

“HOW TO WAIT ON THE LORD.”

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First Christian Reformed Church

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Scripture Texts: Acts 1:12-14

Introduction.

There are three events in the life of our church that were part of my motivation to spend some time in the opening chapters of Acts. This Sunday's focus on prayer for our elections, next Sunday's elections for new elders and deacons, and then Pentecost Sunday two weeks after that.

These next three texts in Acts match up with those three events. I am trusting the Holy Spirit to be the one guiding and speaking to our hearts through His Word and into our lives, both personally and corporately.

But what about GEMS Sunday? Does it fit in to all of this in some way?

The theme for GEMS this year is “In His Steps.” It is based on I John 2:6 which says, “whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.”

One of the aims of their study this year is “to learn how to live by listening to Jesus and acting on what He says.”

How do you do that when Jesus is not among us? How do you seek the will of God? How do you wait for the Lord?

If you are at all impatient like I can be sometimes, then I have bad news, Christianity is waiting.

Abraham waited for a son.

The children of Israel waited 400 years for deliverance from slavery in Egypt.

David pray in countless Psalms, “how long, O Lord?”

The prophets made prophecies that would be hundreds of years old before fulfilled.

We have been waiting 2000 years for the return of the Messiah.

In God's way of doing things, waiting is not a waste of time or energy. Learning how to walk in Jesus' steps means learning how to wait on the Lord.

There are three essential things that stand out in our text about waiting and effective prayer.

The followers of Jesus showed their trust in Jesus by walking in *obedience* to Him.

They walked *together in unity*, being of one mind or of one accord.

They persevered or were devoted to *prevailing prayer*.

Don't wait passively, wait actively, do the last thing He told you.

From our text we learn the first step in waiting, the first thing you can do while you are waiting for Jesus to answer or show you the next step, is to obediently do the last thing He told you to do. Do what you already know while you are waiting to find out about what you don't yet know.

Luke 24:49 Behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.

Acts 1:4-5 He ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father.

So, they went to Jerusalem and waited. That's faith, that's trusting and obeying. They listened to Jesus and did that He said. Listen to the context for the GEMS theme verse:

I John 2:3-6 By this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. 4 Whoever says, "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, 5 but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: 6 whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

Do you think they would have received the promised Holy Spirit if they had not done what Jesus said? If they had gone off to Galilee to fish? While God delays, practice obedience.

Don't wait alone, wait with others in worship and fellowship.

Luke 24:52 They worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, 53 and were continually in the temple blessing God.

Acts 1:14 All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

This is our first glimpse into the early church and we can't help but be impressed and moved by their unity. 120 people gathering together for ten days in the temple for worship and in an upper room for prayer.

Do you realize what a miracle of grace this is, that so diverse a group of sinners could be together like this, tax collectors, prostitutes, proud, arrogant men, deniers and doubters. The church only exists and holds together by the grace of God through Jesus Christ.

We are not here to grumble and complain and point out the warts and say how we aren't like other churches, God has called us here by His grace to take our weaknesses and use them for His glory, and to show us our dependence on Him through our dependence on each other.

Hebrews 10:24-25 Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

When you are waiting on the Lord, when you are waiting for God to show you the next steps or open the next door and resolve the next issue or burden of your heart, besides being faithful and obedient in what you already do know, there is something else you should do.

Continue in holy habits and in holy places. They went with friends to a familiar place, a place of habit, they kept the habits of worship, fellowship and prayer. Christianity is community, it is not meant to be lived in isolation or alone.

Some where I came across this nugget. The bridge of habits carries us over uncertain waters and unfamiliar terrain. It's another way of saying keeping doing in the dark what you learned in the light.

What a great change had come over the followers of Jesus after the resurrection. Before they scattered in fear and panic, confusion and denial. Now they are all gathered together without fear.

If it was the same upper room as the Passover, then how fitting, because that is where Jesus said:

John 14:16-18 I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, 17 even the Spirit of truth.

What is important about this large gathering of 120 is that they were together, meaning united, agreed, of one mind or one purpose. They were agreed to be together to pray and they were agreed about what to pray for, the Holy Spirit, as Jesus had instructed them.

Romans 15:5-6 May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, 6 that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

When we are together with one heart and one voice, in a unity of the Spirit, that is when we glorify our Father who has made us to be brothers and sisters.

Don't wait impatiently, wait persistently by devoting yourself to prayer.

During these 10 days they were joined continually, persistently, earnestly in devoted prayer. This would later be a mark of the new converts to Jesus.

Acts 2:42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

True prayer is characterized by perseverance, earnestness, faithfulness. Prevailing prayer.

Dependence.

Jesus had to impress on the apostles that no matter how strong they were or how smart, they didn't have what they needed to be His apostles. Spending three years with Jesus didn't mean now they were good to go.

Never say to God, "It's OK, God, I got this. I'm good here."

Whatever you are doing in life, you will do it better and more fruitfully in dependence on God. Look to Him constantly for wisdom and strength, the wisdom of God and the power of God.

You will be a better father, mother, husband, wife, teacher, student, manager, farmer, carpenter, accountant, mechanic, nurse, business man, business woman, owner, factory worker, care giver.

