

Coming Back

(Series: ReImagining Church; Message Four)

Acts 1:9-14

A. Luke begins his book by underscoring Jesus' Resurrection (1:1-4)

1. The resurrection story is the bedrock on which the Church is built

"If Christ has not been raised, [our] faith is futile" (1 Corinthians 15:17)

2. Inherent in this Good News (Gospel) is the call to evangelism:

"I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die." (John 11:25-26)

B. Then Luke says the Father will be sending the Holy Spirit

1. Acts 1:6-8 is the thesis statement and outline for the book of Acts

2. The Holy Spirit will empower the followers of Jesus so they can witness of him *"in Jerusalem, in all Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

JESUS GOES BACK HOME

A. Luke continues with a recounting of Jesus' Ascension (1:5-11)

B. This must have been an amazing event

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me, so go, making disciples of all nations..." (Matthew 28:19f)

"He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God" (Apostle's Creed)

"He [now] pleads our cause in heaven in the presence of his Father"
(Heidelberg Catechism, Q/A 49)

"He is the head of the church, and the Father rules all things through him"
(H.C., Q/A 50)

"...through his Holy Spirit he pours out his gifts from heaven..." (H.C. Q/A 51)

"It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away the counselor will not come to you, but if I go I will send him to you" (John 16:7)

C. What's the big deal about the Ascension?

1. The Ascension of Jesus underscores the credibility of Christ

2. The Ascension of Jesus underscores the completion of his work

3. The Ascension of Jesus means the Comforter (Holy Spirit) can come

4. The Ascension of Jesus means he is now pleading our cause

5. The Ascension of Jesus means we can celebrate because Jesus reigns

JESUS WILL COME BACK

A. Two white-robed angels suddenly confront the disciples

1. The encouragement: Get going, be his witnesses

2. The promise: *"This same Jesus...will come back in the same way..."*

B. People often handle life by living in nostalgia - focused on the past

1. Nostalgia is a search for "home" (from the Latin *"nostros"*)

2. But "home" is not found by looking to the past but by looking to Jesus

C. Be ready...because Christ's return is certain

THE DISCIPLES COME BACK TO JERUSALEM

A. They all return back to Jerusalem

1. First, the apostles - these extra-ordinary ordinary people

2. Then the women who had quietly followed Jesus everywhere (cf. Luke 8:2)

3. Then Luke mentions Jesus' mother, Mary, and his brothers

B. History suggests Mary moved with the Apostle John to Ephesus

1. History records that most of Asia Minor became followers of Jesus

2. Mary got to see the full identity, power and impact of her Son...

3. It is one of the stories Luke records of the triumph of hope over hardship

THE DISCIPLES COME BACK TO PRAYER

A. The disciples came together in one accord

1. The Church impacts this world when its members live together in one accord

2. This was possible because they were praying together in one accord

B. The early Church seldom talked about the Church

1. Instead, they preferred to talk about Jesus

2. All the elements necessary to turn the church right-side up are right here:

a. A risen Savior and Lord who is still alive today!

b. An empowering Spirit that takes up residence in Christ-followers

c. The disciples of Jesus on their knees in prayer - in one accord

Lord I crawled across the barrenness to you...with my empty cup...

Uncertain in asking any small drop of refreshment

If only I had know you better; I'd have come running with a bucket

(Nancy Spettleburg, "If only I had Known")

C. Lord, fill my bucket...may it overflow