

"What Does God Have in Store?"

Easter 6

1) For the Church?

Acts 2:1-21

2) For me?

May 31, 2020

May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance. (2 Thess. 3:5)

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Do you know anybody who just has a knack and a gift for coming through in the clutch? Over the last two months, ESPN released a made for TV series titled "The Last Dance," chronicling the Chicago Bulls and their journey to win six NBA championships in 8 years in the 90's. Throughout the 10 episode series, they would flashback and then forward and back again talking about a great number of things that threatened to derail their path to success. One constant throughout the series – the focus, command and competitive fire of Michael Jordan that willed the team to victory. Michael Jordan was a "clutch" player. He would make the steal. He hit the jumper – the game-winning shot. When the outcome seemed uncertain and fans were biting their nails – asking themselves – "What's going to happen next? What does Michael Jordan have in store now? Michael Jordan came through in the clutch. His teammates, his opponents, announcers and fans – everyone who watched Michael Jordan said – he's the greatest who ever played the game.

Might we ask the same question about our God? Do we ask that question of our God? Should we ask that question about our God? Especially in times when uncertainty abounds in so many areas of life, we do well to focus on our God and ask the question. Going back to the first Pentecost day and remembering that our God has not changed, let's go forward with the question in our hearts, **"What Does God Have in Store?"**

Do you think the disciples were asking that question in the days leading up to Pentecost? Try and place yourself in their situation for a minute. They were told by Jesus, not once but several times that his promise would be fulfilled. They were told to wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit to come. They were told that he would come with power to help them be witnesses of Jesus and his work and his resurrection. Yet they weren't told exactly when.

And they weren't told exactly where. And they weren't told exactly how. They weren't given timetables and appointments and details about how this was all going to play out and what it was going to mean for them. Perhaps they were doing a little nail-biting themselves and wondering – **“What does God have in store?”**

They probably had on their mind the events from 10 days earlier – with Jesus giving them marching orders (the Great commission), blessing them and then ascending into heaven.

What were they doing? Luke tells us in v 1 –

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.

Why were they there? Going back to OT times, the feast of Pentecost was also known as the feast of the Harvest.

The Old Testament Feast of Pentecost was one of the three annual harvest celebrations of the ancient Israelites. Grain in Israel is harvested in the spring, and on Pentecost the Israelites were expected to bring to the Lord the “firstfruits of the wheat harvest” (Ex 34:22). Pentecost was also one of the three great festivals for which every Israelite was to assemble in Jerusalem.

On a day when Israelites were looking for a Passover lamb, Jesus rode into Jerusalem. On the day when the Israelites were concerned about slaughtering and eating their Passover lambs, Jesus hung on the cross as our “Passover lamb” (1 Co 5:7). On the day when the Israelites brought the first sheaf of the grain harvest (the Sunday after Passover), Jesus arose from the dead as “the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Co 15:20). And on the day when the Israelites brought the firstfruits of their grain harvest to the Lord (Pentecost), the first ingathering of souls into the church took place. (Sermon Studies)

Isn't it amazing? God knew exactly what was in store for the church.

Luke tells us in his gospel –

⁵² Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. ⁵³ And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God. (Luke 24:52-53)

And in Acts 1:14 –“...they went upstairs to the room where they were staying... [and] joined together constantly in prayer...”

We’re told that in those days the group of 120 believers was gathered together. (Some commentaries suggest only the 11 + 1 (Matthias) were present). They devoted themselves to the Lord and his Word and his teaching. They brought their praise and petition to him in prayer. They encouraged one another in their faith. Even as they were asking the question, “**What does God have in store?**” they were gathering together with the Word and prayer. They were holding the promises of Jesus in one hand, studying to learn and relearn the other things God had said, and they took their uncertainties, questions, petitions and praise to God in prayer.

Can we learn something from those early believers? Do you find yourself asking the question, “What does God have in store for me?” “What does God have in store for my family?” “What does God have in store for my church?” “What does God have in store for our country and our world?”

