

Acts 1 – The Launchpad of Leadership

At the start of a new year, there's one verse that always comes to mind – perhaps you've read it. Isaiah 43:18-19.

Do not dwell on the past.

See, I am doing a new thing!

Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?

I am making a way in the wilderness

and streams in the wasteland (Isaiah 43:18-19).

We live in anticipation of that this morning.

And so as we begin the new year – as we begin a new series on Acts 1-8 – Spirit-Led Leadership – our first step is to lead with prayer.

Gracepoint is a **House of Prayer**. You'll see that everywhere here.

So this morning we're going to center in Acts 1 this morning – verse 1-11 (new to GP – we preach through books of the Bible. Sermon notes posted on web site below the service broadcast the following Monday). As we get into the text, let's **pray**.

Father, thank you for the word of God that does the work of God in the hearts of the people of God. We come, Lord, this morning - and we bring ourselves. We bring our attention, our minds, to engage in the words that we hear, the words that we read, the thoughts your Holy Spirit is going to give us.

We pray that you would feed us and teach us, but more than that equip us to be vessels to speak your word, to share truth, to encourage others, to have knowledge, but then, Lord, to act on it. For we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Acts 1:1-3

The book of Acts was written by this guy named Luke, and Luke was known for his attention to detail – a well-educated man – known because he wrote two different books in the NT – the Gospel of Luke (which goes by his name), and then he wrote this book called Acts.

And at the beginning of Luke and Acts, he's writing to this guy named Theophilus, and he tells him at the beginning of Luke – I have carefully investigated all that I'm about to lay out to you – I've talked to eyewitnesses. So Luke wasn't careless, wasn't just writing down hearsay and rumors – he tells about what he documented.

And he tells Theophilus, "I'm writing all of this down so that you may know the certainty of the things you've been taught." So think about this: 30% of your NT is one man writing to one man, to tell him about Jesus, which ought to **tell you just how important one person is to God**.

Luke had an intention, that all those who would come to follow Jesus – in his day and beyond – could have certainty about the historical story they were leaning to.

So he writes the book of Acts, and it is following the story of Jesus beyond the resurrection – the continuing unfolding story of Jesus.

So let's continue reading in verse 4 (Acts 1:4-8)

Now - one of the things that's noteworthy is how Luke opens the book: former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus *began* to do and teach.

It's like Luke is saying, "Hey, the Gospel I wrote about the birth of Jesus – the ministry of Jesus – the crucifixion of Jesus – the resurrection of Jesus – hey, that was just act 1 in the drama that Jesus is unfolding. That was the beginning.

But here we have God's work continuing – and although this book is commonly called "the Acts of the Apostles," probably a more accurate name would be "acts of the Holy Spirit."

Because this is the continued, unfolding story of Christ and his church working through the Holy Spirit.

I don't know about you, but sometimes I think about the story of Jesus all culminating in the Cross and the empty tomb – and that was the climax and the end, and then it was done.

But that's not what Luke says – because God is not a yesterday God, right? Luke wants you to know that, "Jesus was just getting started by rising from the dead."

That incredible moment was just the beginning. And so there is more.

So what he's going to do is give us an identity for us to lean into that will help us find our way forward. And this identity had three parts to it.

First and foremost

1. The church is a movement of the Kingdom of God, started by Jesus.

Verse 3- for 40 days after the resurrection, he spoke about Kingdom of God." Notice what he spoke about. Not, "Ok guys, I'm gonna show you how to start a religion."

He didn't say, 'Hey, you guys are gonna build these incredible cathedrals and people are gonna come from miles around to see these buildings (that nobody goes to anymore)." No! He got them together and spoke about the Kingdom of God. What is that?

He was preparing his followers for a movement of God's reign in every place and every heart.

And so what is the Kingdom of God? Read the Gospels – he describes it through parables, through miracles, through his ministry and teaching.

What does it look like?

- The lost coming home.
- Sinners like you and me are forgiven.
- People have a new hope!
- The poor are cared for, the hungry are fed, the sick are healed, the addicted are set free.

And so the church – at it's inception – was essentially a movement of God out into the world – built around the conviction that

- Jesus had died as the only Savior for sinners –
 - was risen from the dead, proving he was who he said he was –
- and now had called people to a new way of living. (And the way he called them – was through HIS PEOPLE to be witnesses out into the dark and broken places of the world. **(That's what it originally meant to be the church (which comes from the Greek word "ekklesia"– to be a community of people called out into the broken places).**

But over the years, a terrible thing happened. People began to think of church as a “place” that you went to for religious services. (And so through the Middle Ages, people “went” to church. It was a place you ATTENDED or a SERVICE you sat through, rather than a movement you were part of.

