

Gospel Triumph: What to Do While You Wait – Acts 1:12-26

Abraham is a major character in the OT and the biblical story, but we really don't have that much information about his life. But the majority that we do have is during a 25-year period from age 75 to age 100 and he spent that entire time waiting for God to fulfill a promise He made to him. Listen to Genesis 12:4 and then Genesis 21:5. 25 years is a long time. It's a lot of days to get up every morning and NOT see the fulfillment of God's promise.

Abraham is a wonderful biblical example of faith, but most of his faith was spent just doing normal stuff and waiting. He got up, opened the tent flap, managed his flocks and herds, roamed the ancient landscape in search of pastureland and water, and then went to bed that night. Monotony. Sameness. Waiting.

But really, Abraham is not alone in Scripture. Waiting is woven throughout the lives of God's people. *"Waiting isn't a supplemental experience of the Christian life. It's central. Following Jesus involves a life of waiting."* – Mark Vroegop

Our passage for today finds the disciples of Jesus waiting. They won't wait for 25 years, but they still are in between God's promise and the fulfillment of that promise. Jesus has ascended to heaven, and they know what He's said will come next, and now they have to wait. I have no doubt that almost everyone in here is waiting for something right now. It may be test results, it may be a major life transition or the return of a prodigal child. There's an uneasy monotony to waiting. So, what do you do while you wait? The Apostles of Jesus provide a wonderful model for us in this text this morning. **3 Habits to Practice While You Wait for God.**

1. Lead with Unified Prayer (vv. 12-14)

We saw last week in the first eleven verses of Acts how the disciples were promised the Holy Spirit and commissioned for Christ's mission. After this Jesus ascended to the Father and the Angels promised He would come again.

After this happens the disciples immediately make their way back to Jerusalem, which was where they were supposed to wait for the promise of the Spirit. Look at verse 12. Jesus had led them out of the city to the Mt. of Olives for the Ascension. A Sabbath's Day's journey was the distance you were allowed to walk on the

Sabbath and it was about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile. They return to Jerusalem and gather. Look at verse 13.

Luke lists the 11 remaining apostles by name. Now, we won't read anything more about the vast majority of these apostles, but there's a reason Luke lists them by name. These are the same Apostles Jesus formally called early in the Gospels. As you will see in a minute, one of the twelve is missing because of his apostasy and he will need to be replaced. But before that happens notice what the apostles and those with them do. Look at verse 14.

There are others with them in the upper room, Jesus's mother and brothers, who apparently now believe He is the Messiah. There are also other women who traveled with the group, and some may have financially supported the ministry. As they are all together notice their posture.

They are united in purpose, attitude and goal. They all want and value the same things. They express this by devoting themselves to prayer. This is the first thing they do as they wait. They pray. What were they praying about? The text doesn't say but it's a pretty good bet that they were asking God to fulfill His promises and send the Spirit. They were praying according to God's will and giving themselves to prayer.

This isn't the only time this sort of prayer meeting is mentioned. In fact, prayer plays a key role in the movement of the Gospel in Acts just as it did in the life of Jesus in Luke. You would always find Jesus getting away to be by himself and pray and in Acts we find the Apostles continually giving themselves to prayer. Listen to Acts 2:42; 4:24; 4:31 6:4.

I have to be honest with you, I rarely lead with prayer when I'm waiting. Prayer is not the heartbeat of my Christian life. And I think that's because at the end of the day I believe that Nate can do this on his own. I trust myself too much. If we're honest prayer can seem like a waste of time, time that could have been spent doing something more productive. But if you pay attention at all to the Gospels and Acts, prayer is absolutely central to the work of the Gospel and your personal growth in Christlikeness. We need to learn to lead with prayer, especially when we are in a season of waiting.

2. Look to Scripture (vv. 15-22)

Look at verse 15. Throughout the first half or so of Acts we will see Peter clearly put forth as a key leader in the early church. That begins here. He stands up to address those gathered and he has something important that needs to be done. Look at verse 16.

So Peter says that the Holy Spirit inspired David to write in the OT but that writing was pointing toward Judas and Judas was part of the intention of the original writing. Look at the end of verse 16 and verse 17. Judas had been numbered with the original Apostles who had been chosen by Jesus. He had walked with them and ministered with them for several years. But Peter points out here that Judas had also played the key role in the arrest of Jesus that led to His crucifixion. He was a guide to them.

Of course, none of this took Jesus by surprise. John 6:70-71. In fact, Judas's appointment to be an Apostle and his betrayal of Jesus all fit within God's plan and Peter says were all fulfilling the OT Scriptures. How so? We'll see in a minute but first we need to see the full picture of what happened to Judas. Look at verses 18-19.

I don't want to get into the details too much here but clearly the money Judas "earned" to betray Jesus was used to purchase a field and that field ultimately became Judas's final resting place. Peter describes his death as the reward for his wickedness. It was his just punishment.

