

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

06.12.2026 | God Prepares His People | Acts 1:12–26 | Dr. Clark Fobes | Associate Pastor

Open up a Bible to the book of Acts as we're continuing on Dang you bushes, I'm sort of preaching, I'm already messed up No, thank you guys for serving our church that way. We are continuing the book of Acts in this theme of God's mission to the ends of the earth And how he wants to make us a people that are ready and willing to heed his call, to be his witnesses And we're here in this moment in Acts chapter one where there's not a lot happening There's honestly not too much going on in this passage to preach off of But that's kind of the point, it's right in between Jesus' first call that we saw last week That Pastor Ben started off in the book of Acts with, with Jesus' ascension and his command for them to be witnesses

And then in Acts chapter two, which we get this amazing event of Pentecost, where the first church, the first sermon is preached in the first church Publicly at least, the first conversions happen with 2,000 people coming to the Lord I mean just amazing things, tongues of fire descending, wild crazy things happening. But here we're in the in-between where it just seems a little bit bleak and not much goes on And that's again kind of the point that we'll see what does God do in these moments and seasons of waiting and preparation So if you have a Bible, open that to Acts chapter one

If you need a Bible, there's one, there should be one in the pew seat in front of you Or if you're in the front, in the compartment underneath your seats And we're going to read verses 12 to the end of the chapter, verse 26 So Acts chapter one, starting in verse 12 And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room where they were staying Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the zealots And Judas the son of James All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer together with the women and marry the mother of Jesus and his brothers In those days, Peter stood up among the brothers The company of persons was in all about 120 and said Brothers, the scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas Who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus For he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry Now this man acquired a field with a reward of his wickedness And falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem so that the field was called in their own language a kaldama, that is field of blood For it is written in the book of Psalms May as can't become desolate and there be no one to dwell in it and let another take his office. So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us Beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us One of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection And they put forward two, Joseph called Bar-Sabbas who is also called Justice and Matthias And they prayed and said, "You, Lord, know the hearts of all Show which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry An apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place And they cast lots for them and the lot fell on Matthias and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

You know, waiting and preparation are not exciting themes in our society and culture And yet, if you think about all the good action movies that we have There's always this waiting and preparation montage One of the classic ones is Rocky When the Eye of the Tiger is playing and he's training Maybe you're too young for this, but he's running up and down the steps in Philly And he has the awesome moment at the end when he's holding up his hands and preparing for the fight to come But you know, one of the ones that I think did it best, one of my favorites is the Karate Kid In Karate Kid, if you're not familiar by now, I'm going to spoil things But I mean, the movie's like 40 years old So, in the Karate Kid, this guy, Daniel Son, he gets beat up by a bunch of bullies And he wants to learn how to fight and he finds this sensei, Mr. Miyagi And he goes to Mr. Miyagi, finding out he knows Karate And he says, "Mr. Miyagi, you've got to teach me how to fight!" And he says, "I will train you" And he's all amped up, he's ready to go He's going to be taught how to fight immediately to get back at these punks that are bullying him But then what does he go and do? We get the famous lines, "Okay, your training starts now, wax the cars" Wax on, wax off, paint the fence, like this And then there's that amazing moment where after weeks of doing this, Daniel Son's like, "Mr. Miyagi, what's this all about? When are you going to teach me how to fight? And then he says, "Show me wax off" He says, "What do you mean? Show me wax off!"

And you get that amazing moment where he's going, "Wax on, wax off" And this is kind of a wax on, wax off moment for the disciples in the Book of Acts Where it feels like they're doing something of little importance But this is the grand preparation, the waiting montage, the training montage, so to speak Before the spirit descends and they're launched out

for all these amazing acts of the spirit's witness through them It's a call and reminder for us as we look at the Book of Acts What does God have in store for us in our own moments of waiting and preparation? How does he want to prepare us to be a people and a church that are ready and willing to heed his call when he calls? Now there's one note we have to make when it comes to interpreting the Book of Acts How do we read and interpret the stories that are here? There's often a question that people will pose and Biblical commentators will say Is this story descriptive or prescriptive? Descriptive meaning it's simply describing what's going on and showing us what happens in the early church Or is it prescriptive? In the descriptions we're meant to see that this is prescriptive, prescribing what the church should do for all time and all eternity And often there's a debate as we come to these different things Especially when it comes to replacing Matthias, Judas with Matthias How much of this is prescriptive?

