

Gathering Expectantly

Acts 1:12-26

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Introduction

Last week we began a new series in the book of Acts.

- We looked at the first 11 verses of chapter 1,
 - And we saw that although Jesus ascended into heaven,
 - this by no means marked the end of His work on earth!
 - According, Luke spoke of what he had written before in his gospel about Jesus as what Jesus *began* to do and teach.
 - Indeed, Jesus' ascension did mark the completion of His redemptive work,
 - but if anything, it was but the beginning of the great missionary work that He was now prepared to engage in!
 - He told His disciples that they would be His witnesses, first in Jerusalem, then in Judea and Samaria, and then to the ends of the earth!
 - He told them to go to Jerusalem and wait for the promise of His Spirit who would be poured out on them in not many days.
 - They had a great work to do for His kingdom and that work was only beginning.
- I applied this to you—reminding you that Jesus is still reigning and still working and still has a great work for us, His church, to do until He returns!
 - It is not for us to speculate about His return or what He might do, but to each do our part in the work of His kingdom...
 - whether that work be preaching or taking care of our children.
 - Today we will look at how we ought to come before Him as His people with expectancy...
 - We are to look to Him as the One who promises to work among us.
 - The Bible refers to this as waiting upon Him.
 - It doesn't mean that we sit around and do nothing,
 - but rather that we come before Him in the assembly as those who continually expect Him to act in us and through us and in the world by His Spirit, just as He has said.
 - That is the lesson that is impressed upon us in Acts 1:12-26 which I read to you a few minutes ago.
 - Here we see how Jesus disciples, when they expect Him to work:
 - gather together,
 - pray with one accord,
 - deal with apostasy
 - and prepare leadership for mission.

TRANS> Let's look at each of these characteristics... first...

I. When disciples are expectant, they gather together expectantly!

- You see in verse 12 how they leave the Mount of Olives where Jesus ascended and return to Jerusalem:
 - **Acts 1:12: Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey.**

A. They do this expectantly in view of His promise and in accordance with His directives.

1. He had promised that He would pour out His Spirit and that they would be His witnesses—in Jerusalem, and then in Judea and Samaria, and then to the ends of the earth!
 - And He had told them go to Jerusalem to wait for the promise of the Spirit—
 - You can see that back in verses 4 & 5 in which we are told that:
 - **Acts 1:4-5: And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.**
 - And so that is what they do!
 - They go to Jerusalem and they gather together expectantly!
 - They expect Him to do what He said He would do!
2. They do this even though they had not been all that they should be for Him in the past—
 - only 40 days before they had forsaken Him, just as He had told them they would.
 - And they were under the shadow of Judas defection which was, as Luke mentions in 19, the talk of all Jerusalem.

TRANS> But they gather expectantly because even though they had not been faithful,

3. Jesus had been faithful, and now they understood that more than ever!
 - During the marvellous forty days between His resurrection and ascension,
 - He had opened the scriptures to them so that they could understand what He had done for them!
 - His suffering and death and lack of popularity had been a great puzzle to them,
 - but now they understood that their dear master had borne the curse for them to atone for their sins!

TRANS> And so they gather because they expect Him to do as He promised.

B. Now I have to wonder if that is the manner of our gathering?

1. Do you come to church each week with eager expectation for God to work?

- God has promised us that when we gather together in His name, He will be with us!
- He has promised to bless the preaching of His Word and to answer the prayers of His people.
- He has promised to hear our prayers and to meet us at His table.
- He has promised to enable us to live as His people, serving Him in His kingdom, and spreading the gospel to the ends of the earth.

2. How sad it is that so many Christians consider gathering optional.

- Of course it is one thing if you are sick or something, but if it is matter of arranging your schedule or of just finding other things to do,
 - that is terrible shame.
 - Jesus is the one who calls us!
 - If you have children who complain about gathering, it is most likely because you have made it an option...
 - You don't ordinarily hear children asking if they have to go to school today—unless they are sick or something.
 - And do you know why?
 - Because they know it is not an option.
 - It is just what you do.
- But besides all that, you and they need to be taught to come eagerly because you come expectantly!
 - You come expecting God to work in you and in your family and in your community.
 - That is the attitude that will animate you and motivate you!
 - That is the attitude that will get you to arrange your affairs so that church is your highest priority.
 - That is the attitude that will get you out of bed on Sunday—not just soon enough to squeak in the door—but to pray and prepare.
 - That is the attitude we see in the disciples in Acts 1:12-26!
 - It's not enough just to show up!
 - We are to come with expectation!

