



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Acts 1: 12-26

Acts

“The Waiting Period”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We’re studying the Book of Acts, we’re in the first chapter, we’re finishing it up this morning. We’re going to look at verses 12 through 26. Where we concluded last week, the Lord gave His disciples their mission, the great commission, to go throughout the earth and be His witnesses, preach the gospel. And then He ascended into heaven. He was taken up, He was received up in a cloud and now we read in verse 12, “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 up to the upper room where they were staying; that is, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of James. These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, with His brothers.

At this time Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren (a gathering of about a hundred and twenty persons was there together), and said, ‘Brethren, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus.’ For he was counted among us and received his share in this ministry.”

Now in verses 18 and 19 there’s a parenthesis and I think we’re to understand by this Luke giving some background information to Theophilus or to gentile readers some of the events that took place, the apostles themselves and those of Jerusalem were well-familiar with what happened, but in the way of explanation he writes verse 18, “Now this man,” meaning Judas, “acquired a field with the price of wickedness.”

He didn't actually buy the field himself, but as you know through Matthew's account of these things, he took the 30 pieces of silver to betray our Lord and then in great remorse, knowing that he had sinned, he took it back, the priest wouldn't take the money, it was blood money. He cast it at them and fled and went out and hanged himself. And then the priests took the money, they had to do something with it and they bought a field with that and buried Judas in that field, in the potter's field.

But it is his money and so he is described as the one who purchased the field with the price of his wickedness, that is the money he received for betraying our Lord. Well, He hung himself we know from the other account and we read, “Falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his intestines gushed out. And it became known to all who were living in Jerusalem; so that in their own language the field was called Hakeldama, that is, Field of Blood. For it is written in the book of Psalms,” now Peter is explaining again what they must do and why they must do it.

“Let his homestead be made desolate, and let no one dwell in it, and let another man take his office. Therefore it is necessary that of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us – beginning with the baptism of John until the day that He was taken up from us – one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection. So they put forward two men, Joseph called Barsabbas (who was also called Justus), and Matthias. And they prayed and said, ‘You, Lord, who know the hearts of all men, show which one of these two you have chosen to occupy this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.’ And they drew lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles.” May the Lord bless this reading of His word. Let's bow in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, again we gather together on this Lord's Day, this Sunday morning as your people have done for nearly 2,000 years and again, we lift up our voices to you and ask for your blessing upon us, a blessing on what we have read and a blessing on what we will consider as we study this text together. We ask you to open our minds to receive the truth of it. We look to you to do that, Father, because only you can teach us. You do that through the Holy Spirit. That Spirit that the apostles were waiting for in Jerusalem who is the helper, who is the anointing, who teaches us all things, He is the one who gives us understanding and so we praise you,

Father, that the one that they were waiting for and that came on the day of Pentecost is with us now.

He is in the heart of every believer and seals their hearts at the moment of faith so that we are not only protected from the evil one, we are not only secure for all eternity, but we have within our hearts, within us the third person of the Trinity who teaches us, instructs us, guides us, leads us, and so we pray, Lord, that as we consider these things and how the church was led in those early days, what we can learn from that. We pray that we would learn it, you would teach us and that the spirit of God would teach these things to us this morning.

This is a unique moment in the week and we pray you'd bless it because we are gathered here as the body of Christ with the word of God and the divine teacher and we pray that our hearts will be made receptive to His teaching, may He teach us, may He guide the one who speaks to teach well. So we look to you for this. This is a supernatural ministry, a ministry you have given your people. It's not one we do on our own strengths, it's not one we're equipped to accomplish in our own strength. We must do so in the strength, the power of the leading, of the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. And so we thank you for that, what a privilege it is to be ministered to by Him.

And Father, we pray also for the material needs that we have. You've made us physical beings and with that in a fallen world, we have great needs and we have friends who have asked for our prayers and we pray for them and we commend ourselves to you, Lord. There are people here no doubt who have needs that have not been expressed but you know them, you know our hearts. We're told that in our text, that you know the hearts of all men. You know our condition, physically, spiritually, completely. And so I pray that you'd minister to them.

