

Upside Down: Legacy

04.02.2023

Today we're ending our series

Upside Down

Showing how the church

In the book of Acts

Turned the world upside down

With a message I've titled

Legacy

Turn to Acts 29:1

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About 50 or 60 years before Jesus came

Julius Caesar set out to conquer Gaul

Modern day France

So that he could add it

To the Roman Republic

He and his large army

Destroyed over 800 different towns and villages

Over the course of a decade

He also enslaved

An estimated 3 million people
And became extremely wealthy
Along the way
From the spoils of war

Fearing his power was becoming too great

The Roman senate demanded that he return to Rome
To check in
And submit to their leadership

Caesar essentially had a choice to make:

He could ignore the order
And be charged with treason & likely executed
He could come to Rome alone
And likely be jumped & killed by his enemies
Or he could come and bring his whole army
Which would start a civil war

On January 10, 49 B.C.

Julius Caesar and his large army
Entered Roman territory by crossing the Rubicon
A small stream in what's now northern Italy
Essentially declaring civil war
Ending the Roman Republic

And changing the world forever

On November 6, 1860

Abraham Lincoln was elected

The 16th President of the United States

Over the next four months

7 southern states

Opposed to his anti-slavery views

Seceded from the union

On March 4, 1861

He gave his first inaugural address

Which ended with these words:

“In your hands, my dissatisfied fellow-countrymen, and not in mine, is the momentous issue of civil war. The Government will not assail you. You can have no conflict without being yourselves the aggressors. You have no oath registered in heaven to destroy the Government, while I shall have the most solemn one to ‘preserve, protect, and defend it.’”

39 days later

On April 12, 1861

The South Carolina militia bombed Fort Sumter

Essentially declaring civil war

Changing the world forever

Today we celebrate

That Jesus

After months of pressure and threat and opposition

Got on a donkey

And rode down from the Mount of Olives

Into Jerusalem

This put a process in motion

That would lead

Ultimately - 5 days later

To His hanging on a cross

Changing the world... forever

Pivotal moments

That would forever change their destiny

That would forever change their legacy

That would change our world... forever

I had you turn to Acts 29:1

But it turns out there's not an Acts 29:1

You see

Acts 28 kind of ends abruptly

I think because persecution broke out
And Luke just wrapped up his journal
And sent it out

So, Acts 29

Is our chapter
I titled this message “Legacy”
Because Acts 29
Is where we start writing
Our story
Where we extend the legacy
Of the amazing sacrifice
These men & women offered God

Let’s go back see where Acts 28 ends

Read Acts 28:30-31

Proclaimed

One of the things I’ve been struck by
Reading thru the Book of Acts in this series
Is the nature of leadership
The nature of influence

For years

I have seen the church

As a leadership movement

People I followed

Were all strong, powerful leaders

They commanded the room

They were trained and well-read

In management techniques and theories

I went to leadership conferences

Read leadership books

Provided leadership training

But – and I don't say this lightly

This is a seismic shift for me

The early church wasn't a leadership movement

It was a proclamation movement

Paul spent (possibly) the last two years of his life

Proclaiming

The American church would have coached him differently

We would have coached him to do a leadership conference

Have Timothy and Titus

Barnabus and Silas and Luke

All come to Rome

To Paul's rented house

And learn leadership techniques

We would have coached him differently

Because we see the church as a leadership movement

But It wasn't

It was a proclamation movement

A leadership movement puts more focus on us

A proclamation movement puts more focus on Him

Consider this:

Acts says that the early church

Went from 120 people

To about 15,000 people

In a very short period of time

Those 15,000 people {Show Acts 2:46-47 (NLT) - They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity— all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.}

Met in the temple courts

Listening to the Apostles

And met from house to house

Gathering together... without the Apostles

Just do the math

With our model

The 12 apostles would have needed to identify

Interview

Screen

Train

And deploy

About 1,500 – 2,000 leaders

In just a few months

Not gonna happen

They prayed like crazy

Because they knew they couldn't manage

And control

What God was doing

This was not a leadership movement

It was a proclamation movement

Just consider these verses:

Acts 4:31 (NLT) - After this prayer, the meeting place shook, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. Then *they* preached the word of God with boldness.

Acts 6:1-4 (NLT) - But as the believers rapidly multiplied, there were rumblings of discontent. The Greek-speaking believers complained about the Hebrew-speaking believers, saying that their widows were being discriminated against in the daily distribution of food.

So, the Twelve called a meeting of all the believers. They said, “We apostles should spend our time teaching the word of God, not running a food program. And so, brothers, select seven men who are well respected and are full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will give them this responsibility. Then we apostles can spend our time in prayer and teaching the Word.”

Acts 8:1b, 4 (NLT) - A great wave of persecution began that day, sweeping over the church in Jerusalem; and all the believers except the apostles were scattered through the regions of Judea and Samaria... But the believers who were scattered preached the Good News about Jesus wherever they went.

This was a proclamation movement

Paul... proclaimed

The early church... proclaimed

You & I

Are called to proclaim

So, let me ask you a question

If someone was looking over your life

Would they say

“He (or she) proclaimed the Kingdom of God”?

Like they're describing

The last two years of your life

"They proclaimed the Kingdom of God"?

And if not

Why not?

And if not

When is that gonna change?