TRANS> But how do we know that they are expectant?

- The mere fact that they followed the Lord's directives and gathered suggests that they are expectant of His promise.

- Otherwise, they might well have gone back to Galilee—perhaps have gone fishing again...
- But they don't—they go to Jerusalem to wait where He told them to go and wait for the promise of the Holy Spirit.
- But that is not the only thing that shows us that they are expectant.

II. When disciples are expectant they pray with one accord.

- And you see that this is exactly what these disciples do:
 - Look at verse 13-14:
 - **Acts 1:13-14: And when they had entered [Jerusalem], they went up into the upper room where they were staying: Peter, James, John, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas; Bartholomew and Matthew; James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot; and Judas the son of James. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.**

A. When the church is expectant the church prays!

1. Earnest prayer indicates that we believe that God is going to work!
 - not routine, ritual prayers!
 - but real prayers of earnest supplication!
- a. You can tell by your prayers and by the church's prayers how expectant you are.
 - If you really believe that God is going to work, you will be much more earnest and fervent!
 - You will be like Jacob when he wrestled with God and would not let Him go until He blessed him.
 - You will pray that way for your children and for your relatives and for your neighbours and for the church as a whole!
 - You will not let God go until He answers!
 - You will be desperate for Him to work!
 - There is a false piety that says that if we trust God, we do not need to plead with Him...
 - but it is a false piety!
 - When there is true expectation, there is fervent earnest prayer.
 - Prayer is mentioned 31 times in the book of Acts, and in 20 of its 28 chapters.
- b. And not only can you tell if the church is expectant by her prayers, you can also tell by her prayers when God is about to work in her!

- Whenever He is about to work, He pours out a spirit of prayer and supplication upon us.
 - At least, that is ordinarily what He does!
 - That means that whenever you see the church earnest in prayer, it usually means that He is getting ready to do a great work among them.
 - You can look at it in two ways when you see real prayer...
 - You can say that God will work because He answers prayer...and His people are praying
 - Or you can say that God will work because He has stirred up prayer among His people... and that He does that when He is ready to work!
2. We are not told what they were praying because we do not need to be told!
- It is very easy to figure it out!
 - a. They had just come to understand what their dear Lord Jesus had done for them on the cross.
 - The scriptures had been opened to them that they might understand.
 - And they had indeed understood!
 - Their sins had been laid upon Him and now they were completely forgiven through faith in His blood!
 - They had been filled with the good news of the gospel!
 - You can be sure that they were giving thanks to God for sending Him and for accepting His sacrifice for them!
 - You will never see earnest prayer going on without prayers of thanksgiving and praise to God for what He has done in Christ.
 - b. And that is not all.
 - You can be sure that they were also confessing their sins.
 - When God's people are gripped with the gospel and with what Jesus has done for them, they see what true wretches they have been!
 - They confess that though they desire to do good, evil is present with them.
 - And they pray earnestly that God will pardon them and deliver them from this body of death—this remaining corruption.
 - You will never see true earnest prayer going on where there is not a recognition of sin and a humble confession of sin.
 - c. And this is still not all...
 - They had this promise that the Holy Spirit was going to be poured out.
 - Jesus had told them how the Spirit would empower them to be His witnesses to the ends of the earth...

- And He had shown them from the scriptures how the Spirit would transform them.
- If you look at Luke’s writings as a whole, you will find that for him, prayer is always prayer for the Holy Spirit!
 - The Spirit is what Christ has provided for His church in this age, and if we have Him, we have everything!
 - He ministers Christ to our understanding...
 - He unites us to Christ for our transformation...
 - He gives us assurance that we are God’s true forgiven sons...
 - He empowers us for ministry that we might serve and do God’s will...
 - He makes our ministry effective by working in the world around us!
 - Jesus called Him *the Promise of the Father* and you can be sure that the disciples were praying for this promise.
- You will never see true earnest prayer where there is not a laying hold of God’s promises.
 - We don’t have confidence to persevere in prayer for long if we are not gripped with His promise...
 - if we are praying for things that are uncertain.
- Someone will say,
 - Why pray for it if you are certain of it—if God has promised it?
 - It is because God is pleased to dispense His promises in response to His people’s faith and prayers.
 - Their faith is expressed before Him through prayer.
 - Before He blesses them, He ordinarily incites them to pray.

