not only with the twelve but with others who believed in him. There was always a crowd around Jesus, right? And so Peter's saying alright, so it's got to be somebody from this crowd that's always been around us that's going to serve as number twelve. The number twelve juror. But it's not really a juror. But he's saying like replacing Judas with somebody who has seen it all and can attest to it because they've been there.

And I just want to take an aside real quick and say that this among other passages in scripture is why there are no, zero, nada, zilch, modern day apostles.

I'm just going to say that and let that lie. I don't think anyone here believes in that or thinks that someone who calls themselves an apostle is one. But if you do, I'm telling you they do not exist because they did not see Jesus in his ministry, his earthly ministry, and they have not personally seen the resurrected Christ, and the apostles have already been chosen by God.

[41 : 13] And they're not here in America or taking trips to Africa and deceiving millions to be rich. So apparently there are two men who stood out above the rest to be considered, Joseph, Barsabbas, or Justice, whatever name he has, or in Matthias.

I think they chose Matthias just out of the easiness of his name. One name, yep, you're good. But the casting of lots, it was an Old Testament practice used to determine God's direction in a matter, and this is the last time we see it taking place in Scripture.

We do not cast lots today. I do not support it as being a biblical practice for us to practice today, to try to figure out God's will for a situation.

We have the word of God, which reveals his will to us in many ways. Proverbs 16, 33, the lot is cast into the lap, but its very decision is from the Lord.

Every decision is from the Lord. So the lot falls to Matthias, and he becomes the twelfth apostle. Barsabbas, notice he does not call for a recount. He doesn't say, oh no, this is not fair, we need to recount this and redraw it, no, do it again.

[42 : 26] He does not leave the group to join another one because he wasn't chosen to be the twelfth apostle. He simply accepts the divine choice. Now we don't know, we don't have much on Matthias, but I was intrigued by what John MacArthur offered in what he had to say about Matthias.

He says, there's some historical record about him that he preached in Judea. He was a gospel preacher and he preached in Colchis, which would be the modern Republic of Georgia on the Black Sea.

And that was once part of the Soviet Union. And as the story goes, he preached in Colchis near the Black Sea so powerfully and so effectively that he was stoned to death. So his ending was like almost all the other apostles, martyred for his witness.

See what you get from being there? For seeing it, witnessing it, and for obeying? He got killed.

Great thing to remember when it comes to being used by God to work out his plan is that over 99% and that was a number I just pulled out of the air.

If you want to take the time to figure it out, you go right ahead. But I'm going to say over 99% of Christian history is full of unknown people. Right?

[43 : 49] I mean, we know a little bit about Matthias because of what I found from John, who probably looked it up somewhere else. But we don't know much about him or about many of these apostles.

We know what his history tells us, but it's still very little. And then from 2,000 years ago to today, the people who have been movers and shakers and those who have been sharing the gospel and making disciples and doing what they're supposed to be doing, most of them, we have no idea who they are.

We've got the reformers, right? We talk about Luther and Calvin and Zwingli. We can look at Edwards and Whitfield. We've got the big-name people we can point to, Billy Graham or Jack Wertzen and whatever.

We can pull out individuals, but probably the individuals we can pull out out of our minds and maybe out of mining the books if we have them, 20, 30, I don't know.

Not as many as you would expect to be to count more than 1% of the Christians that have been in the world since Jesus ascended.

[45 : 01] And these are the folks who have gone to their graves, either they've died because of their witness, or they've just been like you and me, witnessing for the cause of Christ.

And nobody's going to know who we are except those that know us here. So God's not looking for the rich, he's not looking for the famous, he's not looking for the eloquent, he's looking for the faithful. Matthias and Barsabbas, they were faithful.

They were there with Jesus from beginning to end. That's who God chose to work through. I'm going to end by reading 1 Corinthians 1, 26 through 31.

Paul writes, For consider your calling, brothers. Not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth, but God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise.

God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong. God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

[46 : 16] God, and because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that as it is written, let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.

Whatever your weakness is, don't let it get you down, and don't let it bring you down, and don't let it stop you from living in obedience to our Savior.

Let's pray. Thank you, Father, for your word. I pray that you would give direction and understanding and conviction in our lives.

Lord, as you work out your plan, help us to be united as your people. Help us to recognize and understand that your plan is, your strategy strategy is organized.

There's nothing that catches you off guard. There's nothing we endure or go through or that we may come down with, a disease, cancer, that we're diagnosed with, Lord.

[47 : 27] Nothing catches you off guard. It's all for a purpose. Help us to see that. And Lord, we know that you have chosen us to carry out this message.

And help us, Lord, to do so. Help us to have confidence and boldness in the resurrection of our Savior. And Lord, as we are empowered by the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, help us to carry it out and do it for your glory.

In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. you