We pray for ourselves this evening as we return to this place and pray you'd bless our meeting, bless all who participate in it and bless us now as we sing our final hymn, prepare our hearts in that way and prepare our hearts to think biblically, to be instructed by you and built up in the faith we pray in Christ's name. Amen.

[Message] I don't know about you, but there are some days when I feel that the most annoying invention of modern times is the stop light, particularly when I'm in a hurry to make an appointment. You feel that way? Well, we don't like to wait, that's the reason. We are used to following schedules and meeting deadlines and don't want

anything to interfere with that, we want green lights all the way. But moving against the light leads to trouble, it can be bad for your health and so it's to our benefit to put our schedules on hold, to stop and wait when the light turns red.

I know I'm stating the obvious and you might wonder why, and the reason is because what is obvious to us in the daily routine of life is not so obvious to us in our spiritual lives and in the lives of a church. Oftentimes God gives us a red light. He requires that we wait and not move forward until He gives us the signal to go. And we see that all through the bible. We see it, for example, in the Book of Exodus. After leaving Egypt, the people didn't go directly to the Promised Land. Instead, God led them south down to Mount Sinai where they received the law and they built the tabernacle. They were there for some time, a number of months.

Then in the Book of Joshua, after the nation crossed the Jordan River into the Promised Land, they might have expected to march on Jericho and begin conquering Canaanites. They didn't do that, instead God told them to wait at Gilgal where they observed the Passover and circumcised those who had been born in the wilderness. There were things to be done before they began their great campaign. There were preparations to be made and often God leads his people to a place and to a period of waiting which may test our patience, we don't like to wait, but those periods of waiting always prepare our hearts or prepare our way for His work. What we see throughout the bible is God leading His people.

And we see that very principle at the beginning of the Book of Acts and we see it all the way through this history of the early church. The Lord has given His apostles their mission to be His witnesses in Jerusalem and in Judea and Samaria and even to the remotest part of the earth and we can imagine that having given them that mission they were ready to go out and begin to do it and tackle the world. They have seen the Lord ascend into heaven and it was a spectacular sight. We're told that He was received into a cloud and many think that that cloud was a kind of glory, so they've seen this glorious departure of our Lord. Then the two angels have spoken to them and told them that He's coming again in just the same way, in glory physically to that same place and so with this great truth in mind and knowing all that He had done for them, the salvation that He had given them through His death, the fact that He's a resurrected savior, that He's coming again, why, we might think that they'd want to go out and preach the gospel right then.

In fact, Luke tells us at the end of his gospel that they returned to Jerusalem with great joy. There's great enthusiasm in these men and so it would have been natural for them to begin preaching about Christ, to fill Jerusalem with the good news of what they had seen and what they had heard and what our Lord had accomplished. But they didn't do that. They weren't ready for that. They were full of joy, but joy itself isn't enough. More preparation was necessary. They needed to be equipped for the mission. The Lord told them that first they were to wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit whom He and the Father had promised to give them.

And so in the second half of Acts 1, Luke deals with the waiting period prior to Pentecost. Was a period of ten days. We know that by figuring out the details. Pentecost occurred 50 days after Passover. The Lord was resurrected at Passover and He ascended 40 days later, that leaves 10 days to go before Pentecost. Now that seems like a rather long time, ten days of waiting for preparing people to do ministry, something of a delay that might seem rather lengthy in view of the fact that the message that they were to preach is so important and the mission that they were given is so urgent.

The lost souls in Jerusalem and throughout the world, shouldn't they be at that task immediately? And often we feel that way. We want to act immediately or we want to see God act immediately. We don't like to wait, but He doesn't lead according to our perception of need and our perception of urgency. He doesn't follow our schedule or our plan. We are to follow His and we're to be sensitive to that. He is the head of the church. He leads and He guides. He knows what is best, He knows the right time to move and He knows when waiting is best for our personal growth and for the ministry that He has given us to do.

There's a providential working of God in the world and there's a right time for us to move and we move according to His will. And so the apostles didn't question His command. They obeyed and they returned to Jerusalem for the Mount of Olives and went up to the upper room where they were staying. It's not certain which upper room this was, but the definite article, The Upper Room might suggest that it was the upper room where the Lord ate the Passover meal, the Last Supper with His disciples. It would have been a familiar place to them and it would have been an appropriate place to wait because it was there that He gave the disciples the promise of the spirit

in John 14:16-18, “I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever.”