And so the church became an institution that essentially provided services for people and was controlled by powerful people who used it to serve their own interests.

BUT AS TIME MOVED FORWARD – something awesome happened. God raised up a group of people – called the Reformers. One of the main ones for the English-speaking world was William Tyndale.

Through his studies of going back to Scripture, William Tyndale came to the conviction that Christianity was essentially a movement – and if people were going to be devoted to the movement they had to understand the message.

And so his life’s work was to produce the first translation of the Bible into common English. And every time he came across the word “**ekklesia**” – he translated it “congregation” instead of church, because he was trying to emphasize that the church was NOT A PLACE YOU WENT TO, but a MOVEMENT you belonged to.

(And, of course – that infuriated church leaders because it undercut their authority. And eventually William Tyndale was tried as a heretic, HANGED and BURNED AT THE STAKE).

But during his trial – right before he died, he said to those so-called leaders:

“If God spare my life, ere many years, I will cause the boy that drives the plow to know more of the Scripture than you do.”

And we know that prayer was answered – because today, we have all held the Bible in our hands.

And so – the first thing we must understand is – we’ve been called to movement – and that means going in the power of Christ, and not sitting and talking about Him!

And when we take that call seriously – strongholds are broken, demonic powers flee.

By our love, hearts are soften, communities are workplaces are brightened, and cynics become believers.

This is what it looks like when the Kingdom of God begins to advance in our midst - and we can see it coming up all around us.

So – in the Navy, there’s something called **The Moth Ball Fleet**. 91 ships sitting in safe harbors all over the US.

These are ships and boats that have been decommissioned – aircraft carriers, frigates, battle ships – waiting for the day we may need to recommission them.

And while sitting in a safe harbor may be the destiny of boats who have come back from the sea – that was never God’s intention for his people.

Christ’s for the church is anything but a static institution.

The church was called to movement.

AND THAT MEANS – WE THINK BIG!

In fact – I find it interesting, that Jesus is calling them to a global mission. **VERSE 8 – KEY VERSE**

But in verse 6 the disciples ask: (“Lord, when are you going to restore the kingdom of Israel?” It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.”)

Which is to say, “What WAS is not what this movement is going to BE!”

Here are these early believers, and what they’re concerned about are their own nationalistic interests.

They are thinking Israel – Us – Now!

But Jesus is concerned about going to the ends of the earth.

They are thinking small, he is thinking globally. His vision is that they be a community that starts with us being witnesses at home, and then taking that witness to the ends of the earth, bearing witness to what we’ve seen and heard!

And so #1 – “church” is not a service you attend, but a movement you join.

It is FIRST a movement of the kingdom started by Jesus:

And secondly – that movement is:

2. Fueled by the Holy Spirit

Verse 8 – “But you will receive power – POWER – when the Holy Spirit comes on you!”

You need to understand, if you are a Christian and are worshipping here today, you have the gift of the Holy Spirit living in you.

You see – the Spirit works kind of like the pilot light in a gas fireplace. If you don’t know how that works, I’ll explain like I did to one of my boys one time.

We were at someone’s house, and he was looking in the gas fireplace and so fascinated by it, and all of the sudden he says, ‘Dad, there’s a fire in there!’

He was so excited because he saw the fire – this little blue flame that’s always there.

And the reason it’s there is – all you’ve got to do is turn the knob, and it increases the amount of gas to the fire, and suddenly – it’s burning everywhere – the whole thing is on fire!

You see, the gift of the Holy Spirit is like the pilot flame of God’s presence within your heart – it is the promise to every believer.

It’s always there.

So the pilot flame is there, yet there are times in our life we are literally filled with the Spirit – and that’s like the flame kicking up. So how often does that happen – when does it happen?

Paul says we should ask for it all the time. Eph 4 – he says “keep on being filled with the Spirit”

In the Apostle Peter’s life we see it happen over and over again - He’s filled with the Spirit in John 21, he’s filled with the Spirit in Acts 2, he’s filled with the Spirit in Acts chapter 4, he’s filled with the Spirit in Acts chapter 10 – over and over again, he keep being filled with the Spirit.

The movement that Jesus was starting would be fueled by the Spirit in God’s people.

That when we are baptized into Jesus, we are given the gift of the Holy Spirit and God in his good grace continues to pour out his Spirit on his people as we seek his face.