TRANS> So you see that the disciples, having been promised the Spirit, did pray—

- but I have been saying that their prayers were earnest—how do we know that?

B. We know that their prayers were earnest because it says that they “**continued in prayer with one accord.**”

1. The word translated *continued* is a strong word that means *continue steadfastly* or *continue earnestly*.
 - It means that they kept on in prayer,
 - And it means that they did it fervently.
 - They prayed hard and they did not give up...
 - Ten days elapsed between Jesus’ ascension and Pentecost, and throughout these days they continued in earnest prayer.

- It is one thing to pray fervently for a day or two, but it is another to continue in prayer for ten days—
 - That is what you do when you are expectant in prayer—when you believe that God is going to do what He has promised.

- 2. Not only that, but we are also told that they continued in *one accord*—*homothumadon* in the original.
 - This is one of Luke’s favourite words—he uses it ten times in the book of Acts.
 - It is a great word... *homothumadon*
 - *Homo* means *the same*,
 - and *thumos* (*thumodon*) means heat in the sense of passion—often used to refer to burning with anger!
 - But the compound word always refers to unity of some kind—either in a good cause or a bad cause.
 - Several times, Luke uses it of the Jews, gathered in opposition against the church!
 - But in every case, it speaks of those who are brought together because they are passionate about something.
 - This is the kind of unity we are supposed to have in the church!
 - Not the kind that is so popular today where we “just agree to disagree!”
 - That is not *homothumadon*!
 - *Homothumadon* is where you are united in a common purpose...
 - in Acts 1:14, united to seek the Lord for His promised blessing!
 - This is not about a church that gets along because they really don’t care about anything...
 - This is about a group of disciples who are burning with zeal for the kingdom of God and for the cause of Jesus Christ!
 - God doesn’t want us to set aside His word so that we can get along.
 - He wants us to zealously unite around His truth and labour together with passion for His kingdom!
 - Of course we must be humble and not make a big deal about secondary or doubtful matters—
 - and we won’t if we truly are united with a zeal for God!
 - And such is the case with these 120 disciples in Acts 1.
 - They are united in the common expectation for God’s promise to be fulfilled in them.
 - They are of one accord in prayer because they are expecting God to work.

- May we have such an expectation that we also will continue with one accord in prayer and supplication!
3. And notice what a tremendous unity this is...
- a. There is a unity among the eleven apostles.
- They had been jockeying for positions even on the night of Jesus' betrayal, but there seems to be none of that here!
 - They were surely humbled when Jesus had washed their feet, but now how much more that He had gone to the cross for them!
 - The kingdom of God is not about position—it is about serving God with your gifts in the place to which He has called you.
 - Peter is one of those men who sees something that needs to be done and jumps in to take action...
 - but there is no indication that he wants to have the pre-eminence when he stands up among them and speaks to the matter about Judas.
 - He is only interested in fixing the problem of a missing apostle.
 - And there is no indication that anyone resents his initiative.
 - Instead, they join together to fix the problem at his suggestion.
 - This is all the more encouraging when we consider how Peter had denied the Lord Jesus.
 - Truly he had been restored by Jesus Himself and everyone accepted that.
 - Their interest was in God's blessing, not in muscling their way to positions of rank.
- b. Note as well that there is a unity with Jesus' family according to the flesh.
- Jesus' brothers are there—though they had been unbelievers...
 - They have been fully received as disciples because they have repented of their unbelief and are now united in seeking blessing from Jesus.
 - James becomes an administrative leader in the church, and is one of the first to write a canonical epistle.
 - And Jude also writes one of the letters that the church has recognised to be among the divinely inspired writings.
 - The gospel has changed them!
 - And there also is Mary, the mother of Jesus.
 - From the superstitions that arose concerning her in later years, it is instructive that nothing more is said of her than that she was there...
 - And it should be noted that this is the last time she is mentioned in the New Testament at all.

- Far from the place she has come to have in the Roman Catholic Church, she is here simply one of the women...
 - She is joined with the others to seek the blessing that her Son has promised.
- c. There is also a unity with the men and women.
 - You see that together they are seeking God's blessing.
 - In the New Testament, there is neither male nor female, and soon there will be neither Jew of Gentile.
 - This does not mean that the fundamental difference in roles between male and female has changed.
 - Women do not become men, but they are together in the congregation as those sanctified by what Jesus has done.
 - They take a very active place in the book of Acts in the area that belongs to them—mercy ministry of all kinds.
 - They are united in passionate expectation for Jesus' to pour out His Spirit with the other disciples.