Take Jesus at His Word, you need His power, you need His Spirit.

Praying for what God has promised.

Think about something here. Jesus promised them the Father would send them the Holy Spirit soon. This begs a question. Why pray for what Jesus and the Father have already promised to send?

The promises of God in Scripture don't render prayer unnecessary or mean we can be lazy. In fact, it is quite the opposite. What God has promised are the incentive to pray, we honor God by asking for what He desires to give, but wants us to want. And the promises of God give us confidence that when we pray for them He will hear and answer.

We can pray with ***expectancy***, because God has promised.

Have you thought to pray for what God has promised? What are some of your favorite Scripture verses? Have you thought to pray them and ask for them?

God, cause all things to work for your glory and my good, for the good of those who love you (Romans 8:28).

God, bring to completion the good work you have begun (Philippians 1:6).

God, enable me to trust in you with all my heart and lean not on my own understanding. Help me in all my ways to acknowledge you that may direct my ways (Proverbs 3:5-6)

God, may your will be done and not my will (Matthew 6:10).

God, give me a new heart and a new spirit. Take away my heart of stone, cause me to walk in your statutes and commandments (Ezekiel 36:26).

God, send your Holy Spirit upon me in a deeper and greater fullness. More of you, less of me.
God, for my children/grandchildren I pray:

Psalm 102:28 The children of your servants shall dwell secure; their offspring shall be established before you.

Jeremiah 32:39 I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever, for their own good and the good of their children after them.

God, feed your sheep with the meat of the truth of your Word and give the to drink of the living Water of your Spirit. Don't let your Word go out and return void and empty, but cause it to fulfill every purpose for which you have sent it.

Praying the promises of God especially applies to the Holy Spirit.

Luke 11:13 If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, *how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!*"

Jesus encourages us in our prayers to ask for what God has already promised. And Jesus encourages us in our prayers to remember that God is a good Father who only gives good gifts.

Jesus wants us to be secure in the confidence that God hears and delights to answer His children with the best of gifts, and what gift is better than the fulness of the Holy Spirit.

Be especially praying for the pouring out of the Holy Spirit. When does the Spirit come?

While Jesus was praying at His baptism the Spirit descended on Him (Luke 3:21-22).

When the followers of Jesus were praying for 10 days the Spirit fell on them.

When the church was gathered for prayer the Spirit was poured out in a fresh way (Acts 4:31).

So why does God delay? Why didn't Jesus just send the Spirit right away?

They had to learn to wait, to exercise patience, humbly acknowledge their dependence on God.

God often delays to test us and train us, to teach us the holy habit of perseverance in prayer. Don't grow weary in well doing and don't grow weary in prayer.

While we are persisting and persevering and prevailing in prayer God is at work, things are happening in us and in the world around us, God is preparing, working, changing, convicting, purifying.

May we have "a new resolve to prevail and persist in prayer without doubting God's love. And let us prevail specifically in praying for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit—his power, his gifts, his fullest blessing—all the while rejoicing that the prevailing itself is a great work of the indwelling Spirit of the living God" (John Piper).

We are very ordinary humble people but we are praying to an extraordinarily great God. Pray great things from God, expect great things from God, attempt great things for God.

Every one of us needs a revival in our souls, needs a time of refreshing to come.

Jesus walked in obedience to the Father. Let us walk in His steps in obedience. Jesus didn't walk alone, He was constantly in the fellowship of believers, friends of the faith. Let us walk in His steps together. Jesus made prayer a priority. Let us walk in His ways, seeking His will in prayer.

Implications and applications.

How many of you have gift cards at home? To stores, restaurants, movies. Do you know why businesses love gift cards? Because people forget about them or lose them. Do you know how much money goes unclaimed from gift cards? Make a guess. Over a billion dollars a year.

They have the benefit but they never use it or enjoy it. We have God's promises purchased for us by the blood of Jesus but we don't use them to our benefit, they are unclaimed.

Take God at His Word, literally. Believe God's revealed Word, take hold of His covenant commitment to it, and ask Him to keep what He has promised in His Word.

Look where the book of Acts begins. It begins in an upper room with people on their knees in devoted prayer for 10 days. God is up to something and when He is He starts with people praying.

Prayer is the way forward, we will only make progress on our knees. If we don't have time for prayer then we are in trouble at the very core of our souls.

Let me give one encouragement to prayer with week, a digital call to prayer. How God can use our digital clock, watch or cell phone to alert us to pray? When the numbers are all the same or in a discernable pattern.

Will you pray with me this week for the elections?

Will you pray with me with a sense of expectancy for God to pour out His Spirit among us?

Pray with expectancy. Expect great things from God (like His promises), attempt great things for God (like praying for His great promises).

Prayer: Holy Father, we have depended too long on our own wisdom and our own strength and our own resources. Our poverty is greater than we know or acknowledge. We need the riches of your grace to us in the Holy Spirit, so we humbly ask. Increase in us an expectancy that you delight to answer this prayer. Help us not to grow weary but to persevere and persist in

heart-felt prayer that you will fill our souls and our church with the wind of your Spirit for your glory.