When you are filled with the Holy Spirit, God will give you a vision!

What is your vision? What is God speaking to you?

Do you believe God has more for you to do?

Jesus said, “The harvest is ripe, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of harvest to raise up workers.”

The advancement of the Kingdom is dependent on me and you.

And so what is the launchpad of leadership?

1. Movement of the kingdom started by Jesus
2. Fueled by the Holy Spirit
3. Third and final point – it is carried by the people of Jesus. (9-11)

⁹After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

¹⁰They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. ¹¹“Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”

Now – isn’t that interesting. Here are these early disciples. Jesus is sending them into all the world.

He ascends back to heaven after giving them their marching orders. And what do they do? They missed the whole thing.

First (we saw in verse 6)– they want to debate times and dates and seasons when they need to be investigating ways they can serve their community and world.

They’re leaning back into old understandings and expectations of religion – and Jesus is urging them forward by the creative power of the Holy Spirit.

AND THIS QUESTION HIT ME THIS WEEK – WHEN DO CHURCHES STAND GAZING INTO THE SKY?

I attended a workshop recently – and this is the graphic that popped up in the screen: **PAVE THE COWPATHS**

At first that was odd – until the speaker explained that it means.

The term originates from when city planners in early Boston simply paving the paths that cattle had worn into the ground, leading to a chaotic street layout.

And so we can perpetuate what was – with little thought for what might be.

Could it be that God wants to do a new thing among us?

“WHY STAND LOOKING UP INTO THE SKY – when God wants to send is out into the whole world?”

And so in 2026 – here’s my prayer for Gracepoint – for you:

That we begin with prayer. (You may have noticed Jesus’ words in verse 4 – “On one occasion while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: Do not leave Jerusalem, but **WAIT** for the gift my Father promised.”

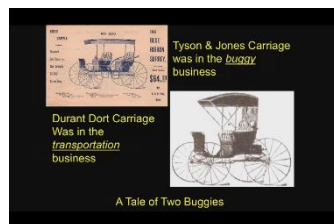
1. As we go into 2026 – let's begin by waiting, pausing, listening, patient in prayer. **For these early disciples – God was about to do something so amazing that the entire world would take notice.** But it started – with PRAYER.
2. Part 2 of my prayer – that we don't get distracted with "times and seasons" – and that we look into the future instead of paving cow paths. (Here's the thing – **if your goal as a church is to perpetuate some tradition, some personal preference that you have – your expectation is that church makes you happy and does all the things that satisfy you** – it won't be long until you don't have a church anymore. And it's the reason that thousands of churches are becoming moth ball fleets and closing their doors every year! Part 2 of my prayer is – that we don't get distracted by "what satisfies me."
3. And three – that we never lose sight of our mission mandate – to be a **community of people called out into the broken places** proclaiming his love, his goodness, his power).

If we lose that – we've lost it all!

So I'll close with this – A tale of Two Buggies

These two buggies were both invented in the 1870's.

There were two buggy companies – **Tyson and Jones Carriage Company**, and Durant-Dort Carriage Company.



The **Tyson and Jones Carriage Company** was in the buggy business. They made the finest buggies in the state of North Carolina (they are in Carthage, NC).

The **Durant-Dort Carriage Company** made good buggies too, but they understood they were not in the buggy business, they were in the transportation business.

You see the difference?

So what happens to a company that is in the buggy business when an automobile comes out? They go under.

What happens to a company that's in the transportation business when the automobile comes out? They figure it out, don't they?

So if your business is paving cow paths, guess what?

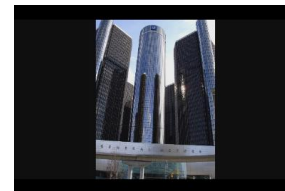
Nobody's following those anymore.



So - this is all that's left if the **Tyson and Jones Carriage Company** in Carthage, NC. It's a post card. The last buggy was sold in 1929 to an 81-year-old man who said,

"Automobiles will never catch on in America." It was the last one sold.

The Durant-Dort Carriage Company - anybody know what happened to that one?



It turned into a little company we like to call General Motors.

You see, they understood – we're not in the carriage business, we're in the transportation business.

So if our churches are going about preserving some tradition, we're gonna go the way of the buggy company.

But if our church is about making disciples of all nations, the Lord says what? "Behold, I will be with you always."

Here's what Jesus said in the great commission - You go make disciples, and you'll go kick down the doors of hell.

Let's begin with prayer – let's not lose sight of our mission
And let's go forward in the POWER of the Holy Spirit!