

## Sermon

Grace Street Fellowship, Dr. Jim Burgin, pastor  
Sunday, January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2018  
The Church of Jesus Christ

Acts 2:42-47

### Opening

1. Tim Marshall is a former foreign correspondent for Britain's Sky News television and a leading authority on foreign affairs. He has written a book titled Prisoners of Geography: Ten Maps Which Explain Everything about the World. In it, he explains how the basic physical characteristics of a country or region shape the destiny of that area more than the people who pass through. He contends that these physical realities, such as frozen ports for 6 months of the year in Russia, and the absence of a mountain, shapes the fate of nations, regardless of the people in leadership.<sup>1</sup>
2. A map helps you understand the larger context of the day-to-day realities, which shape people's choices. Do you think the expansive and wide-open plains of West Texas, for example shape the way a people think. Alternatively, that the presence of a body of water makes a difference in where cities develop? It is interesting to me that J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis both drew maps of Middle earth and Narnia as they developed the stories around them.

### Transition/Main Point

1. On this opening Sunday of the New Year, it is important that we know where we are "on God's map."
2. Have you ever entered an address into your "Global Positioning System" and followed its direction precisely, but still ended up at the wrong location?
3. If your map isn't accurate, then how will you know where you are, and how in the world would it be possible for you to get where you are going. It is important for your map to be accurate.
4. Maps help us understand our place in the world, and help us know how to get where we want to be. Scripture provides us a kind of map of the church – characteristics of the terrain, so that we understand what the church should look like, how it should act. We can look at this picture provided by the Lord and know instantly if the church has lost its way. We can also find our part in God's plan, and see our place in God's work here on earth.
5. We will find the purpose of God's church, and our purpose too as we look at this passage today. Specifically, we will discover that God wants the church to stay connected to God's Word, to enjoy being together as a Christian family, to take the Lord's Supper together, and to pray.
6. Your church should be doing these things, and it is important that you watch to make sure the church stays on track. However, there are expectations and opportunities for you here too.
7. Let us look at the context of the focal passage we will examine later.

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<sup>1</sup> Tim Marshall, Prisoners of Geography: Ten Maps that Explain Everything About the World. (New York, NY: Scribner, 2015), pp.1-10. For example, in the first page of the introduction, Marshall references Putin's faith as a great supporter of the Orthodox Church. If this is true, Marshall contends, then Putin "may well go to bed each night, say his prayers, and ask God: "Why didn't you put some mountains in Ukraine?" If God had built mountains in Ukraine, then the great flatland that is the North European Plain would not be such encouraging territory from which to attack Russia repeatedly."

**Context** (Acts 1: 1-10)

1. Luke is the author of the book of Acts, but he wrote a previous book, which we refer to as the Gospel of Luke.
2. In the first book, Luke outlined the life and teachings of Christ, and detailed his crucifixion & resurrection.
3. After his resurrection, Jesus appeared with and taught his disciples many things about the Kingdom of God, but he also gave them a specific direction – they were not to leave the city of Jerusalem. They were to wait for the gift of the Holy Spirit promised by the heavenly Father. Jesus said that in a few days they would be baptized by the Holy Spirit.
4. They gathered around him and asked, “Lord, are you going to restore the Kingdom of Israel at this time?”
5. Jesus said “It isn’t for you to know the times or dates the father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.
6. Then a cloud took him out of their sight, and they stood there so long, 2 angels came to reinitiate them again, and gave us a promise that Jesus will come back again in the same way he left.
7. The 11 returned to the upper room, and “they joined together constantly in prayer.” Mary was there, and Jesus’ brothers too.
8. Peter spoke to the believers and told them what had happened with Judas. Through an interesting process, the Lord led them to choose Mathias as the 12th disciple.
9. As Acts 2 opens, they were “all together in one place.” Suddenly, a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what appeared to be “tongues of fire” descend, separate, and land on each of them. They were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in foreign languages. God-fearing Jews from every nation were there, and each one heard their own language being spoken. They were amazed. They wanted to understand what was going on, and some said, “Oh, they’re just drunk.

**Peter’s Message** (Acts 2)

1. Peter said – It is only nine in the morning. No one is drunk.
2. What you see happening is a fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy in Joel – the Lord will pour out his Spirit on his people. They were Jews, so they knew the passage.
3. Jesus was the real deal – and you know it, because you saw the miracles he did.
4. You handed him over to the Romans, and they crucified him.
5. But God raised this Jesus to life, and we are witnesses of it.
6. He has been exalted by the Father, and received the promised Holy Spirit which he has poured out here, and you saw it with your own eyes.
7. Let all Israel be assured of this – God has made this Jesus whom you crucified to be Lord and Messiah.
8. When they heard this, they were “cut to the heart,” and said “what shall we do?”
9. Peter said “Repent and be baptized, and you too can receive this gift – it is for those who are near and far off.

10. He had already said in Acts 2:21 – whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.
11. Then he warned them and pleaded with them with many other words – no manuscript was published as there sometimes was.
12. 3,000 became believers and were baptized on that day.
13. And the church was born.

