Acts is the triumphant story of our God winning the world for Jesus Christ through common people filled with the uncommon power of His Holy Spirit. Acts is a story that has not ended. Acts is our story, as God invites each of us to find eternal significance and supernatural confidence through participation in His unstoppable plan.

Introduction

- Netflix is a modern day business phenomenon
  - 2nd quarter of 2015 = 65 million subscribers
  - Together watch 10 billion hours of video per month
  - Why is it so popular?
  - Binge watching = 60%.
    - I hate watching series on regular TV. Wait a week; wait until next season
- In some respects, if you were a first century reader of the gospel of Luke, you might have felt the same way. Ends without a conclusion
  - Jesus born, died, buried, resurrected, commissioned disciples
  - Then what?
- Lucky enough to get your hands on Luke’s 2nd volume, the book of Acts
  - Acts ends without a conclusion
  - Church is born, begins to grow beyond Jerusalem, gospel reaches Rome; Paul in prison, but preaching...then what?
- Keep in mind as we study Acts, it’s not just history about the birth and early years of the Church. Acts is our story because we are the Church.
- Every day God is writing us into the story.
- This morning...How will your chapter read?
  - Will your chapter make sense in the flow of God’s story?
  - Will your chapter be a chapter that others turn to for direction, inspiration?
  - Acts is the story of the Apostles, but it is also an invitation to join in God’s story of building His kingdom

We begin our study of the book of Acts by reading chapter 1, verses 1-8; Acts 1:1-8

What is the story about? In the broadest terms, The Kingdom of God.

- 40 days after His resurrection He appeared over and over talking Kingdom.
- Conversations I would love to have heard
  - Moses in the tent
  - Moses, Elijah and Jesus on Mt. of Transfiguration
  - John, Revelation
  - 40 days of Kingdom conversations
- Kingdom
  - Kingdom is cosmic – Psalm 103:19
  - Kingdom is redemptive
    - Creatures in rebellion
    - Genesis/Revelation; bookends; perfect fellowship in Garden
Kingdom taken on political form
- Israel was a theocratic kingdom; Ex 19:5b-6
- Israel not ultimate form of God’s kingdom – Dan 7:14; cf. Dan. 2:44

Kingdom is earthly – 2 Peter 3:13
- Physical universe is in decay
- Kingdom is spiritual; personal; relational; Christ in you
  - Gospel – death and resurrection; return to set all things right

So what did Jesus tell them? Luke 24:44-47
- Death, burial, resurrection and return is all part of God’s story that He composed before time began. Tied each of these events to Old Testament revelation.
- Kingdom is now and not yet

Acts 28:30-31
- God is working on earth in human history, but the story is not complete
- He is still writing the story through our lives

...to be continued...

1. Through God’s people – Acts 1:1
   - Jesus began a new phase of God’s kingdom work...and apostles will continue
     - I’m leaving and you are staying. How intimidating!
     - How did they feel? What were they thinking?
   - Fearful, disappointed and doubtful
     - All fled; Peter denied
     - Emmaus Road – “we were hoping that He would redeem Israel...”
     - 40 days with Him. Fear and doubt dissipating, but still confused.
   - Confused – Acts 1:6-7
     - “Restore the kingdom” (nature) = Davidic expectation
       - Davidic covenant promises – 2 Samuel 7
       - New Covenant promises – Ezek 37
       - Promise of Spirit’s coming tied to restoration of Messiah’s rule
     - “to Israel” (extent) = Jewish and local
       - emphasis on vindication, not salvation of nations
     - “At this time” (arrival) – Luke 19:11
       - He didn’t say, You’re wrong about an earthly kingdom.
         - Promised 12 thrones when that kingdom comes; Lk 22:28-30
         - Timing is not your concern
         - You have a different role to play than what you were expecting
         - Kingdom will look different; Church = Mystery form of kingdom
     - YOU are the plan
   - Their world was upside down. Needed direction and courage

