

Monday, November 11, 2019—Acts 3-5

He had been lame since birth. Every day he sat at the Temple and begged for money to make it another day. After the Holy Spirit came to empower the disciples, Peter and John happened upon this man. Rather than giving him money, they spoke the name of Jesus over him and commanded him to get up. He jumped up and went into the Temple “walking, leaping, and praising God” (3:8). He was free!

God does miracles like this to draw attention to His Son. Peter told the people that Christ could do for them spiritually what He had just done for this lame man physically. Times of forgiveness and refreshing were available for their souls if they repented and turned to God (3:19-20). Peter and John amazed the religious leaders with their boldness in proclaiming the Christ. Their only conclusion was they had been with Jesus (4:11-13).

When they were freed, Peter and John went back to the group of disciples and prayed fervently for boldness and power, and God shook the building where they met (4:23-31). Their fellowship was rich (4:32-37), so the enemy sowed seeds of deception among them (5:1-11), but the disciples were able to expose the plot. Then, the religious leaders again arrested some apostles and ordered them not to teach in the name of Jesus (5:40). Rather than wilting, the apostles rejoiced they were worthy of suffering (5:41).

On this Veterans Day, we honor those who have served in our nation’s military. Thank God for them today. Thank God also for those who have served the church—sharing Christ and suffering for His glory.

Sunday, November 10, 2019—Acts 1-2

Hollywood loves a good sequel. When a movie garners popular attention and rakes in loads of cash, the producers, directors, and writers immediately begin discussions for how to make it happen again. They want to continue benefitting from a story that motivates people to spend.

Acts is a sort of sequel. Luke wrote his Gospel for his friend Theophilus, hoping to reassure him that all he had heard about Jesus was indeed accurate and believable (Luke 1:4). He concluded that Gospel with Jesus' command for the disciples to stay in Jerusalem until He sent them the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49). Acts picks up, then, where Luke left off.

Jesus told His disciples He wanted them to go everywhere—near and far—to tell people about Him, but He told them not to do it without the Spirit’s presence in them (1:8). He would be their power source. They had the eyewitness testimony that would be compelling, but the Spirit would be the One who would do the convincing and convicting.

On the day of Pentecost, the disciples were gathered in an upper room in Jerusalem. The Holy Spirit came with a sound that disturbed the city, and the disciples began to speak in the foreign languages spoken by all the Jews gathered to celebrate Pentecost. They wondered what it all meant, so Peter told them (2:14-36), and the Spirit convicted them. Peter told them to repent and confess Jesus as Messiah. The new believers devoted themselves to Christ and one another (2:41-47).

Praise God for the gift of the Spirit to enliven and empower.

Saturday, November 9, 2019—John 18-21

John began his gospel by saying Jesus came in grace and truth (John 1:14, 17). In chapter 18, we see Jesus living out both. In the Garden, He displayed grace toward His captors, telling Peter to put away the sword and healing Malchus's ear, and He spoke truth as the religious leaders wrongly accused and convicted Him. He told Pilate that all who loved the truth would recognize what He said was true (18:37). Pilate wondered aloud what truth was, and he declared Jesus was not guilty.

Jesus assured Pilate that Pilate's power was from God and that His accusers bore the real guilt of the sham proceedings (19:11), and Pilate tried to release Jesus, but the crowd would not have it. They took Jesus to Golgotha and nailed Him to a cross. While hanging on the cross, He displayed more grace as He spoke to His mother and to John (19:26-27). The call of God is more powerful than the circumstances of life.

On Sunday morning, Jesus was alive. His mission was complete, and He could have ascended to His throne, but His grace moved Him to make appearances to Mary and the disciples. Later, His grace lavished restoration on Peter, next to a charcoal fire (21:9) like the one beside which Peter stood when he first denied Jesus (18:18).

Jesus ended with the same command with which He started. Jesus says, "Follow me." Pray to be a fisher of men, sharing grace and truth.

Friday, November 8, 2019—John 14-17

When parents are going out for the night, they go over final instructions with their kids and the sitter. They want to make sure everyone is clear about expectations. They want the night to go well for everyone.

As Jesus prepared for His crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, He wanted the disciples to be clear about expectations and next steps. He would not always be around, but they would not be alone. What He had begun, they would continue, so they needed to know how.

