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Living in HisStory: Revealing the True Wonder of Who God Is:
X Marks the Spot
Acts 1/2
September 30, 2018

Give me a show of hands.

Who here has a good sense of direction? What I mean is, do you usually know where you are and how to get to where you are going?

Who here does not have a good sense of direction?

I feel for all these people because that is where I land. I often say that I could get lost in a phone booth. I think of Harold and Jeannie going to Africa and I see so many details and directions to get to where they need to go. Even getting off of the ferry and getting to the airport is an ordeal for the directionally challenged. There is roads going every which way. There are cars going every which way and all of the stimuli can be confusing if you are not sure of the way. If you are directionally challenged, it is not hard for your anxiety and temperature to rise if you find yourself lost or unsure where to go/turn in a large city that is unfamiliar to you.

Do you remember maps? You can't find them anymore. You pull it out of your glove compartments and unfold it. They fold them like 20 times. You take it out and it is the size of a small picnic blanket. Then to find where you are and where you are on the map is a total ordeal. How we ever found our way, I don't know how.

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Life can mirror this same feeling when we are lost. Have you ever felt lost when deciding what to do when you have a big decision. What city to live in, what to do for work, who to marry, how to spend your money, what home to buy/rent, how do I deal with my broken relationships? These are all big questions and your anxiety can rise when you think of them. You can feel a sense of hopelessness.

Another show of hands, have you ever felt paralyzed by uncertainty about a big decision? Yes, me too. I have felt the same at different times.

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If we do not have a good sense of where we are going, then fear can stop us from acting/living. If I am driving to work, I don't have anxiety about where I am or where I am going because I drive it all the time. The unknown without a compass can stop us from moving forward.

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Today we are continuing our sermon series, Living in HisStory, revealing the true wonder of who God is. I love this title because we are focusing on the right thing as we have started in Genesis and are making are way to Revelation. We have not focused on the individual people in the bible, but more importantly we have focused on what is God doing and how does that affect the people in the story and us in our story. This is important because the bible is the story of God. Period. It is his story and we are a part of it but not the main character.

Today, we are going to look in the Book of Acts or Acts of the Apostles. We are specifically going to spend most of our time in chapter 1 and 2. We are looking at the 12 men who were the closest to Jesus and were taught daily by Jesus. At the beginning of Acts, the context is Jesus has recently been crucified and 3 days later his tomb was found empty because he was resurrected. Jesus had foreshadowed that this would happen throughout his ministry and

scripture in the Old Testament foreshadowed this would happen as well. Even though, Jesus death and resurrection was declared (prophesied) before it happened, it was a scary and uncertain time for the apostles. Their leader, rabbi, teacher, and friend was taken from them.

So, let's see what happens.

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Acts 1:1-3 (NLT)

In my first book I told you, Theophilus, about everything Jesus began to do and teach ² until the day he was taken up to heaven after giving his chosen apostles further instructions through the Holy Spirit. ³ During the forty days after he suffered and died, he appeared to the apostles from time to time, and he proved to them in many ways that he was actually alive. And he talked to them about the Kingdom of God.

The writer of Acts is Luke who also wrote the book of Luke one of the gospels. He starts with sharing that this is a continuation of that book. He also declares how Jesus was with the apostles after he was resurrected.

I would think that this would have had a calming influence on them after the uncertainty of his death. Let's see how Jesus leads them and gives them purpose and confidence in where they are going.

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Acts 1:4-5 (NLT)

⁴ Once when he was eating with them, he commanded them, "Do not leave Jerusalem until the Father sends you the gift he promised, as I told you before. ⁵ John baptized with water, but in just a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

Jesus is telling them exactly where to go and what they can expect to happen. Stay in Jerusalem and soon you will receive the Holy Spirit. Those who follow Christ will receive the Holy Spirit. Jesus did not want them to be alone when he ascended to heaven, so he sent the Spirit.

Now even though Jesus spent 3 years with them and taught them and then he spent 40 days after resurrection, teaching them about the Kingdom of God, doesn't mean they had it all figured out.

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Acts 1:6 (NLT)

⁶ So when the apostles were with Jesus, they kept asking him, "Lord, has the time come for you to free Israel and restore our kingdom?"

I love how Luke shares that they kept asking him. They haven't quite figured out what it is all about but Jesus is about to share again the direction of the rest of their lives and everyone who follows Christ.

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Acts 1:7-8 (NLT)

7 He replied, "The Father alone has the authority to set those dates and times, and they are not for you to know. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

This reminds me of Leora who leads Rooted Kids here at CRBC. When a child is doing something they shouldn't be doing, or is just off the track of what's going on, she often asks them a question. "What are you supposed to be doing right now?" You know, what is your job?

The apostles were looking for Jesus to overthrow the Romans and put them in control and he says, that is God's job to deal with. What is your job? What are you supposed to be doing.

You will receive the Holy Spirit, and then be my witnesses, everywhere. Are they to convince people, or motivate them or change them. NO. That is not their job.

