

“Now What?!”

Acts 1:4—2:2

Jesus told the disciples, *that they were on no account to leave Jerusalem*
but “must wait for what the Father promised: the promise you heard from me.
John baptized in water; you will be baptized in the Holy Spirit. And soon.” (Acts 1:4, 5)

Reminiscent of the words of John the Baptist in Luke 3:15-16...

[The people] were all beginning to wonder, “Could this John be the Messiah?”
But John intervened: “I’m baptizing you here in the river. The main character in
this drama, to whom I’m a mere stagehand, will ignite the kingdom life, a fire, the
Holy Spirit within you, changing you from the inside out.”

Also the words of Jesus in John 14-17

Jesus told them he would leave them, but that the Father would send the Spirit
They would not be alone—The Holy Spirit would come
and explain everything to them

In their confusion they asked if the Messiah would now fulfill the promise as they understood it
When they were together for the last time they asked, “Master, are you going to
restore the kingdom to Israel now? Is this the time?” Acts 1:6

Jesus said you don’t get to know the time—that’s the Father’s business

You get the Holy Spirit

“What you’ll get is the Holy Spirit. And when the Holy Spirit comes on you, you
will be able to be my witnesses in Jerusalem, all over Judea and Samaria, even to
the ends of the world.” Acts 1:8

Whether they understood it or not—the rest of Acts tells how it came to be

Then Jesus leaves them—*“he was taken up and disappeared in a cloud”*

Jesus left them in the shekinah glory,

the visible manifestation of the divine presence and glory

They stand there stunned

God sent angels to reassure them that Jesus is in heaven

and that he *“will come as certainly—and mysteriously—as he left”*

I’ve been thinking about the implications of this...

Jesus’ now has a heavenly body—he can come and go

33 years on earth in a human body with some human limitations

Short time resided on earth but with a heavenly body—no human limits

i.e. appeared in the room without using the door

Now resides in heaven but can still come and go—mysteriously

Jesus *“will come as certainly—and mysteriously—as he left”*

To say that this only means the second coming is to limit Jesus from coming now

No wonder the early church expected him to return in their life time

He did!

To assume it would be to wait for the end times/second coming

means that we miss the Messiah living among us

For a second time people missed him

“Now What?!”

Acts 1:4—2:2

So they returned to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives
They went to the room upstairs where they were staying

Upper rooms in Palestinian cities were usually the best rooms
because they were above the busyness of the crowded streets
Often they served as places of assembly, study, and prayer
The disciples “went upstairs to the room where they were staying.”
the room was probably well known to the early Christians
—perhaps the room where Jesus and his disciples kept the Passover
just before his crucifixion
—perhaps it was the room where he appeared after he rose from the dead

Here they gathered, afraid and uncertain of the future
The Christians felt the increasing hostility of the Jewish leaders
Once again they were alone
For the second time Jesus had left them
This going was not as catastrophic
But it was far more difficult to explain

They waited in the upper room
They were waiting for something Jesus had promised
But which they didn’t understand
The coming of God’s Holy Spirit
And so they prayed, and waited, and talked
But most of all they waited

During this time of waiting they did something practical
They simply did the next step
they replaced Judas who had betrayed them and was now dead
Matthias was added to the 12 disciples

I’m guessing they also talked about things Jesus had said
Tried to understand things that didn’t make sense
Enjoyed the stories of Jesus’ time with them
And wondered about what was next

Feast of Pentecost—they were together in the room...

“Without warning there was a sound like a strong wind, gale force—no one could tell where it came from. It filled the whole building. Then, like a wildfire, the Holy Spirit spread through their ranks” Acts 2:2-3

We’ll go there in more detail next week
—but I want to tell you what God showed me with these verses
This is a personal journey about North Seattle Friends Church
and what God is doing here...

“Now What?!”

Acts 1:4—2:2

Acts 1:6 When they were together for the last time they asked, “Master, are you going to restore the kingdom to Israel now? Is this the time?”

God had given me a vision for the church—”of a great people to be gathered”
and as many gathering places in Seattle as Starbucks

About 3-4 years ago I began asking God—”Is this the time?”

