

The Gospel to the World...

Acts 1-11

Sermon 1:

The gospels record the Life of Christ... His birth, life, ministry, miracles, teachings, death, burial, resurrection, commission to His disciples and His ascension into heaven where He is preparing a place for us and from where we await His return! Jesus said, *“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”* (Matthew 24:14)

As Matthew’s gospel closes, Jesus has one last moment with His disciples and commissions them to *“go and make disciples of all nations.”* (Matt. 28:16-20)

As we tread into the Book of Acts, Luke continues the account of the commission with Jesus telling His disciples they will His *“witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”* (1:8-11)

Before leaving, Jesus told His disciples to go back to Jerusalem and wait... and they did! Ten days later, on the Day of Pentecost, their waiting ended! Just as Jesus had promised, the Holy Spirit came on them and they began speaking in tongues... then preaching in the streets! I and it cut the people to their heart! (2:37) Realizing the Messiah had come and they crucified Him, they asked, *“What do we do?”* and Peter answered... *“Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”* (2:38)

The Church was born that day as about 3,000 answered the invitation and were baptized! The message has never changed, and neither has the response.

A lot happens in the chapters that follow. However, I must stop here for a moment and address Matthew 24:14. When mission speakers share their work, I think most do a great job of pointing out this was referring to more than just geographical boundaries of countries, but rather, to people groups of the world. We often hear there are more than 1300 such people groups in the world who have not heard the gospel. Then the caveat, *“they must hear the gospel before the end will come.”* That often leaves us with a mistaken and dangerous idea that Jesus won’t be returning any time soon.

When the gospel was first preached on the Day of Pentecost, there were staying in Jerusalem, God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven (2:5). In Acts 8, when Stephen was stoned for his faith, a great persecution broke out against the Church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria, and *“Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.”* (8:1-4)

In chapter 10 the Lord sends Peter to the home of Cornelius, a Gentile! On that visit, Peter realizes God accepts men from every nation. (10:34-35)

As the Book of Acts continues to unfold, chapter 11 tells us, *“those who were scattered by the persecution traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch telling the message only to Jews”* (Acts 11:19) and next verse goes on to say, *“Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus”* (Acts 11:20).

The message spread just as Jesus said, from Jerusalem, to Judea and Samaria, and now to ends of the earth. This continued as the church grew, and the message of Christ spread, until Paul said, *“...This is the gospel that you heard and that **has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven...**”* (Colossians 1:23). In other words, there was a time when all the nations, people groups, and creature under heaven, had heard the gospel.

The fact that over two thousand years many refused to believe and thus never passed it on in their cultures leaves us with many people groups today who have never heard. But it does not negate the fact that at one time the gospel had been preached to the whole world as a testimony to all nations.

Why is this important? Because to miss this leaves us believing we have all the time in the world. It makes us like Felix (who we will read about in chapter 24). *As Paul talked about righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and said, “That’s enough for now! You may leave. When I find it convenient, I will send for you.”* There is no more convenient time than NOW! *Today is the day of salvation.* (2 Cor. 6:2)

The urgency is not to tell the nations so the end CAN come, rather the urgency is to tell the nations BECAUSE THE END CAN COME AT ANY MOMENT! That makes it all the more urgent we tell as many as we can, in as many ways as we can, as many times as we can, ***Jesus is coming again, and it may be very soon!***

There are so many sermons that could come from the first 11 chapters of Acts. That was one of them. I think I have time for one more! ☺

As more and more folks worship with us at MCC, they find themselves really enjoying the love we share as a family of God. Our love for one another, for our community and for you, is genuine! And there is always room to love more!

When the question of “church membership” or “joining the church” comes up, the conversation seems most often to turn to baptism. If you have worshipped with us long you have observed we baptize by immersion. I want to spend the time we have left this morning to tell you why.

