

Text: Acts 1:1-11

Title: "You Are Here"

Introduction: When I was a kid, I had chores that I was supposed to do around the house; lawn mowing, cleaning, dishes, snow shoveling, picking up apples, loading and stacking wood for our wood stove, etc. Often, my Dad would give me instructions on what needed to be done before he would leave the house and I knew that his expectation is that the job would be done when he got home. Sometimes he would be gone for a couple of days for the church or he would be gone just a couple of hours, but he would let me know what he wanted accomplished before he returned.

Many times, I would figure that I had plenty of time and I would get the work done *after* doing whatever it was that I wanted to do (watch TV, play football or ride bikes or skateboard or whatever). More than once my Dad came home BEFORE I had accomplished what he expected.

When I was still quite young, I had a clear understanding of the word, "Consequences". When we don't do what we know is the right thing to do, there are "Consequences"!

Well, today we are starting a brand new worship series that we are calling, "ESSENTIAL". The idea behind it is that there are certain things that are essential to life. If we want to stay alive as human beings, we need air, water, food, shelter / clothing / protection. Some other things listed as ESSENTIAL as I spoke to people this last week included: coffee, chocolate and toilet paper. I'm sure you can come up with a list of things that are essential to life as well.

Here's what I want us to do over the next 6 weeks. I want us to discover together what it means to be a "Church". We call ourselves a "Church", we talk about "Church" a lot, we are part of the connectional system of the United Methodist ... (help me) "Church". Right! I think that if we are going to keep on calling ourselves "Church", we should know what it means to be the "Church".

You've already heard me say, many of you, that when we talk about "church" we are not talking about a building. CHURCH is a movement of people with a PURPOSE! So, we have to know what our PURPOSE is, right!?

The United Methodist CHURCH has a purpose statement, and I like it. If we are a movement of people with a purpose, we should probably know what that is. Here is the United Methodist Movement's PURPOSE: ***"To make Disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."***

Please know that there was not a person in the United Methodist Church that just pulled that off of the top of their head. That purpose came from Scripture ... "To make Disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."

Can you guess whose idea that was?

At this time I invite you to take the insert out of your program/water bottle. On one side of the insert you will find our scripture for today and on the other you will find a brief outline with blanks for you to fill in. I hope that you will take time to do that. I hope

you will jot down whatever you need to from today's scripture and message that speaks to you. The challenge then is to take this home and refrigerate it. Put it somewhere where you will be reminded of the Scripture and the lessons from that Scripture as you go through your week. It takes more than one hour a week to actually get to know Who God is and who God wants us to be. For those of you who are listening online or "iPodding", please take time to download the outline off of our website so you too can fill in the blanks.

Let's get to our Scripture for this morning, it's from the beginning of the Book of Acts (New Testament ... Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts...). Luke, who was the physician who wrote the Book of Luke (ironically), also wrote the Book of Acts. His Book of Luke told about the LIFE of JESUS and Acts is about the "ACTS of the Apostles" in response to the LIFE of JESUS! So, the beginning of the Book of Acts, Luke is bringing his readers up to speed from the end of his last book...

READ ACTS 1:1-11 NOW AND PRAY!

- I. Acts is the Sequel (vs. 1-2)
 - A. Again, Luke wrote about the Life of Jesus up to his death and resurrection in his 1st Book. Now, Luke is following that up with what happened with Jesus and the Disciples in the next era of history.
 1. Luke covered year 0-30AD in his first Book (LUKE).
 2. Luke covers the next 30 years (30-60) in ACTS.
 - B. So, he starts this Book off with a recap.
 1. One of my favorite TV shows is "The Amazing Race". Sarah and I record it and watch it together when we have time ... I don't always catch the one episode before the next episode is out, so I appreciate that they start each broadcast with, "On the previous episode..." I get a chance to get caught up!
 2. Luke does the same here. He reminds Theophilus (reader of the book and possible Roman friend) of what happened at the end of the last Book. Jesus taught, gave instructions to the disciples and left this world and went up to heaven before the disciples very eyes!

