

Wake  
From Resurrection to Pentecost

So we're nearing the end of our current series 'Wake, From Resurrection to Pentecost', and we've been looking at this interesting space, some 50 days, between the time that Jesus raised from the dead and the time that the Spirit comes to us at Pentecost. Jerry took us through Jesus' ascension last week which leaves us in another interesting space, a 10 day period where Jesus is physically gone and the Spirit has yet to come and that's where we find ourselves this morning, we find ourselves waiting...in between something that seems to have ended and something that has yet to come.

Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey away. When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.

In those days Peter stood up among the believers (together the crowd numbered about one hundred twenty persons) and said, "Friends, the scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit through David foretold concerning Judas, who became a guide for those who arrested Jesus—for he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry." (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. This became known to all the residents of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their language Hakeldama, that is, Field of Blood.) "For it is written in the book of Psalms,

'Let his homestead become desolate,  
and let there be no one to live in it';

and

'Let another take his position of overseer.'

So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these must become a witness with us to his resurrection." So they proposed two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias. Then they prayed and said, "Lord, you know everyone's heart.

Show us which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.” And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles.

When I originally read through the scripture for this morning, it became obvious, very quickly, why Jerry passed this off on to me, thank you very much Jerry.....

There’s a lot going on here in 14 verses, and if you’re like me it raises more questions than it answers. For instance:

- what in the world is a Sabbath day’s journey
- did Luke really need to share the details of Judas’ death
- come on Joseph, three names, really? Pick one and call it a day.
- casting lots, what is that? If its rolling dice isn’t that just chance, how is that ok?

That’s just a few. This morning since these were questions I had, I’m guessing maybe you have the same or similar questions so I thought I’d answer those real quick in the next minute and we’ll keep going. Ready?

A Sabbath day’s journey is about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile or 3000ft. I know I was disappointed to thinking that man, the disciples must be beat from traveling for a whole sabbath day’s journey, when in reality they walked a little ways down a hill.

Luke sharing the details of Judas’ death is a beautiful illustration really. Despite the guts, the gore and the gnarly picture he paints, Luke is really showing us the consequences of sin, the disgusting things that it can do in our lives, and that without Christ, we’re left alone in it to slowing decay and rot.

Joseph didn’t really have three names, Joseph would have been his Hebrew name and at some point he picked up the Latin name Justus. Its likely that he had some interaction with Romans and they would have given him this name....Barsabbas is simply a way of identifying that Joseph was the son of Sabbas.

Casting lots, well it is what it sounds like, its very similar to rolling the dice. It was most likely painted rocks rather than the dice we have today, but the purpose was much the same, to determine an outcome. Now we might see casting lots as a game of chance, and as Christians ask how in the world was it ok for the disciples to be casting lots to determine who will take Judas’ spot, but in Jewish tradition casting lots was a spiritual thing. Proverbs 16:33 says, “The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord.”

Luke includes a pretty detailed list of who is present and waiting. We see a variety of people gathered in that upper room. Think about how different Simon the Zealot and Matthew were. Simon was a political conservative, a redneck in the first century. The zealots believed in the violent overthrow of the Roman oppressors. The zealots despised Rome and all that it stood...or didn’t stand, for. The zealots were often

referred to as 'dagger bearers' because they would carry knives or swords under their cloak and look for any opportunity to stab a Roman soldier who they might come across in a secluded alley or in the chaos of a crowd. The zealots fought dirty, they looted, burned, they vandalized Roman occupied buildings, they did everything they could to make life miserable for their foreign visitors. I had a professor in school that said, in the first century, zeal was something you did with a knife, not something you did on your knees in prayer. Simon was a zealot, a sworn enemy of Rome. Matthew on the other hand was a sympathizer with Rome. He was Jewish but Matthew had accepted a position with the Romans as a tax collector. Most of us in this room would say that we're not terribly fond of the IRS, but in Palestine, tax collectors were hated. The very idea that they had to pay taxes to Caesar just galled them in the first place, but any Jew who would make his living by helping the Romans collect taxes was regarded as a traitor, and they treated the tax collectors like dirt. Matthew was a tax collector before he met Jesus. Now I can just imagine Jesus gathering his disciples for the first time and getting them together and saying, "ok I want us to go around the room and introduce ourselves and tell us what you used to do for a living"...and I can imagine when it came to Matthew and he says that he used to be a tax collector that Simon nearly leaped across the table with his knife at Matthews throat. I would imagine Simon may have had doubts about being apart of this disciple thing at that point. Had Simon met Matthew under any other circumstance other than in the presence of Christ, he may have slit Matthews throat. But in the presence of Jesus, the past differences were set aside and Matthew and Simon accepted one another and lived in harmony. Verse 14 says they all joined together in prayer.

