

Sermon Title: “***You Are HERE***”

Series: *Learn, Live, Lead*

Speaker: Pastor Damian Mericka

Text: Acts 19:21-31

Introduction

“Stand firm, and you will win life.” -Luke 21:19

We began this year with a look at what Kingdom endurance is. ***Standing Firm*** here means *Endurance* and is a very rich word embodying an ***upward, consistent, contagious, and outward*** motion that goes against the current. *It is swimming upstream after Jesus.* We saw this is the work the Spirit of God does in our lives, just as He did in Jesus’ - He leads us upward to higher ground and a higher life in Him.

We also looked at some of the outward challenges we face when going upward with the Spirit, including the spiritual forces of darkness which our on their way downward. As they are being cast out of God ’s Kingdom, we are being brought in. This is the nature of our Spiritual Battle. Unlike the generations that came before Jesus since His Ascension the Spirit has now come upon us to take the battle to where it truly is at.

What does this look like lived out in or lives? Following Jesus as His Disciples.



“Come, follow me,’ Jesus said, ‘and I will send you out to fish for people.”

-Matthew 4:19

This series is set to be a journey answering this question- *what does it mean to follow Jesus?* How do we today answer His invitation and see this journey with Him unfold as it did for the first-generation followers of Jesus? Together we will discover anew what it means to follow Jesus- *to be a disciple making disciples culture that **learns, lives, and leads!***

I. One Direction (Acts 16:5-9)

“So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily. And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. And when they had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. So, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, ‘Come over to Macedonia, and help us.’ And when Paul had seen the

vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.” -Acts 16:5-10 ESV

Being told *no* is often not a very pleasant thing for any of us. At times as Christians we can be so convinced that something is a great idea- in our personal lives, in our homes, in our jobs- even in our churches yet find God does not open the door. Prayers seem to go unanswered, and the opportunity passes us by. But God, didn't you promise that if *I seek, I will find? If I knock, you will open the door?*

Luke, the author of Acts is the same author who captured these words of Jesus in the Gospel bearing his name. In Luke 11 we find Jesus teaching His Disciples how to pray- coming to God as our Father with expectation that He hears and answers us. The words regarding *seeking* and *knocking* are heart attitudes or postures that seek and wait for God to answer. This is meant to show us that God is always there for our time with Him in prayer. He is involved; He knows what we need and what He is leading us into and through.

The passage builds into this final, concluding statement,

“If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?” -Luke 11:13 ESV

Ask here in the Greek implies *begging, craving, desiring, requiring*. Too often we hear this text preached as an attachment to our desires; yet it is rather a *redirection* to the desire of God- *to see His Son Glorified*. This is to be the very hunger of our souls! Why is this such a strong, consistent focus in Scripture? Because Jesus' Glorification is our endgame in this world, breaking into the eternal without sin.

Jesus said,

“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going.” Thomas said to him, ‘Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?’ Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

-John 14:1-7 ESV

In our text here from Acts we see the *Holy Spirit* had forbidden (withhold something from someone, deny or refuse leading the one asking to feel hindered) them from entering Asia where Ephesus resides. Then the *Spirit of Jesus* did not allow Paul and team to pursue their desire. Then, a vision of a man of Macedonia appeared to Paul he and team concluded this was *God* calling them to go there. In all three instances, this was the ***Holy Spirit***. So in tune is He with the Son, He is referred to as *the very Spirit of Jesus*. So knowledgeable is the Spirit of God the Father's mind and will He **illustrates** it to us, transforming us with every obedient step in it.

What I want to note here is that Paul desired to lead his team to Asia as the primary focus of his Second Missionary Journey. God said no; it was not His will. How could sharing the Gospel not be His will?! God is at work beyond what we see; His *no* today may become a *yes* tomorrow. We must trust His leading, trust His timing, and obey His direction. This is how we are transformed into mature believers. And this is how Paul, who was not ready then, is not prepared for the work of ministering in Asia. God knew what Paul would be up against; he was not ready. But in God's timing, he will be.

No matter what our circumstances are, regardless if God's answer is yes or no, we can be confident that in Christ we are all being led in one direction- toward our Glorified Jesus!

"In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths." **-Proverbs 3:6 ESV**

II. You Are HERE (Romans 8:26-30)

Paul builds on this in his letter to the Roman believers,

"Likewise the Spirit helps in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches our hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that for those who love God all things work together for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified." **-Romans 8:26-30 ESV**

We are a part of a story that finds its origin before the creation of everything that is; in the mind and heart of God. God chose us before creation, calls us into His Son, and through His Son we are ***Justified*** (past tense; *saved immediately from sin's penalty*) and ***Glorified*** (future tense; *saved ultimately from sin's presence*).

The Holy Spirit brings the mind of Christ into us, transforming us further from our sin and closer into His Holiness, seeking first His Kingdom and His Righteousness. Our very wills (hopes, ambitions, desires, dreams) have the grip of pride loosened as His Grip of love takes hold. No matter how God answers or leads, we can have faith in Him that His purposes and timing are perfect. *Trust Him.*

But Pastor, you said Justification is in the past tense, and Glorified is in the future tense. *What about the present, **HERE** and **NOW**?!*

In between this declaration of Justification and application of Glorification is the work of ***Sanctification*** (present tense; *saved progressively from sin's power*).

Sanctification has a two-fold application for us as believers in Christ.