- II. The Resurrection Life (vs. 3-8)
 - A. 40 Days of Change (read V. 3)!
 1. Luke, again, was a physician. Luke tells us in his 1st Book that he is just going to write down the facts ... he does not want to have anyone catch him not telling the truth and thus find holes in the Christian movement.
 2. Jesus spent 40 days in and out of the "Apostles" (Disciples = followers; Apostles = messengers/missionaries) lives. They didn't know when he would show up again, but He did!
 3. 40 days of PROVING to the Apostles that He was REALLY ALIVE ... ate with them, taught them how to fish, walked with them, and taught them about the Kingdom of God!

- B. First things First
1. One of the things that Jesus commanded them = “Do not leave Jerusalem until the Father sends you the gift he promised ... Holy Spirit.”
 2. Don’t do anything—and Jesus had a lot for the Apostles to do—until you are filled with the Holy Spirit.
 3. In other words, Jesus tells them, “You cannot do what all I need you to do to serve the Kingdom of God without being filled with the Holy Spirit!”
- C. But, what about the Kingdom?
1. Then the Apostles ask a question, “What about you freeing Israel and restoring OUR KINGDOM?”
 2. Please note that Jesus did not get mad at the Apostles for asking this question. Do you know why? Because Jesus had given them reason to believe that it was coming ...
 - a. Matthew 22 = Jesus promised another opportunity for Israel to receive Jesus as Messiah and the kingdom.
 - b. Matthew 19 = Jesus promised the Apostles that they would sit on 12 thrones.
 - c. Matthew 12 = Jesus stated that Israel would have another opportunity to accept Jesus even after sinning against Him.
 3. ...IF, Israel would believe the Apostle’s Message and accept Jesus as the Messiah! BTW - It still hasn’t happened.
 4. “The Father alone has the authority to set those dates and times...”
- D. The Assignment
1. THEN, Jesus gives them an ASSIGNMENT / CHORES / A ‘TO-DO’ LIST.
 2. I love how Jesus handles this ... Kingdom = My Father will take care of that, BUT, here’s what you need to be thinking about ... Stop thinking about the Kingdom and the outcome ... think about the PROCESS.
 3. The PROCESS is this: AFTER you receive the HOLY SPIRIT and the POWER that comes with it, THEN...
 4. ...THEN, you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth!
 5. “There is your chore list...” Jesus then disappears into the sky and the Apostles are just standing there staring (jaws open) and trying to see Him...
- III. Don’t Just Stand There (vs. 9-11)
- A. Jesus Is Coming Back ... Messengers: “Men of Galilee ... he’s coming back!”
1. Don’t just stand there staring...
 2. Do what you were told!
- B. What Happened Next (30 Years of Acts)

1. We find out in this history Book called Acts that the Apostles went back to Jerusalem and received the Holy Spirit as promised. THEN, they went out and preached in Jerusalem (to Jewish people) about Jesus!
 2. Then, they went out into the region around Jerusalem known as Judea (to Jewish people) telling people about Jesus.
 3. Then, they went into Samaria (Jewish mixed race people) telling about Jesus.
 4. Then, they went to the ends of the earth (including the non-Jews/Gentiles starting in Acts 10 with Peter and Cornelius) telling people about Jesus and baptizing them.
 5. The Book of Acts tells us that the Apostles led a movement over the next 30 years that started local Christian Churches / communities of Believers from Jerusalem to Africa to Asia and to Europe ... 39 cities and 30 countries, islands or provinces (MAP).
- C. If the Disciples/Apostles had *not* done what Jesus said (carried out the “Assignment”), the Church would have died!
1. Here’s the question I have ... WHY?!? Why did the Apostles feel compelled to give the rest of their lives to spreading the news about Jesus Christ? He died!!
 2. Answer: Jesus spending 40 days with them proving that He (who they saw die on a cross and be buried in a tomb with the stone rolled over it and sealed with a Roman seal and guarded with Roman guards ... dead ... gone!) was still alive.
 3. Something REAL had to happen! Remember last week how we experienced Cleopas and his friend who had a burning inside of them on that Road to Emmaus, that they had to tell others ... something REAL happened to them.
 4. Something REAL happened to the Apostles to, because they were real people who, after Jesus was crucified, were REAL SCARED. I wonder what had to happen to them for them to go from hiding behind closed doors fearing for their lives to swinging those doors open and risking their lives (and many died for their faith: Peter, James, Stephen, etc.) to tell people about Jesus?!?
 5. Some people question the resurrection of Jesus Christ. I don’t! Do you know why? Because I know that most human beings are not willing to die for something they don’t believe in. Those men believed that Jesus was alive again. Those men believed in a resurrection for all of us or they would not have risked their lives!!
 6. They came out! They came out and changed the world they lived in because the Holy Spirit burned deep inside of them. The Holy Spirit gave them power and courage and love like