And so they were all gathered in one place, it's not really important where that place was, whether or not it was that upper room or if it was a room in the temple as some believe. But they were waiting. And they were waiting together for the gift of the spirit. Luke lists them by name, “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.” In addition to the 11 apostles there were the women Luke writes. These may have been the women who were at the cross and who later brought spices to the tomb, women like Mary Magdalene, they were there. Mary, the Lord's mother was there and His brothers.

Now that's interesting that His brothers were there because the Lord's brothers had been skeptical of Him. They had been unbelieving. John tells us that in John 7:5, they actually opposed His ministry. But it changed as very obviously occurred here a work of grace has happened and we know, Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15 that following the resurrection the Lord appears to His brothers and through that appearance He has quickened them, He has changed them, they've come to faith. They are now believing men and obedient to Him. They were gathered there too, that would have included His brother James who wrote the Epistle of James and His brother Jude who wrote the Epistle of Jude and probably also His sisters were gathered there.

Verse 15 we read that later the size of the group increased to 120 persons which is only a portion of the over 500 to whom the Lord appeared after His resurrection. But it probably included people like Lazarus and his sisters and Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, the two disciples whom the Lord met on the Emmaus Road and a number of other unnamed believers, people who are unknown to us, 120 people were gathered there.

And I think that indicates something's quite practical for us and important for us to remember and that is that the nature of the church is the nature of a community. It is a people drawn together by their common faith in Jesus Christ and we need to be together. We have been joined together into one body, into the body of Christ. We have been baptized with the spirit into that body, placed in an integral relationship with one another and we need that association with one another.

The analogy of a body is meaningful. It points out how we are joined together and we must seek that association. We're not made to be alone, we're not made to develop as Christians in the likeness of Christ in isolation from one another. James Boice who has written a commentary on the Book of Acts, it's his sermons that he preached at Tenth Presbyterian Church makes this observation that when students go off to college, the thing that is often most important in determining whether they go on in the Christian life or they drift off in the first few months of their experience in college is whether they find Christian fellowship on campus.

They need other things and he points that out, they need prayer, they need bible study, they need to attend church, but, he says, pure contact and encouragement seems to be especially important. And so he always tells students that the first thing that they should do when they go off to college is get in touch with a Christian group. They need to have Christian fellowship. We all need to have Christian fellowship. And so quite naturally these people were drawn together in the upper room during those ten days.

Now in verse 14 Luke tells us what they were doing there. They were with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer. So when the Lord leads us into a time of waiting, it is not to be a period of inactivity. The apostles didn't sit around and stare at each other for ten days. They were active. They prayed. Their prayers aren't recorded, but we can imagine that they prayed with praise and thanksgiving for what God had done for them through Jesus Christ. They praised Him for their salvation. There must have been confession of sin. Peter had failed the Lord miserably the night of His trial and He wasn't alone, all of the apostles had abandoned the Lord.

And as they sat around together in the upper room with time to reflect on their situation and on themselves, they must have become increasingly aware of their own inadequacy. They'd been given a great mission, the great commission to be the Lord's witnesses, to represent Him throughout the world, but who is sufficient for these things? They knew they weren't. And so they probably prayed about the future, that God would prepare them for the task and make them adequate for that. He would do that through the gift of the Holy Spirit and they knew that so they probably prayed that God would make them ready for the coming of the spirit.

John Stott suggests that they actually prayed for the coming of the spirit. Some have objected to that explanation on the grounds that it was unnecessary for what God already promised to do, was certain that He would do that it so there was no need to pray for it. But God’s promises don’t make our prayer superfluous. In fact, it’s God’s promises that give direction to our prayers. They are expressions of His will for us and we’re to pray according to His will and those promises and prayer according to those promises give us the confidence to pray. And we pray for the promises.

In fact, if you go to the end of the bible, the last chapter, John’s prayer is that the Lord Jesus would come. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. Now that is a promise that’s been made, He’s going to come. In fact, He told His disciples that Father had set the time of His arrival. It was determined and yet that didn’t keep John from praying for what Christ had promised to do. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. So the certainty of an event is no reason not to pray.