Things we should follow for all eternity or things that are just describing what happened But I think a better way to approach the Book of Acts that maybe splits the difference is what I've just kind of coined super-scriptive Going beyond what we see A superscriptive was an epitaph or a model written on a gravestone or a pillar or on top of anything really To kind of describe what's underneath in ancient antiquity at least It was to give this sort of model of what's to come And when we read the Book of Acts. I think it's helpful to remember that there's a superscriptive way we read this We read the descriptive and to properly contextualize or contextually apply Acts to our modern day. We need to see beyond the story what are some principles that it's drawing out that apply for all time and believers in all places and all eternity. And so the way we'll do that is by just simply looking at this passage and asking the question in the midst of our own waiting How is God preparing this people for the work he has for them? And so what are some things we can draw for in our waiting? How does God prepare us as his people for what he plans, has planned for us? And three ways that we'll see this first God prepares a people who cling to his promises I'll see three things all throughout this passage of how God prepares a people

The first one being he prepares a people who cling to his promises You know I think it's interesting that in this passage Peter, Peter's recounting of Judas's death takes up quite a bit of space It's one that is new for us because we only have one other accounts in Matthew But if you remember for the disciples they have just recently seen Jesus risen and ascended Which means Judas's death is fresh on their minds So why is Peter taking up so much space to recount Judas's death? Well some people say that's, well there's this discrepancy in the accounts Matthew's is different from Luke's and so Peter is writing or giving more detail to some of what Matthew left untold There's a number of different ways to try to explain these differences In Matthew we're told that he simply hung himself Whereas in Acts we get this very amazing beautiful description that he fell headlong And burst in the middle and his bowels spilled out everywhere I mean a very graphic account by all means

And some people have said well to harmonize the two to try to make sense of it Maybe Judas hung himself and you have a note in your Bible that says swelling up because of death He then burst and fell off of the rope and then his insides splattered all over the fields. Sorry to put a graphic image in your head but we don't know exactly how to harmonize these two But more than getting too caught up on the differences Again we should ask the question why rather than the what Why is Peter spending more time talking about Judas's death and just preparing to replace him? And I think it's because Peter is presenting Judas as a parable of sorts to the Apostles and the disciples As they're preparing to take on this task of witnessing to the ends of the earth There's a lot of wordplay that happens in Peter's description of Judas's betrayal and death One of them is when he says Judas was allotted his number with the Apostles If you look at verse 17, we're told he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in the ministry Now that is very parallel to what's told at the very end in verse 26 when Matthias was numbered with the 11 Apostles He's using some wordplay to show Matthias's replacement But even more than that there's more wordplay too on this term for lots He was numbered among us and was allotted his share in the ministry That word for share in the ministry is the same word used of clergy, clareos And it could also refer to a lot or an inheritance In fact, it's the same word that's used again later on at the end when he talks about Matthias's lot among them It's the same word or similar word to the word for lots being cast All throughout there's this wordplay Where we could even say that the lot or the field that was bought with Judas's blood money is a corroborated wordplay With that share of the ministry.

Even in the Old Testament, this word had significance In Deuteronomy chapter 10, this is the same word, the share or lot in ministry that was used to talk about the priest's inheritance We're told Levi has no portion or inheritance with his brothers The Lord is his inheritance as the Lord your God said to him Again, same word there, clareos, for lot share

inheritance. I think what Peter's trying to convey is that in Judas, he saw this inheritance in the world And traded his inheritance with God for a lot or a field in the world And when it comes to the disciples and what they're about to embark on in bearing witness to Christ's death, resurrection and ascension to the ends of the earth They're meant to see that their lot, their inheritance is not in the world with a physical field or lot But simply with God and what he's about to do In their preparation, there's a remembrance that their preparation is to cling to their promises that they have an inheritance with God, not in the world I think this also helps explain that first psalm that Peter quotes about Judas' death fulfilling The second one is quite explanatory, he says, "Let another take his office" in verse 20 That's pretty simple, he's using that to say the office of the apostles But what's going on with that first one? "May his camp become desolate and let there be no one to dwell in it" Why would he mention this in relation to Judas? Well for one's camp to be desolate and no one to dwell in their tents was a sign of their line being wiped out They would have no inheritance to pass on to a future line because there was no line to pass it on to.