Now the church today ought to be a place where political differences should still be tolerated. Not every Christ follower is going to see the political arena the same way you do. You see there is no political litmus test in Christ.

So while Matthew and Simon had political differences, Peter and Thomas had personality differences. Thomas was a realist, probably a choleric personality, a take-charge guy. When Jesus couldn't be dissuaded from going to Jerusalem, it was Thomas who said, 'well let's just go up and die with him'. When Jesus spoke in mystical language, it was Thomas who would speak up and say 'Lord we don't understand what you're talking about.' When the disciples insisted that Jesus had risen from the dead, it was Thomas who said 'I'm not going to believe that until I can see and touch for myself.' You see Thomas was cerebral. He wanted a rational for his belief and his behavior. Simon Peter on the other hand was a dreamer, a 100% sanguine personality. He followed his emotions for the most part. When Jesus predicted his coming death, it was Peter who was first to say, 'surely you're not going to die Lord'. Peter was a positive thinker and you can imagine that Thomas just thought he was a Pollyanna. When Jesus spoke in symbolic language it was Peter who would say, 'Lord, I know what you're talking about, I know that you're the Son of God, the Messiah.' When the resurrected Christ appeared on the shore, it was Peter who first recognized Him and jumped out of the boat and swam to meet him and Thomas had to row the boat back. When Jesus came walking on the water, it was Peter who said, 'Lord if that's really you,

ask me to come and I'll walk out to meet you.' and I can imagine Thomas was saying, 'somebody get the life ring, I think the idiot's really going to try it.' Don't you imagine that being so different in personality resulted in them getting on each others nerves? Can't you just hear Thomas muttering 'come on Peter, get real'...and can't you hear Peter saying 'come on Thomas, get a life, when are you going to believe something? You can't put everything into a test tube.'

But in the presence of Jesus Christ all of these personalities were blended into one body. They were all together Luke says, joined in prayer. God uses us all, whether we're bold and loud like Simon or quiet and influential like John. Whether we're brilliant or...for others not so brilliant, but perhaps experienced in the way that you only can be from truly living life and living through all that it can throw at you. Regardless, God is looking to us, just as he looked to these first 12. He's looking to us. Remember last week in verse 8, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and you will be my witnesses." He is looking to us. These disciples, the church, ZPC, you and you and you and me and you are God's Plan A....and there is no Plan B.

That said, church, we have work to do. We find the disciples in these 14 verses, waiting. Jesus tells them back in verse 4 to wait. Wait....its an interesting word. It implies that something is coming, we're anticipating something, otherwise we would just be being, not waiting.

----POOH STORY----

"'Well,' said Pooh, 'what I like best,' and then he had to stop and think. Because although eating honey was a very good thing to do, there was a moment just before you began to eat it which was better than when you were, but he didn't know what it was called."

Waiting shouldn't be passive; there is work to be done in the waiting. In verse 14 the disciples joined together constantly in prayer.....they prayed. Prayer is no small thing we do, it's an inherent part of being a Christ follower, not because we think its nice, but because Jesus taught us how and tells us to pray, in all things. We have work to do church. Jesus in verse 8 says that 'you and you and you and you and me and you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth' We have work to do. Let's never allow our waiting to be an excuse to sit and do nothing. Wait with anticipation, be willing to wait. Our willingness to wait reveals the value we place on the object we're waiting for. What are you waiting for? Church, we've got work to do.

We see in verses 21 and 22 the qualifications that the new apostle, Judas' replacement, would need to meet, but I want to focus on something Luke mentions in verse 22, a witness to His resurrection. The replacement for Judas must be someone who was a witness to His resurrection. The resurrection is an amazing thing, a central event in human history, the event at the center of the Christian faith.

There is the historical resurrection, a beautiful truth.  
But there is also the principal of resurrection, what it means for us here, now, today.

