

Acts 1, Part 2

We're going to continue with Acts 1 as we talk about Spirit-Led leadership.

Today's focus: Let's jump into God's word – we're going to seek first God's plans.

We'll be looking at Jeremiah 29:11 and the second half of Acts 1

For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

Can we say a good "amen" to the promise of God's Word?

I want to say three things from God's Word:

1. God can be trusted – "I know . . ."
2. God is good – "prosper, not to harm"
3. God is in control – "you hope and a future"

It's beautiful

God has a plan for your life.

You may not have ever heard that, you may have never thought that, you may be here for the first time just trying to figure all this out. I need you to know – God has a plan for your life.

I also need you to know that the enemy does as well. (And I also need to remind you that we do as well – so there's **all these plans** . . .

I was thinking this week as I was praying and planning through this, I had this thought that the enemy has to work really hard, and I kind of like that.

I like that the enemy has to scheme, he has to plan, he has to look for ways to get into our life and mess our life up and get us to distracted – he has to work really hard.

But there is an ease and a current to living in God's plan for our lives that can only come that way.

God has a plan for you, and God has a plan for his church – for us at Gracepoint. (And you'll have the opportunity in the second half of the message to hear from our Shepherds about their very prayer plans for Gracepoint in 2026).

Last week – began looking at God's plans for his church:

Acts 1:8

They're trying to figure this all out, and as he leaves, they are looking up and he says, "Why do you stand looking into the sky?"

And we talked about the fact that we stand looking into the sky when we live only according to old expectations, but we are not open to what God wants to do in the future. And that Jesus has called us to join his plan for a new day forward.

God calls us to live into this moment and to live with expectancy.

Acts 1:12-26

¹²Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day's walk from the city. ¹³When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James.

¹⁴They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

They're all praying together – men and woman – and they're all praying boldly. And apparently Mary was quite the prayer warrior.

And so the secret of their greatness was not only that they prayed, but that they prayed together – and they prayed often. That's how the holy Spirit came into their midst.

GROWING UP – one guy, one moment, one mic (it was **formal**). But this is **communal**.

Verse 14 says they gathered “together.” They were united in prayer – prayer is what bound them together.

Then notice – this prayer, this togetherness is going to be the foundation stone of addressing issues in the church (YOU SEE – YOU ALWAYS BATHE YOUR PROBLEMS WITH PRAYER):

15-20

¹⁵In those days Peter stood up among the believers (a group numbering about a hundred and twenty) ¹⁶and said, “Brothers and sisters, the Scripture had to be fulfilled in which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through David concerning Judas, who served as guide for those who arrested Jesus. ¹⁷He was one of our number and shared in our ministry.”

¹⁸(With the payment he received for his wickedness, Judas bought a field; there he fell headlong, his body burst open and all his intestines spilled out.

What's going on here?

Verse 15 says “in those days.”

These disciples had an “in those days” moments where they had dealt with a lot over a short time. [A LOT WAS COMING AT THEM] – you understand that, don't you?

In a short period of time – they had watched as Jesus was crucified, now he's been raised. But it was an emotional roller coaster. And to top that off – ONE OF THEIR INNER CIRCLE – JUDAS – ABANDONED THEM – BETRAYED JESUS – AND EVENTUALLY TOOK HIS OWN LIFE.

It was a terrible moment.

So – they're one apostle down. God ordained 12, now there are 11. They're trying to make some sense of it.

¹⁹Everyone in Jerusalem heard about this, so they called that field in their language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.)

²⁰ “For,” said Peter, “it is written in the Book of Psalms:

“May his place be deserted;
let there be no one to dwell in it,’

and, “May another take his place of leadership.’

They’re trying to make sense of it – they’ve been betrayed, Jesus has been betrayed.

And Peter does something that is extremely wise: his first move is TO CONSULT THE WORD OF GOD FOR ANSWERS.

He goes to the psalms (which are of great comfort) to see what God has to say about the matter.

And what they realize is – God’s word had given direction, that leadership must go on!