And what Peter's drawing out is that even in Judas' exchanging of his inheritance with God for these 30 pieces of silver that were told The price of a slave to be redeemed which amounted to not a huge sum but not insignificant, maybe about \$15,000 in their time Even that sum of money had no one to be passed down to because he traded in his inheritance with the Lord for the world And you see Peter's giving both a warning to the believers but also an encouragement and a reminder that our inheritance is not in the world but it's in the Lord We are not to trade our lots with God for a lot in the world Again this word play is found at the end of our passage again in verse 25 He mentions that they're to find one to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place Same word there for place in the ministry but his own place with the fields Peter's reminding the disciples of this because of the danger that can come of following Jesus in the world and being to question and doubt our own inheritance with God But also of what he's calling all believers into to follow Christ and be his witnesses That we're to cling to this promise and remember we have a greater inheritance in the Lord than in the world Because like Judas, especially the longer we walk with God or even as we embark on this task of bearing witness as his disciples.

There will become moments where we're tempted to trade our lot with God for a lot in the world. It's hard to cling to a promise that's unseen when there's something so tangible in front of us that can often seem to fulfill what we're longing for I think especially the more we gain earthly treasures in this life, the harder it becomes to cling tightly to our future inheritance in the Lord And the easier it becomes to let go of that and trade it for some earthly possessions You know, my guys DG was meeting last night and we were talking about this with one of the first John exercises Of how are we pursuing the world or living life according to the world's ways And you know, one of our brothers mentioned that it was so easy to live simply and poorly when he was young and single.

And it made me remember in my poor seminarian days, it was it felt really easy to put all my lot in inheritance with the Lord When I had nothing to my name, I had no 401k, I had no Roth IRA, I had no investments I mean, I was living paycheck to paycheck, making rent and eating sausages every night and top ramen But it was easy because I had nothing to claim in the world, it was easy to say my inheritance was with the Lord. Now, as you gain a family, you can't just go on eating top ramen all the time with your kids, you could But one of the things that we talked about was the more that we've grown, we've taken care of our families, got married, had kids Those lines become a little bit blurred about where are we placing our inheritance with the Lord And especially the more means we have and we gain to gather things in the world, the more those lines get blurred Where is our inheritance really being placed See, it's a remembrance and a challenge that as much as we have means in the world, our ultimate inheritance is not here It's not to gain things that the world has, but cling to God's promise Following Jesus is an act of trusting in and clinging to God's promises, even when it may be unseen.

And here's this super-scriptive principle for us, this was not just for the apostles I think Peter's point in presenting Judas as a parable is not to say that, well, this was just for the apostles But other believers, you can kind of be a mix of Judas and Peter You can be kind of half Judas and half Peter, just don't go and hang yourselves. Peter's making it very clear, you're either with Judas or you're with the disciples You either claim you're a lot with the Lord in the world or you're going to exchange it and claim it with the world and lose your life with the Lord It's a clear warning, but also a reminder of what Jesus calls every believer when we're called to follow Jesus So that even in the unseen moments, we remember our greater inheritance is not here, but with the Lord in heaven.

It kind of reminds me of recently this week, eating a meal with my family and one of my daughters I won't say which one, but was taking some time to finish her dinner. One of our rules in her household is no sweets, no treats until you finish your food. We were all eating our dessert and she was still trying to finish her dinner and it was ice cream. And so I just kind of noticed her ice cream started melting and so I started taking some bites out of her ice cream. And big mistake, because the moment she saw me take her precious scoops of ice cream, she just started bawling and wailing. She was inconsolable, she said, "Daddy, you stole my ice cream!" And so I thought, well it was melting, I didn't want it to go to waste and I didn't have enough. So I was just taking some of yours, but there's a whole gallon jug in the freezer. There's more to come, in fact there's so much ice cream that you can have even more than that's on your plate. But the immediacy of what was before her was so upsetting, so caught up in the moment that she couldn't even fathom that there was something else that she couldn't see.

