Beginnings - Part 3

# Birthing Something New

## (Acts 1:1-14)

We are in part 3 of our series, Beginnings, as we celebrate this Mother’s Day. As I was reflecting on my notes this morning, I realized that the life of the believer is riddled with beginnings. From beginning to end the Lord is birthing new things in those who have been born again. And so, Mother’s Day is indeed a special opportunity for those of us who respect God as the giver of life, to celebrate the vessel he formed and used to bring us into this world.

What better way to do that as we turn to the Word of God, before the flowers, dinners, and accolades, but to look to the one who not only gave us our beginning, but who holds our future. As we turn to the Word of God in Acts chapter 1, we must recognize that this was the beginning of something new. Not just a new chapter in the lives of Jesus’ disciples, but the beginning of the Church, the body of Christ. And yet all of our lives influence in some way or another the way we see the Scriptures, because even up to this very moment,

“We see but a poor reflection as in a mirror” (1 Corinthians 13:12).

And so, we turn to the Word of God, looking through the veil of our humanity, bringing into it our own perspectives, our backgrounds, and our experiences through the eyes of faith. Not in something that doesn’t exist, but we believe in a mystery that is still being revealed, in a God that is so much bigger than what we’ve been through, where we’ve came from, and any worldly, political, or religious ideologies that have been forced upon us.

Like Nicodemus in John’s Gospel, we believe, we come in faith, but it’s under the cover of darkness. We know that it’s there, we can even see it dimly, but we come walking, living by faith, and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). Which brings a level of humility into our Christian faith that makes us understand that we can’t see as well as we’d like, we don’t know as much as we think we know, because we’re not nearly as smart as we think we are.

It’s in that context, like Theophilus, to whom Luke was writing in Acts chapter one, that we need to be teachable so that we can be established in our precious faith.

“In my former book, Theophilus,” he writes in verse one, “I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen” (Acts 1:1-2).

And so, now several decades after the resurrection, much had been written about the life and message of Jesus, but not everything could be trusted. And so, Luke, a physician and an educated man, carefully researched and interviewed eyewitnesses, and with the guidance of the Holy Spirit wrote his gospel, called here his “former book”, so that his readers might have an accurate and orderly narrative of the life, ministry, and message of Jesus.

Luke’s Gospel along with Acts was written to or dedicated to this Roman official named Theophilus who may have sponsored the writing of this great and lengthy endeavor of Luke. And so, it seems likely that Theophilus was a believer, maybe a friend or acquaintance of Luke, who was seeking to gain a better understanding of the basic foundational truths of the Christian faith. And so, there were many questions that he had that were unanswered about those mysteries that had been hidden from the foundation of the world.

Just like a baby in the womb starts with just an egg, there are different levels of revelation, because the test can reveal that you’re pregnant, an ultrasound can reveal that it’s a boy, but until Christ is formed in you through teaching, through the Word, and through experience, the revelation is incomplete (Galatians 4:19). And so, revelation of Christ comes in stages and phases, much like labor pains, but honestly it takes much longer, because it takes a lifetime to get it right.

And so, unlike Nicodemus who knew the Scriptures, but needed to be born again, Theophilus needed to be taught the basics of Christianity. He needed to understand the revelation of God, because God can’t be explained, he must be revealed. In other words, you can’t be saved by knowledge, your only saved by revelation, and so from Genesis to Revelation God is being revealed.

God who is Spirit, showed up in the flesh. God became like me, and the Bible says, “He appeared in a body” (1 Timothy 3:16). The concept of a holy God being manifested in the flesh is beyond our comprehension, but that is the good news of Jesus Christ. That’s the Gospel, the Spirit of God walked among us in the flesh, the invisible God was made visible, the intangible was made tangible, he came and dwelt among us.

That statement is mind-boggling, that the Holy God would choose to live in such a lowly dwelling as this, but that’s exactly what the Bible says.

“We have this treasure in jars of clay” (2 Corinthians 4:7).

And it’s so humbling, so far beyond our comprehension, that the Creator of the universe would step down into this jar of clay, stooping down in the dirt, and dwelling in earthen vessels. And yet, the Scriptures are very clear, not just that he has us, but that those of us who believe have him. And so, it is the contrast between the treasure and the jar that makes it so obvious that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us (2 Corinthians 4:7).

In fact, when I look at myself, when I look at what I’m doing, there is no doubt as to whether it’s me or him, because if there is anything good in me, and anything of value in me, it’s got to begin with God. And that’s why the Bible tells us,

“God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:6).

In other words, the light came from his word, it didn’t come from the sun, but it was the word that said, “Let there be light” (Genesis 1:3). And that word shall not return to him void, it’s still out there, because the book of Hebrews says, he upholds all things by the word of his power (Hebrews 1:3, NKJV).

And so, it’s his Word that will accomplish what he pleases, it shall prosper in the thing for which he sent it (Isaiah 55:11). And until he decides to move, as long as his word remains, you’ll be able to endure all things because his Word will hold you up.