When are you going to fulfill my dream?

People are leaving—fulfilling their dreams of moving to the country to live

But what about Friends Memorial?

Acts 1:7-8 He told them, “You don't get to know the time. Timing is the Father's business. What you'll get is the Holy Spirit. And when the Holy Spirit comes on you, you will be able to be my witnesses in Jerusalem, all over Judea and Samaria, even to the ends of the world.”

God didn't answer my question

What God did say was to be faithful and that the timing was in God's hands

God's Spirit was with me/us

Witnesses in Seattle and Puget Sound—yes!

But in the world beyond that?

No, I don't think that's our calling—my vision was local

Now we are actively involved in ministry in North Africa, Burundi, and Honduras

It's a much bigger thing than I originally thought God gave me!

Acts 1:13-14 They went to the upper room they had been using as a meeting place: Peter, John, James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James, son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, Judas, son of James. They agreed they were in this for good, completely together in prayer, the women included. Also Jesus' mother, Mary, and his brothers.

They did what Jesus said—they waited

We returned to being the church and we were faithful to the task at hand

I realized that I was called to pastoral ministry—whether I was ever “successful” or not

It didn't matter whether or not the church grew—I was in it for good!

I realized it was true for the church gathered—we were in it together for good!

Acts 1:15-26 During this time, Peter stood up in the company—there were about one hundred twenty of them in the room at the time—... They then drew straws. Matthias won and was counted in with the eleven apostles.

During this time we made numerous decisions—many of them practical
some easy and good—others hard

Rearranging the pews

Discontinue Kinder Kampus

Changing church structure—add administry and lay down committees

Moving the offices to the church building

New windows

etc.

“Now What?!”

Acts 1:4—2:2

Acts 2:1-3 When the Feast of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Without warning there was a sound like a strong wind, gale force—no one could tell where it came from. It filled the whole building. Then, like a wildfire, the Holy Spirit spread through their ranks,

This most clearly happened for us when we changed our name to North Seattle Friends
When we had finally worked it through to a decision that this was our new name
there was an explosion of energy in the room
People had held back until everyone could accept the new name
The name came with a real “yes-ness” that has stayed
With the new name came new life
I felt a real and tangible sense of new life birthed among us
A new readiness to be
...the people of God called Friends gathered in North Seattle

Acts 2:17-18 “In the Last Days,” God says, “I will pour out my Spirit on every kind of people: Your sons will prophesy, also your daughters; Your young men will see visions, your old men dream dreams. When the time comes, I’ll pour out my Spirit On those who serve me, men and women both, and they’ll prophesy.

The Spirit has been poured out on all of us
No longer is it up to the pastor and worship leaders
There is a real sense of community and that the Spirit speaks through all of us
I feel a real and tangible sense that all are taking their place as ministers of the gospel
It feels way different (and better) to me as the pastor

Acts 2:43 Everyone around was in awe—all those wonders and signs done through the apostles!

God is doing the miraculous among us
Carolann had been having knee pain—which we prayed for before they left
In an e-mail she said the pain left as she got on the plane at SeaTac for Burundi
That’s just one example of the wonders and signs done among us

Acts 2:44-45 And all the believers lived in a wonderful harmony, holding everything in common. They sold whatever they owned and pooled their resources so that each person's need was met.

If you received Walt’s e-mail this week, you know how God has blessed our finances
We approved a budget beyond our means and we were able to meet it
plus another \$7,500 over the budget
plus another \$32,000 in designated giving
for things from personal needs of people to new windows
We have given \$154,000 to the work of the church!! That’s generosity!!
That’s God!!

Acts 2:46-47 They followed a daily discipline of worship in the Temple followed by meals at home, every meal a celebration, exuberant and joyful, as they praised God. People in general liked what they saw. Every day their number grew as God added those who were saved.

Times have changed and we don’t worship daily in a temple and we go out to eat
But we enjoy being together and visiting—in fact we hang around for a long time
In general... we like being at North Seattle Friends Church