And it kind of reminded me how we are sometimes with God when he says that "You may not see the greatness of the promises I have before you right now, but in those moments when we just feel the need. We feel the urgency of the moments, how much do we cry and bawl out and fail to see that there's something greater beyond what's right in front of us. So often we're like children that can't see the promises to cling to God because we're so caught up with what's right in front of us. When God calls us to prepare in waiting, those are moments to remember that there is a greater promise to come. That there's a greater inheritance than what we find in the worlds. And in our moments of waiting, God desires to prepare for himself a people that hold true and cling to those promises that following Jesus will require. Because when we do, when we are called upon to act, to follow God's plans, to bear witness. There will be those moments where we'll question if this is actually worth it.

There will be moments where we take a risk to speak of Christ, to make choices according to our heavenly kingdom and not the kingdoms of the worlds. And those promises, the way we cling to them will be tested. And in those moments, it requires us to believe that what he has in store for us is better when he does call upon us to remain faithful to these plans. And that's the second point that I think God wants to reveal to us in this passage in Acts. God prepares a people who remain faithful to his plans. We cling to his promises so that when those plans are revealed, we can now remain faithful to them. You know our passage, there's a question that a lot of biblical scholars will ask. Why was it necessary for the 12th apostle for Judas to be replaced? If this was an office for all eternity in perpetuity, then we would have seen the apostles get replaced all the time. One instance of this is in Acts 12, we'll see that James, the apostle James, not Jesus' brother, but the other James, the son of Zebedee, is beheaded. And after he's killed, the apostles don't convene and replace him there. It's something that's only done in this instance in salvation history, only right after the ascension before Jesus sends them to bear witness.

So why, why all this time to replace Judas with another? Well most biblical scholars say this is a fulfillment, a fulfilling of what Jesus said in his promise to the apostles in Luke, earlier in Luke's writing in Luke chapter 22 verses 29 and 30. He says, "I assign to you, as my father assigned to me, a kingdom that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." What did Jesus mean by that? To judge the twelve thrones of Israel sitting on thrones in heaven. There's some debate throughout church history of whether this means this literal reconstituting of Israel. Where the twelve tribes will literally be regathered in heaven and these apostles will sit on thrones judging those twelve tribes. I personally don't think that's what it's pointing towards and many other biblical scholars agree that because Jesus is responding to a question of the disciples, who will be the greatest?

And in their minds to be the greatest would be to sit on twelve thrones judging those literal twelve tribes of Israel being the new figureheads in all of heaven. But Jesus' whole point in who is the greatest is not that they would sit on thrones of power, seats of power, but rather they would give themselves up for the sake of others. And I think what Jesus is calling attention to is that these twelve tribes will not be literal Israel, but this renewed, reconstituted, recovenen to Israel. Now not through the tribes of Israel, but the tribes of the nations. And when he says the disciples will sit on these twelve thrones judging, these are not literal thrones of power. But actually the thrones, the seats of prominence these apostles will bear when they give their lives up for the nations as they bear witness to Christ.

See Jesus is calling them to prepare themselves for the sacrifice they're meant to take to take the gospel to the ends of the earth for the fullness and fulfilling of God's people coming to him through Christ. It's not literal tribes and literal seats of power, but rather this moment of getting ready for themselves to give their lives up for the sake of the nations. And

when the apostles replaced Judas with another, they're remembering Jesus' words. This number twelve was important to show that Jesus chose twelve to be these figureheads to sacrifice their lives for the gospel amongst the nations. And they were remaining faithful to these plans, no matter how obscure, obscene, or ridiculous it seems, they were staying true to God's plan even if it meant their own sacrifice. You know, if we think about them fulfilling this task to bear witness to the nations, we think about bearing testimony to the gospel and taking the most effective plan. They would not have chosen one of these two people. If they were trying to be the most effective to give themselves up for the sake of the nations, the gospel bearing witness to the nations, I'd imagine if it were me, I would have said, "Alright guys, let's not just get twelve, let's get twelve hundred. Let's find two hundred and forty, let's double it, triple it, why not? And beyond that, let's find the best people we can find. Let's go to the chief priests, let's find the most influential in society that can share the most. Let's get the influencers that have the most followers on social media, because they'll spread the message far and wide."

