

Church Part 10 - Carrying Jesus (12-5-2021)

Introduction: We have studied the birth of the Church for guidance & definition for who we are called to be.

Let's briefly work backward this morning: The **Church** (Acts) is born from the **Passion** of Jesus which is the culmination of His purpose on earth that we celebrate in the **Advent** (the anticipation & birth of Jesus)

1) The call to carry Jesus

a) Mary is called to carry Jesus (The angel Gabriel visits Mary in Luke 1:26-38)

Luke 1:28-29 (ESV)

(28) And he (Gabriel) came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" (29) But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be.

Note: Mary is sharp - you have good news - offering God's grace? Cool, but like what's this gonna cost?

Consider - The gift of carrying Jesus meant she could lose her fiance, her future, her standing in her community. And we know the stigma followed her family (see John 8: Jesus' birth story was known).

Look at Mary's response . . .

Luke 1:38 (ESV)

And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word."

b) Jesus is approaching his ultimate purpose on the earth and says these words . . .

John 12:23-24 (ESV)

"The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit."

Note: The birth of the church came about because of the death of Christ . . .

- Seed - falls, is hidden (buried), in hope that it will germinate & grow
- What gets planted and what grows are not the same - seed doesn't become fruit, but a tree or plant that produces the crop (fruit) that contains many seeds
- For the good news we celebrate at Advent to spread - Jesus had to die!

c) Jesus disciples are called to carry Jesus

John 12:25-26 (ESV)

(25) Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. (26) If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.

Note: Following Jesus by carrying His life in us, will be costly!

The call to carry the life of Jesus comes with a cost - now let's return to Acts and the birth of the church . . .

2) The cost of carrying Jesus

- Coming out of Acts 2 - the healing of the man lame from birth, & immediately it brings push back!
- Peter & John are threatened and told to stop preaching Jesus. This is the church's response . . .

Acts 4:29-31 (ESV)

(29) And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to **continue to speak your word with all boldness**, (30) while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of **your holy servant Jesus**.” (31) And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.

Note: Carrying Jesus will mean being misunderstood, rejected, & opposed. But just as Mary was promised God's favor, so too are we - the Holy Spirit came upon them, so they could continue to carry Jesus!

Peter imprisoned & the apostles Beaten & warned for speaking about Jesus . . .

Acts 5:40-42 (ESV)

(40) and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. (41) Then they left the presence of the council, **rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name**. (42) And every day, in the temple and from house to house, **they did not cease** teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.

Note: They have added to the threats - physical harm. And yet, the work continues!

Stephen Martyred for bolding preaching Jesus . . .

Acts 7:54-60 (ESV)

(54) Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him. (55) But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. (56) And he said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.” (57) But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him. (58) Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. (59) And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” (60) And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Note: And another grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, & with his dying words he breaths forgiveness

This is a turning point for the early church - from increasing threats & hostility to persecution & death . . .

Acts 8:1-3 (ESV)

(1) And Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day **a great persecution** against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. (2) Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. (3) But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison.

Acts 8:4 (ESV)

Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word.

Note: And Jesus words are being fulfilled in their midst - they are scattered like seed and the word spreads!

3) The fruit of carrying Jesus

a) The Church grows as people receive Jesus

Acts 9:31 (ESV)

So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.

b) The power of God is revealed in my life

2 Corinthians 12:9-10 (ESV)

(9) But he (the Lord) said to me (Paul), “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. (10) For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

- Fruit is produced on the **other side** of difficulty and struggle, and . . .
- In the midst of the difficulty and struggle God’s grace is sufficient and his power is on display. Not to remove me from trouble, but to empower me to carry Jesus though it all.

Conclusion: How then shall we respond?

- **Say yes** (like Mary)
- **Ask for help - boldness & strength** (like Peter & the church)
- **Choose to love & forgive those who oppose - even at great personal cost** (like Stephen)

Whatever the challenges and costs - continue to proclaim the Good News of the Advent!