TRANS> And that is our main point...

- that whenever the church is expectant, we continue in prayer with one accord—one holy passion!
- But there is yet another thing that the expectant church does that we must turn to now.

III. When disciples are expectant, they deal with apostasy.

A. Peter stands up and explains the apostasy of Judas from scripture.

1. It is very discouraging when one of our brothers or sisters turns from the way of truth.
 - a. No one expected Judas.
 - He was the treasurer among the twelve.
 - He had gone about with them for three years and had preached and healed.
 - He had seen the sincerity of his Master, the compassion of his Master, the reality of His miracles.
 - He had heard His powerful teaching and he had seen His consistent life.
 - And yet he had turned against Him and delivered Him over to His enemies.
 - b. And now, as Luke tells us, the deeds of Judas were known to everyone in Jerusalem.
 - It was a favourite subject for those who wanted to find fault with Jesus...
 - “See, His own disciple has betrayed Him!”

TRANS> This had potential to greatly discourage the disciples—how could they be witnesses when one of them had turned on their master?

2. But you see what Peter does—he explains that this is but the fulfillment of scripture.
 - a. Peter has been taught by Jesus that the scriptures are about Jesus, and he finds writings in Psalm 69 and Psalm 109 about Judas.
 - He now understands that the opposition between the seed of the woman (believers) and the seed of the serpent (unbelievers) spoken of throughout scripture is in truth the opposition of Satan to Christ.
 - And that that opposition was most fully manifested when Jesus came in the flesh by the betrayal of one of His own apostles!
 - The whole of these Psalms that Peter quotes have many points of connection with Judas and Jesus.
 - Psalm 69 speaks of the Jewish community’s general rejection of the righteous and places a curse on them because of it...
 - Psalm 69:24-25 says: **Pour out Your indignation upon them, And let Your wrathful anger take hold of them. Let their dwelling place be desolate; Let no one live in their tents.**
 - Peter sees that this curse upon all the rejecters applies to Judas.
 - And so quotes verse 25 as it is translated in the Greek version of the OT, and he changes it from the plural to the singular...
 - In Acts 1:20, he says:
 - **Acts 1:20: For it is written in the book of Psalms: “Let his dwelling place be desolate, And let no one live in it”;**
 - And then he quotes from Psalm 109:8 which says that such a person needs to be replaced...
 - **and, “Let another take his office.”**
 - b. Peter declares to the potentially discouraged congregation that these scriptures had to be fulfilled!
 - 1) In other words, it was God’s plan that Jesus should be rejected by His own—
 - It was necessary that even one of His own inner circle should betray Him.
 - Jesus Himself had said that it had been determined that one of them should betray Him.
 - Peter fully acknowledges that Judas, who did this, had been numbered with the twelve and had obtained a part in the unique ministry that had been given to them.

- Peter does not go into the details of his fearful death because they all knew about it.
 - Luke is the one that supplies that information for his readers...
 - But Peter simply says that Judas
 - **Acts 1:16: “became a guide to those who arrested Jesus.”**
 - His hearers in the upper room knew very well how he had betrayed their Master with kiss and the garden.
 - But Peter’s point is that this is what God had decreed.
 - The prophecies about betrayal and treachery find their fulfilment in Jesus’ betrayal by Judas.
- 2) Such treachery against Christ has been around from the beginning and should not cause us to stumble or doubt...
- Cain and Abel were both worshippers of God, but Cain did not have faith and killed his brother.
 - Then there was Jacob and Esau, both born to Isaac, yet one was an apostate who had no regard for the Lord’s promises but had his portion in this world.
 - Then there was the defection the tribe of Benjamin in the time of the Judges...
 - And there was the apostasy of some of David’s sons like Ahab.
 - And there were the false prophets in the time of Jeremiah who said peace peace when Jeremiah warned of God’s judgement and who persecuted Jeremiah.
 - And in the New Testament, besides Judas, there was Simon Magnus who was baptised and then showed himself to be a false disciple
 - And there was Demas who ministered with Paul and then forsook him because of love for the present world.
- We could go on and on, but the point is, we need not be discouraged.
 - We should not suppose that God’s purposes have been thwarted by the treachery of His disciples.
 - The LORD has told us that it will be so in His kingdom until the final judgement.
 - There will be false sons in the kingdom. There will be wheat and tares.
 - But do not let it cause you to stumble or doubt.
 - His work will go on.

