

Sermon- Seek and Trust

Good morning! Over the summer we have been taking a journey through the book of Acts, exploring how God used the events in the lives of the earliest group of believers to spread the Good News of what Jesus had done all across the known world. So the name Acts is short for The Acts of the Apostles, indicating that the book is about the things that the apostles did to spread the Gospel. Now I remember a professor who used to say that he thought a better name for it would have been The Acts of the Holy Spirit, because it is really because of the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit that the disciples ever got out of that upper room in the first place.

And so for us today, I would like to think that we are living out the sequel, the continued Acts of the Holy Spirit! You and I today have access to the same Holy Spirit that Paul, Peter, John and the others had in the times of the early church. The same spirit that showed them where to go, gave them words to speak, gave them power to heal, and caught fire in the hearts and souls of millions as the Gospel spread. But the big question is how do we cultivate a life that is connected and empowered by the Spirit of God?

I think of it a bit like radio. In this room right now, buzzing all around us are radio waves carrying signals from hundreds and thousands of different sources. And with a radio we can single out and tune in to these frequencies. The power and presence of God are alive and present among us, but how do we get on God's frequency? Today I want to talk about *seeking* and *trusting* the guidance of the Holy Spirit. I want us to get into the real life practicals of living a life that is guided by the God. A life that is sensitive to what God is doing and wants to do in, around, and through us. And by doing so see in real terms how God can bring about transformation in our lives to make us more like Christ and spread the message of His love.

We must make an effort to seek the Guidance of the Holy Spirit in our everyday lives. It is easy to get away with business as usual- to live life without daily seeking His will for us. When we think of the will of God and the Spirit showing us the way, it is too easy to think of just the big picture items, and too easy to just think in retrospect. "Now I see that I was guided and protected." But this isn't the picture of the Holy Spirit that we get in the book of Acts. The Holy Spirit is a daily experience! It speaks in real ways; it gives boldness and power- the power of God. So I want to start with some practicals.

One of the primary ways that God speaks to us and the Holy Spirit guides our lives is through *prayer*. Any instance of the Holy Spirit guiding people in the book of Acts is accompanied by prayer in seeking out God's will. Like Pastor Judy said last week, what is *descriptive* in the book of Acts is prescriptive for us. Speak to God and give Him room to speak to you as well! Sit in silence, meditate on things that you have read, ask God how he wants you to respond to a situation or person in life and pay attention to what He says.

Second, be in the Scripture. It is the yardstick for discernment in matters of faith and God's will! Do you see somewhere where your life is not in line with God's revealed plan in His word? His Spirit is guiding you towards being more Christ-like! Are you feeling encouraged, challenged, convicted, or drawn to repentance by something you read? Pray and ask God for the give you the boldness to live in that word.

Third, make use of your close knit Christian Community. One of the highlights of my year is seeing this truth play out in Mexico on the Mission trip. It was amazing seeing how through devotional time in prayer and the Word and then hashing out these things in discussion with others, lives are changed and impacted and transformed. Any Mexico mission Team folks here today? If you want to know more about this, talk to any of

them after service today and they could tell you about the amazing ways God made Himself known on our trip!

Now when I talk to people about hearing God's voice and trusting the Spirit, I naturally get the question, "well how do you know it's really God?" That is the most important question to consider. These second two points are important clarifiers. We are told to test everything against the Scripture. God will not ask us to act against His revealed word. Also, our community can help us discern and understand what God might be saying to us. God can use others to confirm what He is saying. They can also provide Godly wisdom, insight and encouragement into situations where we might have a skewed or short-sighted perspective.