2. By the Spirit’s power – Acts 1:4-8a
   - Where? Joel 2:28-32; John the Baptist; 5X in John 14, 15 & 16:7
   - Why do they need the Spirit?
     - They don’t know what to do and once they discover it, they won’t have the courage to pull it off!
   - Power = dunamis; explosive power; dynamite. Luke 24:49
   - John Wycliffe (1330-1384) translated Bible into English. Translated Greek paraclete for Holy Spirit as the “comforter” (which makes me think of a warm, thick blanket that I wrap around myself); comes from Latin, fortis, which means strong; Comforter is one who wraps men with courage and with strength.
• Why don't we experience more power?
  o View Spirit primarily, if not exclusively for personal sanctification.
  o He is that. The fruit of the Spirit is character transformation
  o Acts outpouring of Spirit is for witness
  o Jesus had same experience of Spirit coming on Him for power
  o Why did Jesus need power? For sanctification? No. Power and direction to proclaim and validate testimony about Kingdom
  o Paul’s only request – boldness; advance the gospel; Ephesians 6:19-20
• Greatest fear – not death, but public speaking. For Christians, a particular form of public speaking – talking about Jesus
  o 95% of what we do as the Church can be done without the Spirit because 95% has nothing to do with telling people about Jesus
• One of the primary reasons for Spirit is empower our witness
  o Responsibility = “Be a witness”
    ▪ Not, Get people saved
    ▪ Talk about what you have seen, heard, experienced
    ▪ Validate the facts you proclaim by the life you lead
    ▪ Some messages are easy to pass along
      • Button on every App – Tweet, Re-Tweet, share; under 40 you do this all the time
      • most shared = selfies; most re-shared/retweeted messages = selfie’s of celebrities; I want to show the world picture of myself or someone else’s picture of self
    ▪ Jesus is hard to talk about; that’s why we need the Spirit

3. To the ends of the earth – Acts 1:8
• Jesus was quoting from Isaiah 49:6
  o Prophecy about Himself that He applied to them
  o Paul applied to himself and Barnabas in Acts 13:47
  o Church, we are responsible to bear witness. Requires courage/strength
  o Particularly when you realize that we are to witness to ends of the earth.
• Geographical Table of Contents for Acts
  o Jerusalem (1-7); Judea/Samaria (8-12); Uttermost parts (13-28)
• Apostles probably originally thought Jesus was talking about Jews everywhere in the world. They didn’t get it at first. Resisted.
  o Not geography but people; not just Jews, but all people
  o Genesis 12:1-3
  o Revelation 5:9-10; 7:9-10
• Responsibility = “Be a witness”
  o Made it to Rome. Hub of gentile world, from which it can go everywhere
  o But didn’t complete the task. Remainder is for us and our children
  o I didn’t get it at first
    ▪ Supporting missionaries is one of the things the church does. A few people at our church are really into that. They like potluck lunches.
    ▪ Mission is why the Church exists
• Church, it is easy for us to lose our way. To get our priorities out of line
  o Ex – 7th grade highest priority, mission, every day was feathering my hair
  o Some of us are still stuck worrying about feathering our hair
  o Not here to live the American dream; good life; nice person; family
4. (Until the end or our lives, or...) Until Jesus returns – Acts 1:9-11

- Coaching 7th grade basketball last year. Give kids drill, turn around to work with another group, look back and they are standing around with their mouths open.
- Apostles standing around with their mouths open
  - “Used by medical writers to denote a peculiar fixed look.” (RR, 264)
- “What are you standing around for?”
  - Live like He could return at any moment. Parables
- Jesus said to wait!”
  - Don’t be passive, be passive
- Jesus said Witness. Not responsible to save people; that’s God’s job.

Are you standing around with your mouth open?

1895, Arthur T. Pierson wrote, “Church of Christ! The records of these acts of the Holy Spirit have never reached completeness. This is the one book which has no proper close, because it waits for new chapters to be added so fast and so far as the people of God shall reinstatethe blessed Spirit in His holy seat of control.”

Prayer – align our lives with Your story