Often objections to the sovereignty of God are made by arguing that predestination and election can’t be true otherwise prayer would be unnecessary or evangelism would be unnecessary. Why pray for what is certain to occur? We are to pray, we’re to evangelize, therefore, God must not be sovereign, the election must not be true, predestination must not be right. Why pray for what is certain to occur? Well, first of all, we do that, we pray, we evangelize because we’re commanded to do that. Now that’s reason enough, that’s sufficient enough reason to do so, but the reason beyond that is because God’s will is accomplished through certain means.

He always accomplishes His purposes, He cannot be frustrated by man’s rebellion or failure. In some way, though, He includes us in His decree and the accomplishment of it. We can’t frustrate Him, but He uses us in it. Now that’s true in evangelism as well as prayer. His elect are not saved without faith. Election is not salvation, it is to salvation and it is to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

And so those who unconditionally are chosen by God, that’s true of all believers, unconditionally chosen by God from the foundation of the world will realize that salvation through faith in Christ, not apart from it. They’ll realize that in time and so to believe they must have an evangelist and to have an evangelist, God must send him. He works through means to accomplish His purpose, likewise to obtain His promises, we pray for them. That’s the divine means that God has given to

us to obtain the blessings that He has for His people. And that is why we pray and we can be assured of the things we pray for for the very reason that God is sovereign. Because He is sovereign we can have confidence in our evangelism. Because He is sovereign we can have confidence in the things we pray for when we pray according to His will.

If God is not absolutely sovereign, what guarantee do we have that He can answer prayer or that people will come to faith? There's no guarantee at all. He would be a frustrated deity and He is not that. And so we are to be praying for the promises of God, praying that God's will be done and it seems likely to me that this is what the apostles were doing, that they were praying that God's promises would be fulfilled and praying for the coming of the spirit. But the important thing is they prayed.

That is one reason that the Lord leads us into times of waiting, so that we will draw near to the throne of grace. And the two characteristics of their prayer which Calvin said are two essentials for true prayer are they persevered in their prayer and they were of one mind. These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to pray. That expression one mind is one of Luke's favorite words. It occurs throughout the Book of Acts. It occurs ten times in the Book of Acts and only one time outside of the book so this is a word that is particularly characteristic of the Book of Acts, the church in its early days, the people of God were of one mind. And the point is they were together. This is about togetherness. They were not divided against themselves.

And that shows a significant change that had already taken place following the resurrection. Just before our Lord's arrest, up in the upper room we read in Luke 22 of a dispute that was going on among the disciples. They were arguing there among themselves as to who would be greatest in the kingdom of God. So these were strong-willed men. These were men who were divided against one another at that time, the end of our Lord's earthly ministry. They were men who were trying to get the best position. They were asserting themselves, they were characterized by selfishness.

But now we read some 40 days later, but they're in that upper room and great change has occurred. They are together with one mind, not seeking their own interest, they're seeking the common good, the will of God. Now that's a work of grace and a necessary of work. Unity of mind is essential for the ministry of a church. If it

doesn't exist, then perhaps a church should not go forward in the plans that it is making. We seek to follow that as elders at Believers Chapel if we are seeking to know the Lord's will in a particular matter and there is not unanimity among us, we delay, we wait, we pray, we discuss it among ourselves, we read the scriptures and we seek to come to a consensus on an issue.

And we see that these men had arrived at that. They were not divided, they were in agreement in what they were praying for, seeking the same blessing, they were of one mind and they were persistent in their prayers, continually devoting themselves to prayer. That is the pattern of effective prayer. That's the pattern of faithful prayer. The Lord instructs us in that way, and when He gives instruction on prayer, He instructs us to pray continually.

In the parables that He gave, He would give that instruction, most notably perhaps in Luke 18 He gives the parable of the widow who went to the unjust judge for legal protection and he was not inclined to give it to her. He didn't care about her. She was a widow; she was insignificant. He was a powerful and an unjust man, but because of her persistence and because he didn't want to be annoyed by her, he gave what she wanted. And the Lord's point is, how much more will your heavenly Father do for you, who's not annoyed by you, who loves you, wants your best? You're to come to Him in that way. In fact, the Lord Jesus, in talking about the persistence of our prayer, says and we're not to lose heart.