And yet, who does Luke tell us they present before us? One guy who's so obscure that he has to be given two other names because no one knows who he is: Joseph, Bar-Sabbas, also called Justice. The reason he's giving all these names is probably because he was forgotten and he was someone that the disciples didn't really know beyond them. So that's the first one. The other one, so not impressive that he's just called Matthias. That's it. No other details. In fact, this is the only time to replace the apostle of Judas you'd think he might be mentioned more than that. No, this is the only time he's mentioned in all of scripture. These are nobody's, by all accounts. And yet, in remaining faithful to God's plans, they don't jump into what they think is the most effective. The most fruit-producing means. Rather, they simply remain faithful to the way that Jesus showed them. Becoming meek and lowly and giving themselves up for others.

See, I think this is why Peter starts off with this parable of Judas. Because he's reminding the apostles, when it comes to this task, we need to remember that we have no inheritance in this world. When it comes to following God in our lives, bearing witness to him, or simply just being faithful to what he calls us to do. There's going to be moments where we're tempted to do the things that bring the most glory. It seems the most effective. Even when it comes to church ministry, I see this all the time. It's easy to look at the outside metrics. Things that are impressive, like large numbers. Lots of money and giving, big buildings. As much as we have an amazing building here. It's easy to look at that and say, "Well, those are the metrics, and whatever we can do to get there, by all means possible. That's what we should do to have the most successful church. But I love, as our brother reminded us today. Success is not determined by the metrics. Faithfulness is success in the kingdom and economy of God."

See, it's a reminder in those moments to not be like Judas. And run after the ways of the world and think we have some earthly inheritance. But as we cling to our inheritance in the Lord. To remember that regardless of how foolish it may seem, what we're called to do. Giving up our lives so others may hear. Maybe not even believe. That's the foolishness of the cross. And that's the faithfulness God calls us into. See, in those moments where we're tempted to chase after the glory of the world. We cling to God's promises so that we can remain faithful to His plans. Because I think in those moments where we're tempted to chase after some pomp and power or impressiveness and excellence. Those are moments, as much as it may feel like it's good intention for God. Whether in our church or even in our own lives. Those are moments that we can apologetically cover up the very thing that makes Jesus the Savior of the world.

As Pastor Ben mentioned last week. A Jesus who came and looked weak and foolish in the world's eyes. So why would his people exchange the weak and foolishness of God for the pomp and circumstance of the world? See, oftentimes following Jesus and remaining faithful to the call He sets before us. Will look incredibly foolish in the world's eyes. But that's exactly what he calls us to remain faithful to. And that's what he desires to do in our preparation of waiting. It's this call to simply be his living epistles, as my dead friend John Livingston Nefius says. Witnesses to what God has done in our lives. It's an ordinary call to faithfully bear witness to what we've already seen Jesus do in our lives and in the world. You notice the, as unimpressive as these two men are that are presented.

Notice the qualifications we're told about them. In verse 21 and 22 Peter says. One of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that Jesus went in and out among us. Beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us. One of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection. That's it. There's no long list of charisma, being well spoken, being a good leader, having good vision, being good with money. I mean that's what Judas was, he was very good with money. No, all he says was. They had to have had this faithfulness to observe and walk with

Jesus for the three years he was with us on earth And they're still here now, that's it. There's an ordinariness and a simplicity in this faithfulness that he calls people into. That simply by having borne witness to what Jesus has done, that's the only thing that qualifies us for bearing witness now to the nations

Now I do have to make one note here because he very clearly says two times that these are meant to be men. I think especially if you're up on church drama in light of the SBC controversy over the seeming attack on women in ministry. I think there's a reason why Peter says these are meant to be men if they were signifying or representative symbolic headship Over these new reconstituted tribes of Israel and the people of God But that's not to remove all place for women in ministry in God's call to bear witness to the nations In fact just before this we're told that there were women in the upper room praying I think it's worth looking at in verse 14 We're told that all these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer together with the women and Mary, the mother of Jesus and his brothers. And then right after that we're told that Peter stood up among the company of 120 Now again that just might seem like some insignificant descriptive details for us But that's significant because in the Roman metrics women were never included in the counting of households and numbers And yet Luke is very clearly saying there were women here that are part of that 120 They're not just attached to the men I think he's clearly saying they were part of that number of 120 And all throughout Jesus' ministry and the book of Acts we see women that are involved in high levels in various offices and moments to bear witness and testimony of Christ And so there is definitely a place for women in various aspects of ministry But at least here Peter calls our attention to these men that are ordinary witnesses