First, it means to be set apart.

*“And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” **-1 Corinthians 6:11 ESV***

The moment we placed faith in Christ, His Blood washed away our sin, and we are sanctified (set apart) and fully justified- saved completely from the penalty of sin. Being set apart here is similar to what Israel was as a Nation in the world- God’s Holy, chosen people.

*“For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren” **-Hebrews 2:11 KJV***

Second, it is the present, ongoing work the Holy Spirit is doing in each of us.

“I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.”

-Romans 6:19 ESV

The Holy Spirit is at work in us, setting us apart as God’s children in our identity, and directing our steps toward and into our destination. As we go through this world, living for His Glory, we will find ourselves just as Paul and his team have throughout the ACTS narrative. Yet, keeping our hand in His sees us mature more and more in Him looking less like the world we came from and more like the Kingdom we are a part of.

One final verse before we step back into our key text in Acts,

“But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits[a] to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter.

*Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word.” **-2 Thessalonians 2:13-17***

No matter what we may be going through right now, we can be confident on where we are at. In Christ, we are Justified, both Sanctified and being Sanctified, and on our way to be Glorified in Christ! If our lives were a blip on the Kingdom map, we are all dots in the portion of Sanctification. Where we are compared to each other depends on our own investment in the Word of Truth, time in prayer, and submission to the work the Holy Spirit is doing in us.

And for those of us in Christ, all things work together for the good.

III. All Things (Acts 19:32-41)

“Now some cried out one thing, some another, for the assembly was in confusion, and most of them did not know why they had come together. Some of the crowd prompted Alexander, whom the Jews had put forward. And Alexander, motioning with his hand, wanted to make a defense to the crowd. But when they recognized that he was a Jew, for about two hours they all cried out with one voice, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!” -Acts 19:32-34

Remember, Paul originally wanted to come to Ephesus on the Second Journey but God said no. Now, on the Third Paul has been here for more than two years at God’s leading and the Ministry of the Kingdom is flourishing. As Paul desired to leave and begin the journey that would eventually lead to Rome, we find Paul yet again facing interruption. This time it is a riot because of the impact the Gospel was having on the economy of Ephesus and greater Asia.

On the surface, there was great confusion. In this theater people rushed in ready to defend to the end their lives- against what? While the people of Ephesus may not have known and been unified in the cause, the Jewish community there did. *The Christians were the problem!*

Alexander was most likely put forward by the Jews to help save them from being thrown out alongside Christians. This was an attempt to distance themselves again from Jesus and His message. Yet in their effort slip out of the divided crowd, they ended up becoming the uniting factor! For both Christianity and Judaism rejects idolatry- Christians are just bolder to speak the truth against great cost. For two hours they cried out their allegiance to the *superiority of Artemis*. **NOTE: The enemies’ strongholds rarely fall to the ground without a shout!**

“And when the town clerk had quieted the crowd, he said, “Men of Ephesus, who is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple keeper of the great Artemis, and of the sacred stone that fell from the sky? Seeing then that these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rash. For you have brought these men here who are neither sacrilegious nor blasphemers of our goddess. If therefore Demetrius and the craftsmen with him have a complaint against anyone, the courts are open, and there are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one another. But if you seek anything further, it shall be settled in the regular assembly. For we really are in danger of being charged with rioting today, since there is no cause that we can give to justify this commotion.’ And when he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly.” -Acts 19:35-41

Against the particulars of the religion and temple the Ephesians were keepers (Greek: guardians) of the clerk sees no danger in Gaius and Aristarchus. Greater, even the message of Christianity does not pose any real threat. Why? Ephesus was founded in the 10th Century BC and their religion still stands. The Clerk is perhaps arguing that it’s a new fad; let it run its course. Christians have not done physical damage to idols nor the temple property. If anything further was to be pursued, do it through proper channels.

The Clerk is a politician with one eye on the crowd and one on Rome. His concern had more to do with the manner of this protest than the accusations themselves. What was burned was their own property. What was redirected were their own funds- no longer buying or tithing to Artemis. Therefore make an appeal through the courts. This would require greater effort in time and money of which Demetrius did not either have or want to invest toward.

From this event forward Gaius will eventually host churches in his home while Aristarchus will sail with Paul and become imprisoned with him. And as for the fad of Christianity, Artemis is neither worshiped nor her stone around. *As for Jesus, His followers have both increased and His worship spread out into the furthest reaches of the world- and still going!*

IV. Be Encouraged (Acts 20:1)

“After the Uproar ceased, Paul sent for the disciples, and after encouraging them, he said farewell and departed for Macedonia.” -Acts 20:1

Encouraging here in the Greek means to comfort and strengthen with teaching. In other words, Paul reminded them that trying times will come, but understand while you may have stood in that Theater, you are always positionally Justified in Jesus Christ! No matter what would have happened or may happen in the future to you, you are all on the same road moving in the same direction- sharing in the Glory of Jesus Christ!

Trust God with your lives. Obey the Spirit that indwells you; allow Him to lead you as you live for Jesus inside and out. No matter what, keep your hand in His!

Saints, may we be reminded of the Gospel that we have believed.

In Jesus we are **Justified**, past tense, fully forgiven.

In Jesus we are being **Sanctified**, present tense, set apart and transforming.

In Jesus we will be **Glorified**, future tense, sharing in and with Him forever.

You are **HERE**.