### **The Resurrection of Christ**

1. Let's not pass over this point too quickly;
2. They have seen something, which they are astounded by, and they do not understand.
3. Peter tells them that Jesus Christ the teacher, the one they killed for claiming to be God, was in fact, God.
4. In fact, he defeated death, and now reigns from heaven's throne.
5. Theologian N.T. Wright makes an interesting point about the reality and the power of the resurrection:
 

“The early Christian understanding of Easter was not (1) that this sort of thing was always likely to happen sooner or later, and finally it did. It was not that (2) a particular human being happened to possess even more unusual powers than anyone had imagined before. Nor, (3) did they suppose that it was a random freak, like a monkey sitting at a typewriter and finally producing “All's well that Ends Well” after several near misses.<sup>2</sup>
6. Wright contends, and he is exactly right that early Christians “believed like any human being does that dead people do not ordinarily rise from the dead. The only thing, which accounts for the birth of the church, the continued belief in Christ in face of martyrdom on the part of the apostles,” Wright contends, that it is true.
7. 1 Corinthians 15:14 – if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.
8. As we start this New Year, I wanted us to remember why we are here at all. We are a part of the church, which was birthed on that day.

### **The pattern of the church**

1. The church established a pattern for living which we still cling to today.
2. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. (2:42)
3. Notice that they continued steadfastly in each of these.
4. Let's unpack these one at a time.

### **The Apostles' teaching**

1. The “apostles' teaching represents the word of God.
  - a. Hebrews 4:12 – the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.
  - b. Isaiah 55:11 – so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.
  - c. Isaiah 40:8 – the grass withers, and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever;

<sup>2</sup> NT Wright: The Resurrection of the Son of God (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), pp. 711-12.

- d. His Word is a lamp unto our feet and a light to our path (Psalms 119:105)
- 2. Illustration: Nick Pitts, the Director of Global Engagement at Dallas Baptist University, was our speaker at the men's retreat this past weekend. He led us in 3 seminars which were exceptional. As good as they were thought, they paled in comparison to the way this man had God's Word memorized. More his heart, and less his content, made a huge impact on our men.
- 3. I want to challenge each of us to read the scripture through this year. There are copies of a reading plan in the back, which you can follow, and also many others out there that you can look up.
- 4. What are the other 3 characteristics?

### The Fellowship<sup>3</sup>

- 1. The Word used for fellowship is *koinōnia*;
  - a. *Koinōnia* is a “communion, a fitting together of people who have come to Christ from various paths and places, yet find themselves gathering with one heart.”
  - b. It is a “commonness of love, and sympathy, and encouragement, forgiveness, patience, and understanding;”
  - c. It is new command of Jesus in John 13 – that we love one another. That “ought to be the cement that binds together all of the hearts, and souls, and lives, and families that belong to the body of Christ: a fellowship, a communion of love, sympathy, care, and understanding.”
  - d. In first Corinthians 13, we are reminded that we are a fellowship characterized by love. If your preacher has the voice of an angel, but no love, he is just a clanging cymbal. If you give all to the poor, but do not love, then you are just showboating. In the older King James versions, they translated this word charity, because one of the early translations (Jerome – Latin Vulgate) in Latin translated the word for love here into *caritas*. – which refers to the “endearment, the high esteem and loving regard, an infinite preciousness in which we hold and value each other.” That is *Koinonia*.
- 2. Illustration: There is an old story about John the apostle in his later years, asked to speak to a group of believers. He was so feeble that he had to be held up on each side by Christian brothers. He spoke one line: “Little children, love one another.” Those holding him up could not believe he had nothing else to say. When pressed again to speak, all John would say is “Little children, love one another.”<sup>4</sup>

### Taking the Lord's Supper Together

- 1. We identify ourselves with him;
- 2. He becomes a part of us and we become part of him.
- 3. When we eat the bread and drink the cup, we are dramatizing the sufferings of our Lord.
- 4. In Philippians 3:10 Paul says, “That I might know him and the fellowship of his sufferings.

### Prayer

- 1. This is the lifeblood of the church, God's people
- 2. Jesus prays for us, the spirit intercedes for us.

<sup>3</sup> The quotes in this section are taken from a sermon by Dr. W.A. Criswell. Titled “The Perfect Fellowship,” Act 2:42. Feb. 27, 1977.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

3. We seek His Kingdom on earth,
4. And he walks with us, and he talks with us.
5. Before Jesus cleansed the Temple in John 2, he explained that the church was to be a “house of prayer.”

### **Conclusion**

The Triangle Shirtwaist <sup>5</sup>Factory fire in New York City on March 25, 1911 was the deadliest industrial disaster in the history of the city, and one of the deadliest in US history. The fire caused the deaths of 146 garment workers – 123 women and 23 men[1] – who died from the fire, smoke inhalation, or falling or jumping to their deaths. Most of the victims were recent Italian and Jewish immigrant women aged 16 to 23; of the victims whose ages are known, the oldest victim was Providenza Panno at 43, and the youngest were 14-year-olds Kate Leone and "Sara" Rosaria Maltese.

The factory was located on the eighth, ninth and tenth floors of the Asch Building, at 23–29 Washington Place in the Greenwich Village neighborhood of Manhattan. The 1901 building still stands today and is known as the Brown Building. It is part of and owned by New York University.[6]

Because the owners had locked the doors to the stairwells and exits – a then-common practice to prevent workers from taking unauthorized breaks and to reduce theft – many of the workers who could not escape from the burning building simply jumped from the high windows. The owner also made a choice to put out the fire instead of clearing the building.

To make the point, if we as a church aren't functioning as we were supposed to – then it will affect the eternal destinies of people.

### **Invitation**

1. For salvation;
2. For rededication
3. For prayer
4. For joining the church

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<sup>5</sup>Triangle Shirtwaist Factory” Fire. Wikipedia . [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Triangle\\_Shirtwaist\\_Factory\\_fire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Triangle_Shirtwaist_Factory_fire)