So, let me summarize what Peter says about Judas and then we will get to the Scripture that predict this in verse 20. Judas was chosen by God to be a part of the twelve and He was part of God's sovereign plan for Jesus to be betrayed and to die on the cross. This doesn't mean Judas was free from sin and was simply a robot. Judas acted on his own desires and that somehow fits within God's sovereign plan. And we see that because Judas suffered a just punishment for his wickedness.

Alright, now let's look at the first part of verse 20. This is a quote from Psalm 69. But when you see NT author's quoting the OT, they are typically wanting you to relate the entire OT passage that the quote comes from to the NT situation. So, what do we know about Psalm 69? It's a prayer of David for God to save him from his enemies. Listen to Psalm 69:14-15. But it's also a prayer for God to bring

judgment on the enemies who oppose God's king, David. Listen to Psalm 69:22-28.

Listen, the Bible works in patterns and see those patterns fulfilled in Jesus. So, with David, he was God's king and God made promises to him about one of his descendants on the throne. David suffered from enemies and persecution throughout his life. Some of this was despite David's innocence. He was betrayed by close friends and even family. The NT authors see this pattern in David's life and then see the same thing played out in the life of Jesus, just to a much more significant extent. Jesus is the true and everlasting King. He was completely innocent of sin and yet He suffered without cause and died.

Peter is not randomly using the OT here. He learned to read the OT from Jesus. Listen to Luke 24:44-49. And so, Peter sees this pattern fulfilled in Judas and Jesus and then he believes that the OT Scripture demands an action from the Apostles to fulfill another passage.

Look at the rest of verse 20. This is from Psalm 109. This Psalm has a very similar theme to Psalm 69 and is written by David. Look at 109:1-5. And once again David prays for God to bring judgment on the enemy and betrayer. Look at 109:6-15. And it's from this section that Peter sees the command for the Apostles to replace Judas because of his apostasy.

And so, he tells everyone what they must do. Look at verses 21-22. You can see the word "must" is used and there are actual requirements and reasons for the replacement. This man must have been with Jesus throughout His earthly ministry and must have seen the resurrected Lord. This is because of the mission in Acts 1:8 and the centrality of the resurrection to the message of the Gospel.

But here's the bottom line in this section. The Apostles were committed to Scripture and looking to Scripture as they waited. They valued God's Word and understood the progress of God's mission in the world. They lived under the authority of Scripture and so acted in response to it. Let this be your mentality while waiting. What is clear from God's Word that I need to respond to while I wait? This brings us to our last habit.

3. Lean on God's Sovereign Plan (vv. 23-26)

Peter made the biblical case for replacing Judas and now they go through the formal process of replacing him. Look at verses 23-26. Now, this is an interesting way to go about this. They do pray for Christ's help and guidance in the decision, and this is intentional. Jesus selected the original twelve and He must be involved in selecting the replacement. But casting lots? What is going on?

This method of deciding was sometimes used in the OT. They even used it when they allotted the land to the different tribes. Listen to Numbers 26:52-56. Proverbs 16:33. The Apostles were essentially putting forward two equal candidates and trusting the Lord to make the ultimate decision for them.

This method of decision making is not repeated anywhere else in the NT or prescribed for us, so please, don't start using this to decide which job you will take or what car you will buy. But, in this situation for the Apostles, it shows us that they were utterly dependent on God's sovereign plan. They were trusting Him to work.

And you can see in verse 26 that Matthias was numbered with the eleven. Now, in the larger story of the book of Acts it's vital that there be 12 Apostles because this points to a renewed Israel beginning with the disciples in Jerusalem, spreading out to the areas of the kingdom, Judea and Samaria, and ultimately including all the nations of the earth, as the OT promised. Peter and the other Apostles were leaning into God's sovereign plan and trusting Him with it while they waited.

So, I don't know what you are waiting for right now, but learn from these three actions and cultivate these habits of life as you wait. Lead with prayer, look to scripture, and lean on God's sovereign plan. Our actions won't look exactly like the Apostles here but these principles transfer to our day and time quite clearly.

Waiting is quite challenging, but can also be one of the most fruitful parts of life. Don't waste your waiting. Use it for your good and God's glory. Let's pray.

Sermon Reflection Questions – 9/22/24

- Give an example of something you have had to wait for in the past that was particularly challenging.
- Share something that you are currently waiting for.
- What is the most difficult aspect of waiting for you?
- What other biblical characters, beside Abraham, had to wait?
- Do you have any practices or habits that help you to pray? What's the most challenging part of prayer for you?
- Have you had any recent answers to prayer that you can share?
- Why do you think prayer was such a central part of the movement of the Gospel in the book of Acts?
- Briefly explain how Peter sees Judas as a fulfillment of Psalm 69:25.
- Why did the Apostles cast lots to determine the new Apostle?
- Is casting lots a legitimate method for decision making today? Why or why not?

- What are some key biblical guidelines for decision making for us today?
- Why did they need a 12th Apostle?
- What does this passage teach us about God's sovereignty and human responsibility? In other words, how does this passage address both?
- What's one truth from this text that you can use to encourage a fellow believer this week?