Good things happen when... WE GATHER TOGETHER WITH THE WORD AND PRAYER

When you read God’s Word, how can we not be encouraged by God’s promises –

- Surely I am with you always to the very end of the age. (Matt 28:20)
- Call on me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you and you will honor me. (Psalm 50:15)

All kinds of promises. And yet sometimes the promises seem unreal. Sometimes they seem slow in coming. Sometimes we find ourselves in a difficult, maybe even seemingly hopeless situation and we wonder **What does God have in store?** and then do what they did.

They gathered together with the word and prayer. They didn't abandon one another, but they found opportunities to surround and support one another. They didn't forsake God and his Word, but they dug into it with even more zeal. They didn't throw up their hands in despair, but they brought their petitions to the great King who would hear and answer them for Jesus' sake. Not less, but more time together in times of difficulty. Not less, but more time in the Word during times of uncertainty. Not less, but more time in prayer during times of anxiety. When we busy ourselves with those things good things will happen as we wait to see exactly how he answers our question: "What does God have in store?"

² Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

The Holy Spirit went to work on Pentecost.

- 3 phenomena (wind, fire, many languages)
- They were **filled with the Holy Spirit**

The disciples were told about the coming of the Holy Spirit. They said he would be a comforter and a counselor - John 16 (our gospel lesson for today). They were told he would remind them of Jesus. The Holy Spirit is our Legal Advocate pointing to Jesus as our only defense.

They were told that he would come with power.

V 11 – we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!"

Do you think they could have asked for or imagined the day of Pentecost? If you've heard the account, try to think of it for the first time. The timing was impeccable. There were people in

Jerusalem from around the world. The signs were unmistakable – a loud windy sound with no wind, tongues of fire on the apostles’ heads. The gifts were unbelievable – plain, unschooled Galileans speaking and being understood in foreign languages. The courage and eloquence of Peter the preacher were extraordinary. The results – 3000 converted to faith in Jesus and baptized – were unimaginable.

The results of this outpouring of the Holy Spirit –

⁴¹Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. (Acts 2:41)

One last thing we want to think about – the nations listed here is basically a list of all the countries and nations going clockwise around where they were.

This type of list isn’t listed in the Bible, but only going back to Genesis 10. And then in Genesis 11, the Tower of Babel. Man tried to do it on his own and bring glory to himself, so God confused their languages. This is like God undoing the effects of the Tower of Babel.

Why is this significant? If you’ve watched the news this last week you’ve sign so many difficult things surround racism in our country and all the protesting and rioting.

There are many things that make us different and separate us that make us different races and cultures. And it’s easy to focus on those things. But I want you, instead, to think about the things that unite us. Focus on what brings us together. In this Holy Christian Church,

- there are gathered together people from every nation, tribe, language, people and race. (Rev 7:9)
- We can come together at Messiah and look across the table and see people who might look different from us, but aren’t different from us – all of us are people who are fellow redeemed children of God and blood-bought souls of the Lamb who was slain.
- It doesn’t matter the race or color – look at others as people who are dearly loved by God

What's in store?

- for our nation
- for our church – we're getting back to church next weekend
- for me? At my job, in my relationships, my own health

We ask these questions b/c we care about them dearly.

Let's remember how God didn't leave anything to chance in the lesson this morning. God was active in the early church and in the lives of his people. He is still very active in the church and in our lives today. He created saving faith in your heart at your baptism. He continues to strengthen you in the Lord's Supper.

What does God have in store? One thing we know for sure is our home in Christ. What does he have in store tomorrow or in the days that follow? We don't know....exactly. But we know that they are great things as we grow in his Word and go with his Word.

God the Holy Spirit is on the move. How has God filled you with the Holy Spirit? Who can you share Jesus with today?

Let's pray – Dear Jesus, thank you for sending the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Continue to fill us up with your Spirit, and remind us that is...enough. In Jesus' name. Amen.

The peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen. (Phil.4:7)