

May 13, 2018  
Sermon for Seventh Sunday of Easter  
St Peter Lutheran Church  
Bowie, TX  
Larry Knobloch, Pastor  
Acts 1:12–26

*J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus*

Acts 1:12–26 (ESV)

<sup>12</sup> Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. <sup>13</sup> 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 Zealot and Judas the son of James. <sup>14</sup> All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers. <sup>15</sup> In those days Peter stood up among the brothers (the company of persons was in all about 120) and said, <sup>16</sup> “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. <sup>17</sup> For he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry.” <sup>18</sup> (Now this man acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness, and falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out. <sup>19</sup> And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their own language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.) <sup>20</sup> “For it is written in the Book of Psalms, “ ‘May his camp become desolate, and let there be no one to dwell in it’; and “ ‘Let another take his office.’ <sup>21</sup> So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, <sup>22</sup> 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.” <sup>23</sup> And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also called Justus, and Matthias. <sup>24</sup> And they prayed and said, “You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen <sup>25</sup> to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.” <sup>26</sup> And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

Grace, Mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

On this Mother's Day, I have a several questions to ask you:

How do you get along with your mother-in-law? That is a loaded question but more often than not, if we married her son or daughter, we have to admit that there is a good chance that she had input into her child's qualities that attracted you to them.

Speaking of those qualities, how did you choose the mother of your children? Another loaded question. Not everyone has children in mind when they decide to choose a mate. I did, and in fact, even before we were dating I wrote our oldest daughter's name on a napkin at Mr. Gatti's Pizza, telling her that this would be the name of our first child.

Even more importantly, what qualifications did you use in selecting a mate to bring to God's altar for a promise of lifetime commitment? We don't always think of that either. Again, I am probably a little different, I clearly remember wondering what I would do if my future girlfriend/fiancé wasn't Lutheran. I dated girls that weren't Lutheran but never ones that weren't Christian.

And finally, what qualifications would you list for the mothers whom we honor today in our Christian worship? That seems to be another tall order. But it really isn't. If you lead a Christian life, those qualifications are almost so second nature that they come naturally. Not just saying that you are a Christian, but that you live as a Christian, deeds along with your words.

Good mothers and good parents do not happen by chance, but often require important decisions.

God leads and guides us to those decisions, but we don't always follow those leads...we ignore His guidance.

Today we will be talking about making important life decisions. We decide a lot of things every day. What and how much to eat. What clothes to wear, the route you might take to work, which home chore to tackle today, little, simple things. Sometimes those don't take a lot of thought.

However important decisions, decisions about your life take a little more thought, or at least they should.

We look to decide what the problem or issue is, hopefully in a clear statement, preferably short and to the point.

For the disciples in the first reading for today, it was a "now what? And where to?" time. They needed to find a replacement for Judas. Judas had done his thing, as our Text says: "*Judas turned aside to go to his own place.*". He had betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver, and as far as we know, he never repented nor asked for forgiveness. Unrepentant, Judas finally took his own life.

Peter stated the agenda in a clear sentence when he said, "*So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, <sup>22</sup> 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.*"."

Our difficulty in making choices and decisions is that we often deal with wishes rather than needs. We do not say what we really need.

In fact, our hidden agenda does not allow us to be honest in a simple statement of need. We try to soften our statements, suggestions and questions in order not to offend or embarrass ourselves. So our true needs and wants are unclear.

The underlying issue for the world was sin. We needed forgiveness. The fall into sin happened in the Garden of Eden. Mankind's sin multiplied as quickly as the population did.

Sin required sacrifice...it required blood and death. It doesn't get much clearer than that. The wages, the payment for sin is death.

Jesus never wished to die. In fact, in the garden He asked His heavenly Father to remove the cup of suffering. But there was also a divine must, a divine need. In order to save humankind, Jesus needed to die for us and give His life as a ransom for many.

So, a clear statement of the problem. All of the confusion gone. We are sinners. What can be done about that? We look for a solution.

After Judas left, following Psalm 109 to replace Judas, the disciples set certain qualifications. They had to choose someone who had been with them from the beginning, who knew all things that had taken place so that he could give the testimony of an eyewitness.

Even more important than the qualifications of an apostle was the function of an apostle—“*a witness of [Christ's] resurrection.*” These qualifications were demanding, but the successor was to be part of the mission team of the apostles.

We should be just as picky in selecting people to fill positions in the church.

We may be tempted to concentrate on such things as job-related skills or a good personality. But today's disciple needs to be spiritually mature and committed to the Savior, as were the original disciples. One person shouldn't make the decision. We seek the council of all of our brothers and sisters in Christ, and all of them not acting in haste but with much prayer and consideration.

Peter did not act alone in making the decision in replacing Judas. He asked the community of believers to review possible solutions. He depended on the Holy Spirit to guide the community of all believers. The community asked God to lead them in their search for the right person. The church prayed as a group and acted as a group.

One of the hardest parts in making a decision is truly to seek God's help and the advice of fellow Christians in choosing the best person for a particular task.

And all decisions should have a goal. There is a world to be gained for Christ.

There is a ministry that has to be done. An apostle must be sent. There is a story that has to be told. There are people who need to hear of the goodness of a resurrected Lord. Those charged with this awesome task find it gratifying when they successfully select candidates who are fit for ministry and who fulfill the ministry.

Do we decide on activities and make decisions that will further our kingdom, or further the kingdom of God?

Judas made a horrible decision. It was a personal decision based on frustration, disappointment, and greed.

The goal of Jesus' decision for the cross was the forgiveness of the sins of the whole world. He accomplished that goal. Jesus died for the bad decisions of all people, beginning with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

He paid for decisions that you and I regret. He even died for the sins of someone as sinful as Judas or the thief on the cross.

He died to pay our debt and then arose on the third day, proving that God had accepted His sacrifice, for the world...for you personally!

With that knowledge of our forgiveness we are, you are, empowered to be His witnesses to the world! As we heard last week from Christ Himself:

*<sup>8</sup> But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Acts 1:8 (ESV)*

The Holy Spirit gives us the wisdom to make decisions to honor His name. Decisions are never easy, be they deciding on a spouse or selecting people for church offices and tasks.

We need to know our needs, seek solutions from other people, and go to God in prayer. Never leave God out of the process.

When the issue is identified, like the need of witnessing to the world, then we seek a solution. Just like the disciples, we take counsel from each other and most importantly from God. And finally, we make it our goal to witness to the world. By seeking God's will, then our decisions will hallow His name and serve His kingdom here and for eternity.

Forgiveness in Christ is ours, but it is also for the world. May we all make it our goal to proclaim the Gospel to the nations, at home and abroad, following the Great Commission of Christ!

*<sup>19</sup> Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Matthew 28:19 (AV)*

Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Amen.

S.D.G.—Soli Deo Gloria

## **Sermon Outline**

### **Holy Decisions**

*Acts 1:12–26*

- I. When making important life decisions we identify the issue.
- II. We look for a solution, and sometimes ask for help.
- III. All decisions have a goal.