Don't stop after one prayer or one request, come back with that request to the Lord until it becomes clear that you are no longer to do that. Well, that's what the disciples were doing. They were persevering in prayer, so that says something to us about how we're to conduct ourselves. What appear to us to be delays in God's action, times of waiting are times of action for us. Times to pray. That's what we're to be doing in such times as that. And not only that, but we are to be searching the scriptures, we're to be studying the word of God.

And it's clear from what follows that the apostles were studying the scriptures, the Psalms in particular because Peter stood up and quoted two specific passages, Psalm 69 and Psalm 109. He had been reflecting on other passages as well because there was a particular issue that needed to be resolved. And it is in the bible that God gives His people insight and direction. It's through the word of God that we learn His will.

When we find ourselves in times of inactivity in times of waiting, we should see those times as opportunities to study and to be taught of God through His word. It's through the bible that we are blessed. It's through the bible that God gives His people growth and gives them wisdom and gives them understanding. And the apostles understood that. The apostles needed that and they needed it in regard to a particular issue, the issue of filling the vacancy that was left by Judas. He had betrayed the Lord then committed suicide.

And before the church would be ready to go forward in its mission, it had to fill that office. And so Peter stood up and announced that it was necessary to select a new apostle. The room was now filled with people, with 120 people and Peter said in verse 16, “Brethren, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus.’ For he was counted among us and received his share in this ministry.”

Judas was a man greatly privileged. Few men in the history of the world have been privileged as Judas was privileged to be with the Lord, to be an apostle, to have received His share in this ministry and Judas' treachery must have been a huge shock and disappointment to the disciples. Not only 11 apostles but the wider range of the apostles. This was a trusted man. This was an apostle. And so it must have come as a shock, but it wasn't unforeseen. Peter said it was a fulfillment of scripture. These events had been foretold by the Holy Spirit through David and since the word of God cannot fail, since prophecy cannot fail, it was necessary, it was inevitable that these events occur.

Now Peter doesn't cite the text where Judas was prophesied but the Lord did back in John 13:18, the night of the Passover when He informed the disciples that one of them would betray Him. And then He quoted Psalm 41:9, “He who eats my bread has lifted up his heel against me.” That's a Psalm of David and it is taken out of an event in David's life and that person who lifted up his heel against David was Ahithophel who was David's counselor, a man who had been his close associated but a man who had betrayed him by joining the rebellion of David's son, Absalom.

Ahithophel's end is significant when he realized that the revolt would fail. He went home and he hanged himself which is how Judas ended his own life. The lives of the two men are similar. Both had privileged positions, both betrayed their benefactors and both men hanged themselves. So Ahithophel is seen as a type or a picture of Judas and Psalm 41 is a prophecy of Judas' treachery and death. It is a very

sobering thought, is it not? That a man could be so close to Christ, as Judas was, and be lost. That a person could be so near the light and still be in the darkness.

Peter says that Judas received his share in this ministry, he was one of the 12. He was a man who sat beside our Lord in that Last Supper, that final Passover, but he was not genuine. He was wolf in sheep's clothing. There are people like that in the church, people like that among elders in a church, people like that in the pulpit. People who are attracted to the truth, they're drawn to the light, they even seem to have embraced the light without actually believing it.

Later on in chapter 20, Paul will give that warning to the Ephesian elders and he will tell them, “Be on guard, savage wolves will come in among you not sparing the flock.” These are people who appear to be true, but in time prove to be false and do great damage to the flock of God and so Paul says, “You be on guard.” And we must be on guard. But the case of Judas also gives a personal warning for churchgoers. It's not enough to be in a church, it's not enough to be associated with believers. It's not enough to participate in the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper. It's not enough to hear the bible taught week after week. To call yourself a Christian, one must receive Jesus Christ personally.

I'm sure that Judas believed that Jesus was the Messiah, he expected Him to establish the kingdom of God. But he didn't think of Him as the savior, he didn't think of Him as the suffering servant. He didn't believe in Him as the Lord and trust in Him for salvation. Instead, he betrayed Him and he had a gruesome death described in verse 18 and an even more terrible destiny.