Now no matter how much you may feel like you don't have charisma You lack what you think God wants or needs in bearing witness What qualifies you in bearing witness for Christ is simply that you've witnessed what he's done in your life And there are times I think when this will be clearer than others There are times that maybe for some of us the clarity of that call will be more akin to Matthias Matthias did this thing where they cast lots to choose which of these two would be included now in the apostles And it fell on Matthias We don't really know how they cast lots to find Matthias It probably was something of like they wrote names on stones, put them in some sort of jug, shook it all up like boggle, and then threw those dice out. This is one of those areas that I don't think is prescriptive of how the church should select its leaders for all eternity I don't think Pastor Ben or myself should have been chosen by lots Just put some names on stones and cast them out But what is clear is that for Matthias, after this period of waiting, it was very clear to him what his role would have been. And for some of us, you have that same clarity Where you feel some clear conviction or call from God that's whether through your skill set, your career, your job, your relationships This is what God is calling you to do. A

And I think faithfulness, if you're in that category for you, means being faithful to that call even when your zeal for it wanes. We all experience this at times when it comes to our calls, this passion fatigue Where the thing that once convicted us that we were really excited about, whether it was a new career, a new relationship That conviction and enjoyment wanes for a variety of reasons, but I know for myself, those moments most often come when I'm discouraged Because I don't see the fruit of my labor I imagined or expected to see When even in ministry for me, what I hoped would have some clear payoff just isn't there And I got to confess for myself in preparing the sermon, I was feeling that in some moments This has been a reminder for me that even in those moments, whether our zeal fades or the output is not where we want it to be If the call is still clear, our faithfulness should not waver Because there's something very important, if success is determined by faithfulness, then God's call is not predicated upon It's not determined based on our output, our fruitfulness, our success As if faithfulness to God or God's calling is just some sort of investment like in the world

You know, I think sometimes we can see investment in God's call or ministry in our lives Whether it be in your workplace, your family, whatever relationships, not only in the church We can kind of see it as this investment with an ROI, a return on investment And when that ROI isn't showing up the way we expected, that's when we're tempted to turn our investments On to things with a greater ROI like in the world, like Judas But if we start to determine faithfulness based on output, we reduce ourselves and our values simply to what we do for God. We can reduce our own call for God in our lives only based on what we put out So the more we are successful in our lives, the more valued we are by God or in our lives or our careers. But God reminds them they are far more than simply what they do Brother, sister, you are far more than just machines that are valued based on your output in life.

Something that I love that Pete Scazzaro says as our church went through the Motion of Healthy Spirituality He says, "This is why God calls us human beings, not human doings. Because simply in our being, we're reminded that we have innate value as image bearers of our Lord. I think we need this reminder, especially in our overworking culture in the West and in America. That we are not just valued based on our activity as witnesses But simply by being witnesses to Christ's work in our lives We have inherent value all the same which means that Jesus calls us into this faithfulness even when his plans are not clear. You may be like a Matthias where things are very clear and you just need to remember God is calling you to faithfulness even when your productivity or output is not there But some of us in the room may feel like it's not so clear We don't really know what God has called us to. And I think in those moments we're tempted to think of ourselves as lesser than Because we don't have this laser sharp vision or focus in our lives We're not certainly sure and convicted about what God's calling us to do

Now I think on the one hand, can I maybe offer a suggestion that I think that's maybe some more importing of our culture into Christianity Than a purely Christ-like way of following him I think it's more American to say that we need to have clear vision and strong leadership and good conviction and ambition Than it is Christ-like Because all throughout the pages of Scripture, what does Jesus call people into? Loneliness, obscurity, faithfulness in small places But all that to say, it's not to say that ambition and vision and clarity are bad We can still want and desire those and those can be good things to hone us in for God's purpose in our lives And maybe you want some of that clarity, but you don't feel like Matthias, you feel more like justice right now You feel more like Joseph Bar-Sabbas You ever think about that guy? A guy who was so unknown he needed three names for him to be identified How would he have felt? The lots are cast, it falls on Matthias And let's see your justice in the moment You have all this anticipation, God's gonna pick me, God's gonna pick me, God's gonna pick me And then no, boom, it's Matthias And then you're just forgotten, never mentioned again Not even chosen to be a deacon later I mean, you weren't even good enough to be an apostle Why would you choose you justice for a deacon? Go on your merry way, justice