Because the movement

That so many of us are a part of

Is not a church movement

It's not a pastor's movement

It's not even a leadership movement

It's a proclamation movement

And if you're a part of it

You... are called... to proclaim

Read again with me

Read Acts 28:30-31

Taught

"He taught about the Lord Jesus Christ"

I believe Scripture teaches

And common sense suggests
That everyone shouldn't automatically teach in every setting

You can relax

We're not going to institute a lottery system
To see who's preaching each week

Probably a bad idea:

Most people wouldn't like being picked
A few of you would like to be picked a little too much
If you know what I mean

But if you're a follower of Jesus

And I know everyone's not there yet

But if you're a follower of Jesus

And you're saying that Jesus is the most important thing in your life

The King of Kings

The most important person in history and in your world

But you're not teaching anyone – anything

About this most important person in history and in your world

That's suspect

You could start a bible study with your friends

Or over lunch time one day a week at work

You could teach here

To kids or students

And we'll give you training wheels

I helped out Emily last week...

This is not extra-curricular

We just have to broaden our perspective

Teaching maybe to a group

Or teaching may just be to one or two other people

Look at this verse:

2 Timothy 2:24 (NLT) - A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but must be kind to everyone, be able to teach, and be patient with difficult people.

Paul is describing a servant of the Lord

As being 3 things

Most Christians would agree with two of the three

Must not quarrel – that sounds right

Be patient with difficult people – sure

But “be able to teach”

That's just not my personality

But that's an excuse

And we know it's an excuse

Because we wouldn't except the personality clause

With the other two

"I like to quarrel... I mean, I'm a good Christian, I just don't have a kind personality"

"I can't be patient with difficult people... everyone tells me that I AM a difficult person. It's just my personality!"

It's an excuse

Re-read

One of the most famous verses

In all of Scripture

Right before Jesus ascended into Heaven

Look at this:

Matthew 28:18b-20 (NLT) - Jesus came and told His disciples, "I have been given all authority in Heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Did you catch that

He tells them

All of them

Not just the leaders

Not just the pastors

All of His followers

A large crowd

He tells them to make disciples

That's not extra-curricular

And He defines making disciples

By baptizing

And by teaching

What would have to change in your life

For you to baptize at least one person

And teach at least one person

In the next 12 months?

What would have to change?

I mean, something would have to change

If you've not done that

In the last several 12-month periods

So, let me ask again

What would have to change in your life

For you to baptize at least one person

And teach at least one person

In the *next* 12 months?

And I think He knows that freaked some of them out

Because He told them that *as* they're doing that

He would be with them

Always

Is it possible

I don't know if I even believe this

I'm asking the question

Is it possible

That if we feel

An extra measure

Of the presence of God

When we're obeying Him in this way

Which I think we do

Is it possible

I'm asking the question

That if we never do these things

We're leaving some of our experience with God

On the table?

And we'll get to Heaven one day

Because we're not saved by doing enough

But we'll get to Heaven one day

Realizing we didn't get all that God had for us

Is that possible?

And if so

What are you gonna do about it?

Look with me again

At how Luke characterized Paul's final years

Read Acts 28:30-31

With all Boldness

He proclaimed and taught

"With all boldness"

Now let me dispel something here

There's a myth

A rumor

That boldness is synonymous

With personality

And that religious boldness

Is synonymous

With being weird

You've heard that?!?

Let's be honest

We've probably all met

At least one religiously bold people

Who was weird

Right?

But those don't have to go together

Weird is not a symptom of boldness

Weird is a symptom of someone who's not self-aware

A self-aware person can be bold

A non-self-aware person

They're gonna be weird

Even if they're shy

Catch this: the Greek word translated "boldness" here

Literally means "confidence"

One Greek dictionary cites the following definition

Leaves the impression that something deserves to be remembered or taken seriously

Based on that definition

Confidence

Leaves the impression that something deserves to be remembered or taken seriously

Almost everyone

Is bold about something

Maybe it's your sports team

Or your favorite musical artist

Maybe it's the standard you give your children

For what the word "clean" means

There're all different kinds of ways to be bold

Like I'm confident

"bold"

That Michael Jordan is better than Lebron James

You don't have to agree with me

I have lots of friends

Who are wrong about lots of things

You can be one of them

I'm confident

You might say bold

That some country artists

Aren't really country artists

Here's the thing

The most timid person you ever meet

Will come alive

About something they're certain of

Paul... was certain... about Jesus

I want to invite you

To a conference I'll be teaching

Here – at WellSpring

Called “Deconstructing Doubt”

It's going to be Friday night, April 21st

And Saturday morning, April 22nd

It's designed to give you confidence

If you're not yet a believer

I hope to give you confidence that you can accept the claims of Jesus

If you *are* a believer

I hope to give you confidence

So that you can bold with the claims of Jesus

Listen to me

This is so important right now

Last Sunday morning

Our staff gathered, as we usually do, to pray

One person asked us to pray for a young person

Who was facing significant mental / emotional struggles

And another person asked us to pray

For another young person

Whose friend had committed suicide

We prayed and then I stopped everyone...

The next day – Monday afternoon

Our staff gathered, as we usually do, to pray

And we were lifting up the families in Nashville

Whose little babies had been shot at school

Once again, I stopped everyone...

The time... for uncertainty... is coming to an end

A day is coming

And may be already here

When the people of God

Need to be bold with their faith

Not weird

But confident

Leaving the impression that something deserves to be remembered or taken seriously

Because our culture needs to take faith more seriously

Our culture needs to remember the faith they've lost

And that starts with you

And that starts with me

Read Acts 28:30-31

Without hindrance

These are last words in the Book of Acts

Some scholars believe that Paul left Rome

And went to Spain

Before being arrested again

Others believe that he was never released

But all agree that he was martyred

A short time after these words were written

So, the last words that Luke wrote about Paul

Is that "He proclaimed the Kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ

With all boldness and without hindrance"

May it be said of me

All the way through the end of my life

That I proclaimed the Kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ

With all boldness and without hindrance”