Peter will say, “He turned aside to go to his own place.” His own place is perdition. His own place is hell. That's what Peter is talking about. It is a sobering and not a popular thing, but something that must be said because it is the word of God, those who do not believe in Jesus Christ, those who do not repent and turn to Him, they go to hell. That's what happened to Judas. A man of great privilege yet without faith he turned aside to go to his own place.

So now it was necessary to replace him and Peter found the justification for doing that in Psalm 69:25 and Psalm 109:8, he quotes them in verse 20, “For it is written in the book of Psalms. Let his homestead be made desolate, and let no one dwell in it, and let another man take his office.” Both of those Psalms deal with God's judgment on the wicked and Peter interpreted them as ultimately applying to

Judas and giving divine guidance about what was to be done in regard to the position he had left vacant.

And as he read the Psalm, the Psalm said let another take his office. And so Peter makes that conclusion and he lays down the rules for choosing the new apostle. Verse 21, “Therefore,” he says, “it is necessary that of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us – beginning with the baptism of John until the day that He was taken up from us – one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.”

So to be an apostle, a man had to have been a witness of the resurrection of Christ. The resurrection is the basis of the message of the apostles. It is the proof that Christ atoned for sin, that God, the Father, accepted the sacrifice of His son. How do we know that Christ’s atonement is an atonement? How do we know that it satisfied God’s justice? How do we know that it saves? The resurrection is the proof. God brought Him back from the dead and vindicated Him as His son.

On the day of Pentecost in 2:32, Peter said, “This Jesus God raised up again to which we are all witnesses.” And that point is repeated in the Book of Acts. To be an apostle, a person had to have seen the resurrected Christ in His glory. And He had to have witnessed the Lord’s entire earthly ministry from the beginning to the end, from the time of John the Baptist to the time He left the world.

Which raises the question, are there apostles today? Many say that there are. The Roman Catholic Church has a doctrine of apostolic succession. Peter is considered to be the first pope and all the popes that have followed have been his apostolic successors. There are non-Catholics who believe that there are apostles today. But anyone who claims to be an apostle must meet this qualification. Paul did and it was because he could say to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 9:1, “Have I not seen Jesus, our Lord, that He could prove His apostleship?” It was constantly coming into question, people were challenging him on that point and his proof that he was an apostle was that he had seen the resurrected Jesus Christ.

Now it’s sometimes suggested that the apostles were wrong to have selected anyone other than Paul, that he was intended to be the twelfth apostle, but nothing in the New Testament supports that. Paul’s apostleship was unique. He was the apostle to the gentiles. He was separated from the 12 though he was equal with the 12. And that may be the reason that he didn’t have to meet this requirement of having

accompanied the Lord from the beginning with the baptism of John. But he did meet the requirement of personally seeing the resurrected Christ. And that requirement makes it clear that apostleship ended when the last apostle passed from the scene.

No one today can say they've seen the resurrected Lord. And so there are no apostles today, but we do have the word of the apostles. We do have the ministry of the apostles and as we follow it, we follow it in their authority, the authority which is in Jesus Christ. Well, with these requirements we read that they put forward two men, “Joseph called Barsabbas (who was also called Justus), and Matthias. And they prayed and said, ‘You, Lord, who know the hearts of all men, show which one of these two you have chosen to occupy this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.’”

Notice that they prayed seeking God's will, not their own will. They approached the Lord as the one who'd already made the choice and they were seeking from Him to find out that choice. And what may not be apparent at first glance is that they were praying to Jesus. They ask Him to show which one of these you have chosen. And you look at verse 2 of chapter 1, we read that it was He, it was Christ who had chosen these men to be His apostles. So He is the one to whom they put the question, which one is it? Who have you chosen?

Now that's significant because it shows our Lord's deity. It's only to God that a person prays and the apostles prayed to Christ, prayed to Christ because He is God, the Son, second person of the Trinity. But it also shows it's not wrong for us to pray to Him. It's not the norm, we are instructed by Christ to pray to the Father and that is generally how we pray, to the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit. But it's often asked, can we pray to Jesus and the answer is yes. The apostles did.