Now I want to give you a little view into one way that this has worked out in my life. About a year ago I tried a weird little experiment. Many of you might not know this but I have two offices as youth pastor here at St. Tim's. One is right next to Pastor Dan's office in the main building, and the other is over at Starbucks. With my little experiment, every time I would go into Starbucks to read my Bible, work, or meet up with someone, I would pray, "God show up at Starbucks today. I want to be a part of the work you are doing there." Now I don't have enough time to tell you all of the things that have happened at Starbucks since then, but I will tell you one thing- I expect God to do awesome things at Starbucks when I pray that prayer! I remember one time I prayed that prayer, I was reading my Bible and an employee at Starbucks walked up to me and asked me what I was reading. She said, "You read that book a lot. Why do you do it?" God had opened a door for me to share the wonderful experience of finding life and guidance from His word with someone. God makes things happen! He will make opportunities and make a way. Matthew 13:23, "the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown." this is the Holy Spirit Factor. You just need to pray that you will recognize when it happens!

When God is guiding your life, when you are seeking out His will, the next step is to *trust* what He says. How many of you have this friend in your life? You're eating at a restaurant and you see them take the first bite and they grimace. This is then followed with, "oh this is so good, do you want to try some?" And they give you a *bite* that is like half of their meal so they can pawn it off and not have to finish it all? I'll be honest, that's me. But seriously, how come it is so easy for us to treat the guidance of the Holy Spirit like it was a bite of bad food from a friend? It is offered up to us, "Trust me, it's good!" but we are hesitant to seize it and try? It is not enough to merely listen, God calls us to act!

Be bold in doing what you know He wants in your life! When He says, "Here, I have a better way," GO FOR IT! God rewards those who step out of their comfort zone for the sake of Jesus.

When you get that guidance from God, don't hesitate- try it! Trust God when He says that He will make good on His end of the bargain. I guarantee you that God will not hang you out to dry. He will ask that you take leaps of faith, He will ask that you try new things, He will ask you to stop doing things that you want to cling to, He will ask you to forgive (especially the ones you don't want to), He will ask you to get real and personal with people, He'll ask you to tell your story- the real version of it. God will produce a crop thirty, sixty or one hundred times what was sown. It's going to be scary, it's going to be hard, but the chances we take for the sake of Jesus are the things that draw us and others closer to Him! God does not extend challenges to us without extending love and grace.

Now I want to give you a word of encouragement here. When the Holy Spirit guides your life to be more in line with God's plan for you, it is not a set of burdensome rules and regulations meant to keep you in

line. It's not a boogeyman to scare us into being moral people. It is to give us abundant and joy-filled life, to set us free to be the people we were created to be. It is to, maybe for the first time in our lives, try and put the round peg in the round hole.

It is to finally have comfort and ease and peace in saying, I'm not perfect. I'm messed up. I don't have it all together, but You still love me! It is to know that you have not been abandoned and orphaned to fend for yourself in this world. And when we know this, it is no wonder that Paul, the one we have read about today, who faced adversity, trouble, suffering, pain and loss was still able to say, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" And this God want to guide us in His perfect way.

If this is a new idea or new concept for you, start with Baby steps! Something I like to do in my devotional time that has done so much in helping me grow has been to ask myself the question, "What do I know for God wants me to do today?" This isn't some abstract grasping at straws or conjuring ideas out of our own minds sort of exercise. This doesn't work without honest prayer, time spent in God's Word and Christian Community! Here's my advice: Start simple and be faithful. God might not tell you, "Jeff, go to the corner by Safeway on Union and talk to the guy in the blue sweater at 1:38pm today." Just because it is simple or obvious doesn't mean it's not God's will! Sometimes for me it is as simple as admitting that I lost my temper with someone yesterday and God wants me to make it right. But this comes with a word of warning. Don't pray this or ask this if you aren't willing to follow through! It is dangerous business getting used to ignoring the will of God. But trust that if God has asked you to do something, He will be with you in it! And the Holy Spirit will work in powerful ways to draw people to Christ.

Now as I wrap up, I want to say, God's Spirit is alive and moving amongst us. The work that begun in the book of Acts continues today in us. God has extended the invitation and the opportunity to anyone who would take it. We just need to tune in. Every day, every meeting, every class, trip to the coffee shop, dinner with a friend, bike ride or hike, is an opportunity to get on board with God's plan and follow where He leads. Make the most of every opportunity.