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The Apostles job, our job is to be witnesses to who Jesus is, what he has done, how that has changed our lives, and tell those we come in contact with.

Let's continue and see how else Jesus is leading them.

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Acts 1:9 (NLT)

9 After saying this, he was taken up into a cloud while they were watching, and they could no longer see him. 10 As they strained to see him rising into heaven, two white-robed men suddenly stood among them.

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11 "Men of Galilee," they said, "why are you standing here staring into heaven? Jesus has been taken from you into heaven, but someday he will return from heaven in the same way you saw him go!"

So, Jesus ascends into heaven and they are watching him go. Two heavenly messengers ask them, why are you staring into the sky. LISTEN UP. Jesus is coming back but you have something to do. He has given you a purpose.

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Don't let life pass you by. Jesus has a purpose for your life. Be intentional with your life as it is short. Get going and be about his mission.

Later in Acts the Apostles are meeting together with about 120 followers of Christ. You can see that they are starting to get about the business at hand. Peter addresses them and is sharing how it was prophesied that Judas, one of the Apostles, would betray Jesus and he did. Let's look where the apostles look for direction as Judas has died.

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Acts 1:20-22 NLT

²⁰ Peter continued, "This was written in the book of Psalms, where it says, 'Let his home become desolate, with no one living in it.' It also says, 'Let someone else take his position.'

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²¹ "So now we must choose a replacement for Judas from among the men who were with us the entire time we were traveling with the Lord Jesus—²² from the time he was baptized by John until the day he was taken from us. Whoever is chosen will join us as a witness of Jesus' resurrection."

I didn't put the verse up but in verse 12 Luke shares that the apostles were united in prayer. They spent time together seeking directions through prayer. In these verses, they draw on scripture of what to do next.

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Steps the Apostles followed.

1. Prayer.
2. Reading Scripture.
3. Obeying means taking action.

After praying and seeking scripture, they chose two men from those they new and left it up to God by casting lots. Mathias was chosen as the twelfth apostle.

They took action and were intentional about the purpose God had given them.

In Acts 2 we see an event called Pentecost. This is when the Apostles received the Holy Spirit. After this event, Peter preaches with power and shares about Christ, and then in verse 36:

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Acts 2:36-38 (NLT)

³⁶ "So let everyone in Israel know for certain that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, to be both Lord and Messiah!"

³⁷ Peter's words pierced their hearts, and they said to him and to the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?"

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38 Peter replied, “Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

After sharing that Jesus is God, saviour, Lord, and Messiah, Peter reiterates their next steps. The crowd believed the message as it was from and through the Holy Spirit.

Each must repent. To repent means to turn from your ways and follow Christ. Follow him. We repent, turn to God, and then be baptized.

We have an opportunity for you today to be baptized. As we have heard before, the bible does not really talk about unbaptized believers of Christ. When you believe that Jesus is God, and that he lived a sinless life and died and rose again to pay the price for your sins, then Peter says you repent and turn to him and you can be baptized. It does not mean you have it all figured out. It means you are trusting in Jesus to lead you. At the end of the service there will be an opportunity to be baptized. Don't worry if you didn't bring a change of clothes. We have lots. Don't worry if you are afraid to speak in public. You don't have to.

Baptism isn't the supernatural part. Baptism is a symbol of what has already happened in your heart. When you believe and put your trust in Christ, then supernaturally, you receive the Holy Spirit.

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The Holy Spirit, is like a GPS for travelling through life. Because Jesus was leaving them, he promised to send the Holy Spirit to lead them.

Following a map can be difficult to figure out the right place to turn, to merge, to find an alternate route when you go the wrong way. With GPS, you follow the blue dot. You follow this glowing blue dot. It tells you, where you are, where your destination is and how to get there.

I think the Holy Spirit is much like GPS, He is there to show you where you are in your sins. He also shows you where you are going and how to navigate the ups and downs of life as you go. He also, recalculates when you make a wrong turn and helps you get back on track, much like a gps. You have to learn how to listen to the Holy Spirit and also to follow His lead.

In John's gospel, in chapter 14, Jesus tells the apostles that Jesus is going to prepare a place for them in heaven and they know the way. Thomas replies:

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John 14:5-6 NLT

⁵ “No, we don’t know, Lord,” Thomas said. “We have no idea where you are going, so how can we know the way?”

⁶ Jesus told him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me. ⁷ If you had really known me, you would know who my Father is. From now on, you do know him and have seen him!”

Jesus has given us not a map but a GPS. Just like you can follow the blinking blue dot of a GPS, Jesus can show us the way to navigate life at each and every step. He is the truth, the way (not one of many ways, but the way), but he is also the life. He is the only way. He came to show us the way.

Now does that seem easy? A better question, Is it easy? The answer is no. If Jesus has sent us the Holy Spirit to guide us, then what is the problem?

The problem is Satan and us. Through this sermon series we have been following 3 threads.

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1. God is up to something. His purpose is to restore the shalom with us that was lost during the fall back in Genesis. In other words, he is rescuing us through Jesus. We have seen that today.
2. But Satan is also at work and he uses lies and deception to tempt us off track.
3. And we, left to our own devices, move away from God.