When God speaks things start to materialize, matter moves, atoms connect, and things start coming together. That’s why when Jesus said, “Come”, Peter could walk on water, because one word from Jesus caused matter to materialize (Matthew 14:29). One word from God was enough for him to defy the laws of nature, but his Word doesn’t allow doubt and faith to cohabitate.

The God who was and is and always will be doesn’t change and so there’s no room for vacillation, being tossed back and forth by the waves, blown here and there by every wind of teaching. King David said,

“Your word, O Lord, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens” (Psalms 119:89).

And so, the Word became flesh, and made his dwelling among us, a mighty treasure in jars of clay. And when we start praising him, when we start talking about him, he will sit down in the middle of our conversation, because he declared,

“Where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them” (Matthew 18:20).

And so, he came to dwell among us, so that he could be touched by our infirmities, knowing our weaknesses, and understanding our groaning. He took on flesh to know the feeling of our infirmities, to know what tiredness is, to know what temptation is. And so, the Bible says,

“We have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin” (Hebrews 4:15).

In other words, he had to become us, in order to be our kinsman redeemer. He became flesh so that he could redeem us from the curse of the law of sin and death. The Word became flesh, because the Word had no blood, the Word was Spirit, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins (Hebrews 9:22).

And so, God became flesh, he inhabited Mary’s womb, so that he could bleed out. In other words, he shed his blood so that we could get in. All he needed a body for was so that he could become a living sacrifice. And so, he offered up himself both as the offeror and the offering, because he is both the Priest and the sacrifice, and he entered into the Holy of Holies all by himself.

Now, I know you thought I was lost, I forgot where I was going, but I didn’t. Luke tells us in verse 3, “After (Jesus) suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. 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, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days, you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1:3-5).

And so, we’ve come to the beginning of all things for the church, not just looking at what God did, but what God still wants to do today. That’s why most of you are here, not because somebody explained God to you, but you are here because he revealed himself to you. He gave you a sneak peek, the dwell among us God, Immanuel, showed himself to you. And that’s why he assembled them together, because he’s giving them many convincing proofs that he’s alive, but not just that, he had something even greater in mind.

In Luke chapter 24, Jesus had told them,

“Stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49).

In other words, Jesus doesn’t want you to just know about his life, he wants you to experience his life through the person, the presence, and the power of the Holy Spirit. And so, he is preparing to birth something new in them because the victorious, more than conquerors, overcomers type of life can’t be lived apart from Christ’s power.

In Acts chapter one, verse eight, he said, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you” (Acts 1:8).

And so, all the believers are excited and they’re wondering, “What do we do now?” And Jesus told them, “Wait for the gift my Father promised,” and so verse 12 says,

“They returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day's walk from the city. When 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. They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers” (Acts 1:12-14).

And so, they’re gathered together, they’re praying, and they’re waiting, because Jesus said, “Wait.”

And that’s really a summary of the whole Bible. God created us, we sinned against him, death came into human history, God promised that Jesus was coming, thousands of years later Jesus comes. He lived without sin, he dies for our sins, he rises from the grave, appearing for 40 days and then he says, “Wait!” And so, this is worse than dial up, or even 4G, and they said,

“Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6).

Many of you know that waiting is hard. Those of you who are students, and schools almost out, know that waiting is hard. Others of you are single, you might have met somebody, but you’re not sure yet, and it’s so hard to wait, but Jesus says, “wait.”

“Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord” because I’m going to send you the Holy Spirit (Psalms 27:14).

I want to encourage you to wait. Wait for everything that God has for you. With all the faith you can muster, no matter where you are, or how broken you’ve been, I want to inspire your faith, because the Bible says,

“Without faith it is impossible to please God” (Hebrews 11:6).

Our faith is so important, we can’t be saved without it, we can’t even pray without it, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him” (Hebrews 11:6).

The Word of God tells us that just a little mustard seed of faith is crazy radical. And so, that’s not a questionable faith, a tamed faith, or a reserved faith, but it’s a mighty faith. It’s a faith that will wait on God, a faith that will trust God, a faith that will go to extremes.

You know, when we read about the great men and women of God in the Bible, we’re not talking about a faith that’s reserved, quiet, and unassuming. We’re talking about people who would do the impossible, who would confront a giant with a slingshot and 5 stones, calling down fire from heaven, or walking on water, because they knew that “If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31).

And I believe that there are some things that God has on the inside of you today that may seem pretty crazy that he wants to release. In fact, I believe that God wants to stir up something inside of you, tapping into your future, expanding your horizons, and empowering you to take radical steps of faith right now. And so, I want to build up your faith and help you, whether you’re a stay-at-home mom, the butcher, baker, or candlestick maker; because whatever you do God wants to use you. Not who you pretend to be, or who you think you should be, but the you who you really are.

You see, the truth is that God can use anybody to do anything, if you would just have the faith to believe. It’s going to take faith, but the Bible says,

"With God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26).

And so, there are some situations that you’re in right now that would be turned around with a little bit of faith. Some of you are waiting on God, but he’s been waiting for someone who would believe him beyond what they’ve seen, thought, or experienced before.