Resurrection is the answer to the problem of endings. One of the struggles of the human condition is that we get these incredible beautiful blessings in our lives, throughout our lives and every single thing that comes into our lives eventually comes to an end...that's a problem, we resist that. Whether its life itself or important people or things in our lives, they come to an end. Resurrection comes as the answer to that problem.

There's a clarification that needs to be made, the thing that we need to be careful of is Resurrection is not resuscitation. Jesus was not resuscitated, he was resurrected. One of the ways we know that is that he was unrecognizable to his disciples. Later in Acts, Luke introduces us to Paul. Paul says that when we are bound with Christ and die with Christ we are made a new creation, Jesus when he died and then rose again was made a new creation. Resurrection is the introduction to something new in our lives, not the resuscitation of something old. Resurrection is the introduction of something new in our lives, not the resuscitation of something old. And so when something comes to an end, if we continue to insist, if we continue to look at and wait for and hope for that thing that ended to start over again we will miss fundamentally the resurrection in our lives, we will miss the new creation. Now that's well and good and easy to say but it's not easy to recognize the resurrection in our lives. It takes practice to recognize resurrection.....

If you were looking at a sunset, and you were facing west and you saw this beautiful sun set beyond the horizon, and when it sets you could feel the darkness close in. If you wanted to see that sun again you could continue to face west and hope and pray and plead and you could wait and you could ask for that sun to come right back up the same way it went down and guess what? You'll be waiting and waiting and waiting 'cause it ain't gonna' happen. If you want to see the sun again you have to know where to look. If you want to see the sun again you have to know that you have to turn around and you have to face the east, where an inevitable sun will rise again. A new creation, a new resurrection of a day will come again, but only if you're looking in the right direction. In order to recognize resurrection in our lives we have to know where to look. In order to be able to come to terms with things that end, and by the way things end all the time, in order to come to terms with those endings we have to also know how do we then turn and face the east and wait for something new to come.

Now in this turning, when you say 'this thing has ended' when the reality sets in that this thing is over, when the reality sets in for the disciples that Jesus is gone, it looks like its over, it isn't simply 'well forget it, I guess that's over, I guess I'll just move over here;' its not that simple, it's saying this beautiful thing ended and I will have gratitude and I will have grief and I will have sadness and sorrow but I will also be aware that as

I'm grieving I will turn and orient my entire being in a posture of anticipation. I will orient my vision and my attention to a place where I know that the resurrection will come. This takes practice, remember the struggle, our nature is to resuscitate the old not to recognize the new, the resurrection.

How many of us have had things in our life end and we're still facing west? Pleading, grieving, asking for that sun to come right back up and how many of us need to hear the good news that your grief is appropriate but that you have an opportunity to turn around and at least wait for the sun facing the right direction. A new creation is waiting for you and if you are fixated on the end you will miss the beginning. In John's gospel, we come across Mary Magdalene, crying. Jesus has been crucified and buried but when she comes to the tomb, He isn't there. As she cries a man she doesn't recognize asks, "Why are you crying?" As she answers, Jesus says to her, "Mary" ..... Mary then realizes the man is Jesus, Jesus' first words to her are "Don't hold on to me." Now at this point it's fair to assume that Mary believes Jesus is back, He's alive and that things will go back to the way they were, the good ol' days when they all eat big meals together as a group, when they hung out together and Jesus talked to them and taught them. But Jesus didn't return to put things back to the way they were. Life isn't static, it's always changing. We grow up and we grow old, families experience joys and pains, friends move and people graduate, others lose their jobs and people that we love pass away, we make decisions that change our course for good or for bad, some get married and some have kids, we reconcile, forgive and alter relationships, some get cancer, but regardless of our own realities and experiences, life isn't static. If we become fixated on the end, we'll miss the beginning; we'll miss the resurrection. You can't start the next chapter if you keep re-reading the last one. This is what it means to become a witness to the resurrection in our lives. When really beautiful things in our lives come to an end and yet at the same moment we can turn around and say we know there will be a new creation. We can become a community that does not just believe in the resurrection, but actually knows the resurrection.

Jesus tells Mary to go and tell everyone else what's happening. He gives her a part to play. He gives us a part to play. We have work to do church. Let go and receive a new spirit.