Now we read the outcome of their prayer in verse 26, “And they drew lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles.” This method of choosing by casting lots seems rather strange to us, it seems like flipping a coin or drawing straws, but it was a biblical method that was used in the Old Testament to learn God's will, Proverbs 16:33 says, “The lot is cast into the lap but its every decision is from the Lord.” So the lot was used for learning the decision of the Lord, but this seems to be the last time that this method was used.

After Pentecost it was not necessary because the church was guided by the Holy Spirit. His leading is what characterizes the movement of the church throughout

the Book of Acts. It was led by Him as it waited on Him and sought His will. We see that here with the selection of Matthias. The Lord had already chosen him. The apostles didn't choose Matthias, they didn't appoint Matthias. They simply discerned the Lord's will. And that is what we are to do. It may involve waiting and delaying decisions on projects and moves that we want to go forward with, but the Lord leads. He is the head of His church and we are to look to Him for guidance and direction.

We do that as these men did, by waiting, by praying persistently, by studying the word of God. That's how we seek God's will. It's how the Lord leads us today as we study, as we pray and we can do that with the confidence that He is faithful to lead us and give us the decisions that we need. Well, they did that and the Lord raised up a replacement, one who took the office of the one who had left it vacant. So now the stage was set for the day of Pentecost. The apostles have received their mission from the Lord, they have watched Him ascend into heaven. They have returned to Jerusalem in obedience to Him and they have prepared their hearts during this period of waiting. The apostolic company was now complete, the selection of Matthias fill the vacancy left by Judas.

But as John Stott writes, “The place left vacant by Jesus has not yet been filled by the Holy Spirit.” And the 120 believers waited for Him to be sent, ready then to go into Jerusalem and beyond with the good news of Jesus Christ, the savior of the world. That's the message that the church has today. That's the message that's been given to us. That's the gospel. The gospel is that we are sinners, all of us without exception, but we have a savior in Jesus Christ, God's Son.

Do you know Him as that? Have you trusted in Him for salvation? He is the savior, He has died in the place of sinners and on the cross He bore the full penalty of the sins of His people and the invitation to receive that salvation is open to all who believe, whoever they may be, whoever they may be. That's the good news. If you don't know Jesus Christ as savior, receive Him as savior. Turn to Him, trust in Him.

I began the lesson by saying that often God gives us red lights in our walk with Him. He directs us to wait, but on this matter of faith, on this matter of salvation, God always calls people to move, to delay not. Both the Psalmist and the author of Hebrew said, “Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.” Later on in the book Paul stands before Felix the Roman governor and he preached the gospel, he preached about righteousness and self-control and judgment to come. The text says

Felix trembled. And then he responded by saying to Paul, “Go away for now and when I have a convenient time I will call for you.” That convenient time never came. Paul visited against Felix but he never preached to Felix and a few verses later Felix vanishes from the text and we can only assume that Felix went to his own place. He joined Judas.

Today is the day of salvation. And there is no more important issue for you or for me than that issue. There are lots of important issues that we can give our time to, job security, retirement, harmony among spouses, a good family life, all of that’s important, all of that has its place, but the essential issue is what will you do with Jesus Christ? You know about Him, have you received Him as your savior? May God help you to do that if you’re here without Christ, to look to Him, to know that you are a sinner in need of a savior, He’s the savior, trust in Him and in so doing, receive the full forgiveness of sins and life-everlasting. May God help you to do that and help us who have done that to go forward with the mission that he’s given us to do, to be witnesses for Him wherever we are. God help us to do that, let’s pray.

[Prayer] Father, we do thank you for your goodness and your grace. We thank you that you have sent the Holy Spirit, that He has come. He was in the world from the beginning and He was with the people of God, but from the day of Pentecost on He is in the people of God. He literally lives within us; He has sealed our hearts at the moment of faith. He keeps us secure. He is our guide, gives us the mind of Christ, the life of Christ, we are new creatures in Jesus Christ because of the quickening work of the Holy Spirit and the continuous presence in our lives. We thank you for Him, we pray that we’ll be sensitive to His leading and that we would go forth from this place to be good, faithful witnesses of your Son. Bless us to that end and we pray in Christ’s name. Amen.