they'd never known before! They could not stop themselves!!!

7. They changed the world for Jesus Christ. Over the past 2,000 years, millions of people are experiencing eternal life in God's Paradise because those 12 men and the women and men who worked with them went all "I'll die on this hill" for Jesus!! Life did not matter as much as Jesus to them.
8. The Church came alive because of those women and men. They had a burning inside of them that they would not keep quiet about. They knew that people's eternities hung in the balance and those people were not going to die on their watch!

IV. You Are Here (2009)

A. The State of The Church

1. Why are we talking about this?!? Because it needs to happen again.
2. In the United States today, we have passed the population mark of 300 million people and we are still growing. Meanwhile, average attendance at Christian churches across the country is decreasing.
3. From 1990 to 2004, the United States population grew by more than 18%. During that same time span the percentage of people attending church declined by 3%!
4. Many young adults say that church is not "Essential" in their lives. They rank worship as no more ESSENTIAL than work, fun, family time or sleep. So, they do not attend a place of worship.
5. Did you know that 70% of 18-22 year olds quit church?
6. Now, we know that according to statistics, the chances of a person becoming a follower of Jesus Christ drops dramatically after the age of 18. If that is the case and that is when the majority of people are leaving the Church, then we might have a problem.

B. The Assignment

1. Remember at the beginning of this we were asking what it means to be the "Church"? I believe that Jesus gave us the answer. We are to be apostles ... or people on a mission! What is our mission?
2. Our chore list consists of the same things Jesus told those 1st Apostles: "...you will be my witnesses, telling people about me (Jesus) everywhere—in Jerusalem, Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Middle East Map).
3. Let me show you something: Here it is—Jerusalem (Grant and Crawford Counties), Judea (Wisconsin), Samaria (United States) and to the ends of the earth (world map).

- a. Grant/Crawford = these are your friends/family/neighbors and we reach out with food pantries and worship and ministry; but, we also need to make it personal!
 - b. Wisconsin = we will continue to reach out and try to help other churches be the Kingdom of God in their communities through Leadership Summit, etc. Whatever it Takes!
 - c. United States = mission trips, etc.
 - d. The Ends of the Earth = orphanages in Cambodia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Croatia, Bosnia and India ... wait until you hear how we get to help this year!!
- C. “Essential”
- 1. I believe that the Church is Essential to the eternity of individuals. We have to become ESSENTIAL to people again ... or the Church is dead! And we’ve failed.
 - 2. I’m not sure if you caught that part at the end of our Scripture ... Jesus is coming back!
 - 3. Will Jesus find us being the “Church”? Will Jesus find us carrying out our mission?
 - 4. If we are going to carry out our mission, we have to become “ESSENTIAL” to the people around us again.
 - 5. Over the next 5 weeks, we are going to talk about WHY people don’t think the Church is ESSENTIAL anymore and what steps we need to change that.
 - 6. As a follower of Jesus Christ, I have to do my chores ... I have to carry out the mission of the Church!
 - 7. I want to hear Jesus say, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” I want my friends to hear it too...

Let’s Pray!

Next Week: Top Ten Reasons why people drop out of church and the 7 things Churches are doing to help clear the seats...