We can feel like justice at times where we are forgotten by God Maybe we feel overlooked, maybe we feel like everyone's getting the clarity and the call and the open doors that they want But we're just sitting here pining our time by, waiting on God to answer. You know, I think in those moments, I love that justice is mentioned here So many, with so many names, as a reminder that even in those moments There's a faithfulness God calls us to, even in the waiting when it's unclear. It may not be so clear what God calls us to But that doesn't mean we stop being witnesses to Christ or stop bearing witness to Christ And neither does it mean we question our own value or usefulness to God . Those may simply just be moments where God's call is to wait And at some point, as you continue to faithfully be a witness and bear witness in your life. God will call on you for a specific purpose and it will become clear.

You know, it reminds me of my favorite piece of literature, outside the Bible, ever written This book, Fahrenheit 451, that was written by Ray Bradbury in the 1940s And in this book, if you're not familiar with it, he's writing about how there was this calling out of communism Even in the West, people had this red scare, where people were turning on each other It's all this book about how books are being burned and ideas, new ideas are being shunned And at the very end of the scene, again, I'm sorry I'm spoiling it, but it's 80 years old So just read the book. There's this ending scene where the main protagonist, Montag, he's escaped from the police for having had books and reading them At one point, he read a portion of the Bible and he committed, he read through the book of Ecclesiastes He's talking with this group of outcasts that are around this campfire on the outskirts of the city

And they start to reveal to Montag that they were all people that were too dangerous Because they were professors, they were too dangerous in the government's eyes They read books, they understand knowledge, they wanted to pass that on And with this thought police, that was dangerous to them, so they were cast out And they go around the campfire and start revealing that all these different guys are the living memories of Dostoyevsky Of different authors and writers, different books He says, "If you want to read the Iliad, go talk to that guy, he'll recite it for you We're the last remaining remnants, these witnesses of these books that have all been burned" And then they get to Montag, they're like, "Who are you?" And he says, "Well, I'm just an idiot I was never a professor, I'm not smart" And they say, "Well, surely you have something" He says, "Well, I think I have the book of Ecclesiastes" And the man talking to him says, "Good. Because when you're needed and we need the book of Ecclesiastes, we're going to call upon you Because each one of us are a vessel, the last remaining importance of these pieces of literature, bearing witness to what came before"

And then Montag responds, he's like, "So what are we going to do?" Thinking like, you know, "We're going to get to writing it down, what do we do?" And you know how he responds? He says, "We wait And we wait until we have the opportunity, when we're called upon, to pass on that knowledge, to pass on those books And hopefully once again put it in writing"

You know, I love that picture because it kind of reminds me of how we are as Jesus' witnesses Simply by bearing witness to what Christ has done in your life, if you know and trust and believe in Christ as Lord and Savior. You're an important living testimony of what Jesus has done in your life No matter how small or insignificant you may think you are. You're a living vessel to Jesus' power of his ministry and life and death on earth. And even in moments where you don't know what to do, at some point in your waiting You'll be called upon and you'll be called, "Will you be faithful to this task that God gives us towards?" But even in those moments of waiting Those are not lost moments, as Pastor David reminded us at the beginning of the service Because even in our waiting, that's a moment of preparation where God will prepare himself for a people who pray It's the last point, God prepares a people who pray in waiting

You know, I think it's so fascinating that the first command that Jesus gives to the church is simply to wait If you look at verse 8 of chapter 1, just before a little bit He says, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and Al-Jadea and Samaria And to the ends of the earth" There's a future sense of that. They were not to depart Jerusalem yet because they would be You will be, you will be, you will have power But there's this anticipation in the waiting And Jesus' first command is essentially to tell the early church, "Wait!"