So – they’re going to pick another.

Now here’s something to think about. In the story, we see two routes that a person can take when there is failure (and in all of our lives, there will be some failure at some level).

There’s the Judas Route, and the Peter Route

1. **Judas Route** – Judas betrayed the Lord, was overwhelmed by guilt and shame, and because he didn’t ask for forgiveness, he made MORE BAD CHOICES, one being the personal choice of suicide.

And here’s what can happen – if we don’t RUN TO GOD when we make a mistake, and make changes, we’ll go down the Judas route – and life will shift into self-destruct.

The Judas route is a very dangerous and destructive road.

Then there’s the

2. **Peter Route.** Here’s what’s interesting – both denied the Lord (Judas did it once, but Peter denied the Lord 3 times. Remember when the rooster crowed?

But instead of getting drowned in guilt and shame, he turned back to Jesus, repented of what he did – made changes in his life to avoid future mistakes.

And what happened to Peter? God used him such that he became one of the most powerful leaders of the 1st century church.

So there are two choices when we fail – are we going to take the Judas way, or the Peter way?

They both made mistakes – they both were guilty – One ran from his sin, the other ran to Jesus and His Word!

Why? Because Jesus gives hope, and the Scripture give clarity. Insight. Wisdom.

Last part (2 slides)

²¹ Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus was living among us, ²² beginning from John’s baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection.”

²³ So they nominated two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias.

²⁴Then they prayed, “Lord, you know everyone’s heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen ²⁵to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs.” ²⁶Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles.

So – they have this one qualification – whoever is chosen to fill Judas’ spot, must have been a witness to Jesus’ life and resurrection.

And so they come up with two names: Joseph, and Matthias. (BUT THEY ONLY NEED ONE).

How are we going to decide?

And I’m convinced that today – we would have had a mini election – voted democratic.

But that’s not what they did – they cast lots – literally drew straws (which sound ridiculous in our educated, sophisticated world. When would you ever make a major decision that way?)

But here’s what they knew – there was precedent for that in the Scripture. Because here’s what it means – you had to put your trust in GOD for how the decisions should go.

So they chose the method, Verse 24 says “then they prayed” – and put the whole decision in God’ hands.

They trust that God will lead them wherever they need to go.

I remember hearing a missionary tell about something very similar:

He was in Uganda – doing a preacher’s training conference.

He spent 5 days with around 200 indigenous preachers from rural villages – and the goal was to teach them how to go out and teach the Word of God.

He taught the book of Acts – and this story about choosing who would take Judas’ place was part of the teaching.

At the end of the week, the mission organization they were with brought 4 bicycles they wanted to give away so they could more easily get out to some of the more remote places because the only transportation was their feet.

So there were 200 preachers, and 4 bikes. And one of the men said, “How are we going to decide who gets these 4 bikes?

And one of the leaders said, “UMM – I don’t think we thought this one through.”

And as they were scratching their heads trying to figure it out, James – one of the church planting pastors at the conference – said, “let’s just do it the way they did it.”

And he was like, “What do you mean?” He said, “Well, you said they cast lots – let’s cast lots.” And he said, “I was looking at James like, “Why would you ever do that.” And he said, “NO – WE HAVE TO BELIEVE GOD’S PLAN.”

SO – THEY ALL PRAYED - And so he literally gets a piece of paper, starts ripping it up into small pieces – puts a dot in four of the pieces, puts them in a hat and passes it around the room.

And when they were finished said, “They pastors that have a dot, please come forward.”

They come up and James says, “AH, THE LORD HAS CHOSEN WISELY.”

And everyone got a lesson in what it means to trust the Lord for the decision. And if God will use little pieces of paper with dots on them to achieve his plan – do you believe he's still working if we trust him?

THIS year – there's been a lot of praying from our leaders about where God would have us go in 2026.

You're going to hear some things that didn't come from us, but they came from God.

We know that – because there are plans we could have never envisioned. But they were put on our hearts as we walked along in prayer.

We're trusting the Lord – and now our shepherds will come and share . . .