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Galatians 5:16-18 NLT

¹⁶ So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won’t be doing what your sinful nature craves. ¹⁷ The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions.

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¹⁹ When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these.

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²² But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!

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²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there. ²⁵ Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives.

Therefore, it is not easy at all. We have a part to play.

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We have the Spirit and He is at war with our sinful nature. Satan wants to tempt us that his way is better than Christ's way. It isn't. He wants us to give in to our sinful nature and believe the lie that he is whispering to us.

To follow Christ and to grow in Christ, we have to feed one and starve the other. We have to listen to the Spirit and starve our sinful nature.

Satan is going to make it tempting and we left to our own desires like to call our own shots.

Let me share a story.

Three people who were instrumental in founding of Methodism (Methodist Churches) were John Wesley, Charles Wesley and George Whitfield.

Susanna Wesley was the mother of John and Charles Wesley. She had 19 children in 21 years and lost 10 of them. This was in the early 1700s so you can imagine the work that she had to raise her kids without all of our modern day life hacks and inventions. Every afternoon she took one child into the privacy of her room and there shared with the child the finer things of the Christian faith. Little wonder that from this home, with faith and love, came the dynamic founders and leaders of the Methodist Church.

She spent the time to walk through life with her kids and taught them how to follow Christ not just learn about him. She helped to point to Christ and trust him and follow the Spirit's leading.

It comes down to being intentional with our life.

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Matthew 28:18-20 NLT

¹⁸ Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. ²⁰ Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Jesus told us the big thing to focus on. Make disciples. Baptize them. Teach them to OBEY my commands. The emphasis is on obey. To obey is to listen, to do, to

FOLLOW. Its not just teaching information. And finally, Jesus promises that he is with us. He has given us the Holy Spirit to lead us.

Let us not just leave here today and not examine ourselves. If you are a follower of Jesus and haven't been baptized, come up right away and we can do that. Even if you made the decision this morning to have Christ lead you, you can be baptized. We have towels and t shirts and shorts all ready for you. Maybe you are a follower of Jesus and you find yourself off course a little and you need him to recalculate your new heading. Allow the Holy Spirit to be your GPS. It starts with recognizing it, prayer, seeking it in his word, and then taking a step in that direction. It takes action to obey.

I am going to call the worship team up now. If you want to be baptized come up to my right here and we will have someone back their to help you and baptize you.

Let's pray.



Living in HisStory: Revealing the True Wonder of Who God Is
X Marks the Spot
Acts 1/2
Week of September 30, 2018

Objective of this study: To learn how to listen to the Holy Spirit and live intentionally for Jesus.

[Remember, the main goal of each Growth Group is to allow God's Word to change your heart so that others would see Jesus in you and be likewise changed to be like him. He wants to change the world through us.]

Worship (5 – 10 minutes)

1. Sing a song or two of praise and thanksgiving to God.
2. Spend five minutes in silence asking God to prepare your heart for how he wants to speak to you.
3. After the five minutes have someone interrupt the silence and read Psalm 25:1-10 meditatively to the group. Pause after each phrase letting God speak to you. Did anything "jump out at you"?

Welcome (5 minutes)

Was there ever a time in your life when you were truly lost (location wise)?

[It's really important when doing this study that we each think about ourselves specifically and ways we need to grow, not how Christians in general need to grow. Do the hard work of letting the Holy Spirit speak to your heart.]

Word (30-45 minutes)

1. What stood out from the sermon?
2. Read Acts 1 and 2.
3. How would the Apostles felt at the end of Luke (setting of beginning of Acts)?
4. What are some things that Jesus did to give them direction?
5. What are some examples where the Apostles were shown to follow Christ?
6. What is/are example(s) of where you see growth in the Apostles? Where they seem to 'get' it?

Work (30-45 minutes)

1. Think of a time where you struggled with a big decision (job, relationship, where to live, etc)? How were you tempted to respond? How did you respond? What did you learn?
2. Has the Holy Spirit ever seemed like a GPS to you in time of need? Explain the circumstances.
3. Read Galatians 5:16-25. Why can it be hard for you to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit? What have you learned to help?



4. What are you taking home this week? What changes in mindset or practice do you sense the Holy Spirit prompting you to make?

Prayer

Spend the rest of the time praying for each other. Praise God together for how he works, and how he allows us to partner with him to accomplish things in his kingdom. Here are some things you can pray about for the church:

- A. That, as a church, we would actively and purposefully engage in the mission of Jesus in Campbell River.
- B. The decision about how to partner in the Radiant Life ministry with other churches in town.
- C. Our church board and staff as they lead us to live out the mission of Jesus
- D. River Kids ministry as they reach out to kids in our community.
- E. Our missionary of the week: Mark and Catherine Buhler - Fellowship (Vancouver)
- F. Local CR church: Living Waters - Pastor Randy Beatty
- G. Harold and Jeannie Applin as they are travelling to Ngorika Children's Home in Kenya to serve.