Church, I don’t know what’s impossible in front of you right now, but we need to start exercising our faith. Because when you start stretching your faith, exercising that baby faith, your faith muscles begin growing until that baby faith becomes a cocky faith. And so, if you’re diligent to exercise that baby faith, a faith that wants to see cancer disappear, a faith that wants to see a loved one saved, a faith that wants to see a new job, a new ministry, or a new building, it’s only impossible until it happens.

That kind of radical faith starts by reading your Bible every day, praying for people when it’s uncomfortable, caring for the orphan and the widow when it’s inconvenient. Maybe sponsoring a child through Compassion International, but radical faith starts with simple obedience, and so I want to encourage you to just begin. It’s not about where you start but where you’ll find yourself if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel” (Colossians 1:23).

You see, there are things that God is working on deep down inside of you that nobody will see until it grows up. Things that began in the imagination of God, things that started in baby form, and what we’ve done as adults is we have discounted a powerful tool God gave us. Most of us, somewhere along the way we’ve allowed the thief to come in, because we’ve rejected our imagination as being childish and not biblical and spiritual. And so, we have allowed the devil to come in and “steal and kill and destroy” our imagination (John 10:10).

Now, you may have never thought about it before, but everything we see began in the imagination of God. In fact, you and I are the fruit of God’s imagination. Genesis chapter one tells us,

“God created man in his own image” (Genesis 1:27).

In other words, out of the imagination of God, “He created him; male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27). And so, your imagination is a powerful tool that God gave you to live victoriously, and yet many of you have restricted it, you’ve confined it, because you shut down your imagination labeling it as a childish thing. When the reality is that God gave you your imagination as one of the most amazing tools to channel your faith into an impossible situation.

And so, I want to encourage you today to release your imagination. Give birth to it again, push it out, push beyond your feelings that this can never change and imagine again. Imagine yourself healthy, imagine your family together, imagine making a difference. I’m talking about being free even when you are bound, because that’s how you can be in the middle of the divorce and “consider it pure joy” (James 1:2). That’s how you can wrestle with the doctor’s diagnosis, seeing yourself whole, because you’ve got to see it before you see it. And you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance” (James 1:3). And so, I wonder what version of you you haven’t seen yet, because you haven’t unlocked the imagination God put inside of you?

You see, our imagination is the gift of God, giving us the ability to formulate ideas and create pictures in our minds before they’re released to our five senses. And so, our imagination already has God’s stamp of approval on it which is why when Jesus disciples asked him, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

He said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:1-3).

I think many of us have missed that part, we understand the value of repentance, but nobody’s doing Bible studies on how to become like little children. I guess we think we are too old for that, we’ve grown up, playtime is over, and our kids have kids now. But Jesus gives us the key to the kingdom here, he said to develop the characteristics, becoming like little children.

And so, what are some of the characteristics of children? What do children do? They trust you, don’t they? They believe in you, some of them obey you, and most of them have very active imaginations. They simply trust God like the Bible says,

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding” (Proverbs 3:5).

In other words, they don’t analyze every situation and consider five ways that it won’t work, but they trust God and believe it could happen just like he said.

I believe that’s what Jesus is calling us to return to, because for many of us we were forced to grow up, and the trauma and trials and tragedies of life stole our imagination. We were forced to question everything and not believe what people say. But God wants us to believe again because we need to get our imagination back. We need to get our faith back, because the Bible says,

“Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see” (Hebrews 11:1).

And so, I believe it is time for the church to hope again, time to imagine, time to dream again, being certain of what we do not see.

Your imagination is the womb of your spirit, and I believe when we become like children, when you get the faith for it, whatever you are imagining will start being formed in your life. You’ll be able to imagine so much more than what you’re experiencing. You know, what if you could imagine your current situation changing? What if in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, you presented your requests to God” (Philippians 4:6)?

You see, when you go to God in prayer it changes your focus. And my prayer is that your focus is changing, because you’re beginning to dream again. And God says, bring it to me and let me show you the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future (Jeremiah 29:11). And so, as we come to God in prayer, it changes our focus, it changes our feelings, and it changes our future.

Some of you today, you heard God’s word and you need God to build up your faith, because there was something you were praying for before but you gave up. And so, I want to encourage you to begin again, because the Bible tells us,

“The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man (or woman) avails much” (James 5:16, NKJV).

If you’re here today and you have something you want to believe for. Maybe provision, maybe a miraculous healing, but you have something you want the faith to believe in, would you lift your hands right now? We’re going to pray together, agreeing in faith right now.

Pastor John Talcott

Christ’s Community Church

303 West Lincoln Avenue

Emmitsburg, MD 21727

May 14, 2023

(301) 447-4224

[www.cccaog.org](http://www.cccaog.org)

*Graphics, notes, and commentary from LifeChurch, Ministry Pass, PC Study Bible, Preaching Library, and Sermon Central. Scripture from the New International Version unless otherwise noted.*