Now I don't know about you, but if I had just witnessed Jesus rise from the dead. Perform miracles, raise other people from the dead. Show up, walk through walls Make plates of food appear out of nowhere And then rise into heaven like he's being retracted up by a crane. Waiting would be really hard for me. I would probably be one to run and do everything but wait Like, "Oh my gosh, you just see what happens!" I mean, we'd be using social media, the ultimate witness app, to post about everything We do that for things much smaller than someone rising from the dead. And yet in those moments, Jesus calls the disciples to just wait That would have been an incredibly painful thing to do I think also because we're given this detail, it's easy to miss In verse 12, we're told that they came back to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives The Mount called Olivet

That may, again, may seem like a simple geographic detail But the Mount of Olives, if you remember in Jesus' ministry He gave one famous sermon in the Gospel of Matthew Where he preached about the end times It was at the Mount of Olives where he proclaimed about the end to come And the fulfilling of God's kingdom I think this is likely why the disciples were caught up with that question Are you going to now fulfill your kingdom to Israel? Are you going to start fulfilling all those promises you made, you foretold Back on that sermon on the Mount of Olives? And yet even in these moments, in their anticipation, their urgency, the excitement What are they found doing? Simply devoting themselves to prayer Not idly sitting by, not anxiously pacing about But hopeful, expectant prayer in the preparation

You've got to confess for me, prayer is not my first act when I'm called upon to wait. Prayer is not what I typically run to when I'm in seasons of waiting. Waiting is something that is really hard to learn When we teach our kids how to wait. I think just wait is probably the most off-repeated phrase in our house right now. But when I'm told just wait, oh no no no no no. I'm not a child, I have agency, I have means, I can start making spreadsheets for the most optimal outcome when the waiting's over I can weigh the pros and cons, I can do my research I can mull through all the different opportunities in my head I can anxiously think about things

See, in waiting we tend to want to do everything we can to hasten the waiting To make it come and be over But prayer is probably one of the last things I do, I turn to when I'm in seasons of waiting But in prayer, it's a moment for God to prepare us Because those are moments we're called to cling to God's promises So be called to remain faithful to what he has planned for us. But also to prepare ourselves and for the task to come when God finally calls upon us. Why did Jesus say to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit? If this was such an urgent task, why not just go and start telling people And then the Spirit would come later and it would work out. Remember, because the act that they were called to do was not one that they could simply optimize according to human means. Being witnesses to the risen Lord was not something they could just strategize and pop out an effective model. They were called to bear witness to God who would bring dead hearts to life. Something that only the power of the Holy Spirit could do. They were called to embark in a task that would

have been futile without the Spirit's work To go before them and to bring dead hearts to life So I have to imagine, even in their prayerful waiting, they're praying for God to go before them And prepare the people and the task that they have to come.

Now what about us, now that we have the Spirit? We technically don't have to wait because we already have the Spirit We should not just be waiting around for God to say go and witness It's clear now, go and be my witnesses because you have the Spirit And yet even still, there will be moments where we will have to wait on God's answer. Where it feels like we're trying to move and see things happen But it's not going the way we assume I think in those moments, we can pray with the confidence that we have the Spirit who is preparing us But also going before us to prepare the people and the task that God has in store for us And so when we pray, it's an act of active waiting. Reminding ourselves to cling to God's promises that he's worth it Remembering to be faithful even in small and ordinary ways But also having this expectant anticipation that God will do far more than we can ask or imagine And go before us in the power of his spirits.

God desires to prepare us as his people, for himself, as his witnesses. But in clinging to his promises, remaining faithful to his plans, in prayerful waiting, I think we so often can fall short We can often feel more like Judas in these moments Where we easily trade the promise of God for a promise in the world, inheritance in the world. Where we fail to stay faithful to God's plans because we're so impatient. Or maybe we don't wait patiently in prayer, but we just give ourselves the impatient anxiety and activity. This is why we have to remember in Christ God is preparing a people for himself Because Jesus was already the person God prepared for his glory.

See, Jesus was the perfect person who clung to God's promises despite facing Satan's temptation in the deserts Jesus was the perfect person who remained faithful to God's plans even when it seemed futile. And he was the perfect person that patiently prayed in the garden when he was waiting the worst task awaiting for him at the cross So that now in Christ. there is no failure as his witnesses There's simply the freedom that we bear witness to what Christ has done in his power, not in ours And we are his witnesses.