Jesus would remain foundational. He is the way, the truth, and the life. Like the incense, lamp, and bread in the Holy Place, Jesus was the only avenue to the Holy of Holies and the presence of God (14:1-6). His physical absence would not prevent their fulfilling their mission, however, because He was sending the Holy Spirit to empower them to do even greater things than He had done. The Spirit would be the connection to Jesus which would allow them to remain in Him and bear fruit (15:1-8).

The bad news was the world would hate His disciples just as they hated Jesus (15:18-25). The Holy Spirit would be their Counselor—an advocate standing by their side to defend and encourage—so they would not fall away. Jesus had thought of everything so they could endure until the end, when sadness would turn to eternal joy (16:16-33).

Jesus has overcome (16:33). Jesus prayed for you (17:20). Ask God to develop faith and unity in your life as fruit for Jesus' glory.

Thursday, November 7, 2019--John 11-13

Jesus is the Good Shepherd. He is troubled when His flock is disturbed. He went to Bethany four days after Lazarus had died. Both Martha and Mary came to Him

convinced He could have kept Lazarus from dying (11:21, 32). When He saw the weeping and heard the wondering why, He was deeply troubled in spirit (11:33, 38).

Jesus brought Lazarus back to life that day to prove God had sent Him (11:42). Jesus was the Messiah. Jesus was the one God had chosen to save His people and establish His Kingdom. In order to do that, He would have to die (11:50, 12:32).

Mary grasped this reality possibly better than anyone. She ministered to Jesus like the lowest servant in the house and washed His feet with expensive perfume, giving a rich treasure to her Lord to prepare Him for burial (12:7). Judas resented it, but Jesus commended it. This act was so powerful, John mentioned it in chapter 11 before it happened in chapter 12. She saw what the exulting crowds (12:12-19) did not see. He was worthy.

Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. Then, Mary anointed Him for burial. Then, Jesus stooped as a servant and washed the disciples' feet. He was progressively demonstrating His power and His purpose. He had come to serve as a ransom for His people, and His people would in turn serve one another as servants of their Master (13:15).

He is worthy of all honor. To honor Him, love others (13:34-35).

Wednesday, November 6, 2019—John 7-10

Jesus was able to speak powerfully though He had not been through the religious schooling afforded to the Pharisees (7:15). Spiritual insight was available outside their authority, and it troubled them. The crowds were astounded. Even the guards admitted they had never heard anyone like Jesus (7:46). Many were gaining a handle on who He was, but no one could lay a hand on Him. He still had work to do (7:8, 8:20, 59).

The things Jesus said and did were directed by the Father. Jesus wanted everyone to know God had sent Him and was using Him to establish His Kingdom in their lives. Despite the clarity of His words and the power of His signs, there was still confusion (8:27), but many were still able to believe (8:30). He called them to obey His teachings as His disciples so they would remain free in Him (8:31-32) and have life. Jesus was at work bringing light into physical (9:25) and spiritual (9:38) darkness. The spiritual leaders remained blind and deaf and, therefore, guilty (9:41).

Jesus was willing to lay His life down for His sheep. He was the door of protection and the way to provision. The Father loved Him for what He was willing to do (10:17), and His sheep followed Him because they loved Him and knew His voice. Jesus was without a doubt the Son of God, doing the work God sent Him to do (10:37).

Is Jesus your Shepherd? Obey Him. Love Him. Praise Him today.

Tuesday, November 5, 2019—John 4-6

Because of His wisdom, Jesus was able to get to the heart of the matter when He interacted with people. Because of His nature, He was able to deal with these difficult, delicate matters with a wonderful blend of grace and truth. With the woman at the well, He used her need for water as a bridge to her need for satisfaction—something she was searching for through men but would only find through the Messiah.

Jesus found full satisfaction in doing the will of God (4:31-34). The one working

to bring in the harvest finds joy and provision, and Jesus was doing that work and calling the disciples to continue that work. Imagine the joy when the villagers came to hear Jesus because of what they woman said but now believed because they themselves heard Jesus (4:39-42)!

Jesus was seeking souls but often performed healing as signs of His identity and power to save. This healing on the Sabbath caught the attention of the religious leaders who conspired to kill him. Jesus told them He was not bothered by their lack of support or respect. He was in communication with the Father who told Him what to do. The religious leaders refused to listen to the Father and the Scriptures that pointed to Jesus (5:39), so they would not have His gift of eternal life.

Whether water or bread (6:48), Jesus showed that He was what every heart longed for. Thank God for His grace and truth. Pray for increasing satisfaction in Jesus alone.