TRANS> And so it is that the expectant church does not give up when there is apostasy.

- B. The expectant church receives needful warning from the apostasy.
1. Peter shows how Judas has lost forfeited the place he had in God's kingdom.
 - He has forfeited it by his apostasy...
 - In verse 25, the disciples' prayer shows that they recognise that Judas has gone to his own place—the place prepared for the devil and his angels!
 - There is no avoidance of this fact.
 - He is the son of perdition and his place is the lake of fire.
 2. This ought to make us tremble.
 - There are many in the church who do not continue—who betray the LORD.
 - And they must go to the place that God has prepared for them, the place of outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.
 - Far from avoiding this subject, Peter draws attention to it.
 3. And for the sake of his readers, Luke, speaking by the Holy Spirit, adds the gruesome details of Judas' cursed death.
 - In verse 18-19, he says:
 - **Acts 1:18-19: (Now this man purchased a field with the wages of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his entrails gushed out. And it became known to all those dwelling in Jerusalem; so that field is called in their own language, Akel Dama, that is, Field of Blood.)**
 - We know already from Matthew that Judas returned the blood money to the chief priests who purchased a cemetery for burying strangers.
 - And we also know that Judas went out and hanged himself.
 - Apparently, the field the Jewish leaders purchased was the one that Judas defiled by hanging himself and then by his gruesome fall—perhaps when he was cut down.
 - It is often the case that when a person hangs himself, his body becomes bloated and swollen...
 - And then being cut down or breaking apart, his body fell and burst open so that his entrails gushed out.
 - It is a very shameful and hideous death.
 - The blessed Holy Spirit does not tell us this to entertain us,
 - but to solemnly warn us that this is what happens to the one who rejects Jesus!
 - This is the bitter end to which you will come!

TRANS> The expectant church faces these things because the expectant church knows that God's curses are revealed to us for our good...

- and because the expectant church believes that God's curse truly will come upon those who reject their Lord and Saviour.
 - When the church falls into unbelief, there is an avoidance of imprecatory psalms and there is very little talk about God's curse.
 - The church becomes foppish and effeminate in her unbelief.
 - She is no longer expectant that Jesus will judge His enemies.
- But see further what else the expectant church concerning apostates!

C. The expectant church roots out the apostates when they become known.

1. Judas, of course, had already been rooted out by death,
 - but it was necessary for the church to make an official declaration about it.
 - You see, the office of apostle is a permanent position.
 - Those to whom it is given have the position forever and will be seated on one of twelve thrones in the kingdom of glory.
 - Obviously Judas would no longer be entitled to one of these thrones.
 - And so Peter explains that according to Psalm 109, Judas must be replaced.
 - Another must take his office.
 - Judas is hereby declared by the church on earth to be no longer an apostle or to have a part in the ministry.
2. The expectant church knows that we are required to make such declarations about those who have been numbered among us and turned away.
 - Many churches today refuse to do this...
 - In some cases, those who are a part of the congregation have no accountability whatsoever.
 - They can depart from the faith and nobody says a word about it.
 - No declaration is made that this one who once had a share with us in the inheritance of Christ has departed from us and is no longer considered to have a share.
 - It is our duty to warn the departing one and to declare his impenitence if he is not reclaimed.
 - Jesus said that we are to make his restoration a top priority, leaving the 99 sheep to go after the one that is lost!
 - And then, if there is no repentance, we must officially put him out and regard him as an unbeliever.
 - We declare that such a person has no part with us!
3. The church does this because she believes that the work of the LORD in her midst will be hindered if she allows the wicked to remain in her number.

- In Deuteronomy 13 and Deuteronomy 18, the Lord impressed this duty of removing the wicked upon His people.
 - How often they refused with the result that the church was weakened and corrupted—almost beyond recognition at times!
 - She did not act because she had no expectation about the future that God had promised!
- The Apostle Paul stressed that removing the wicked is still our duty in the New Covenant—that we are to judge those who are in the church.
 - In 1 Cor 5, he told us that it is only pride that keeps us from doing this.
 - And he warned us that a little leaven will leaven the whole lump—in other words—the corruption will spread.
 - If it becomes known to us that an impenitent sinner is among us, we are called to act to remove him lest we become a partaker with him in his sin.
 - How often this duty has been neglected under the New Covenant!
 - What damage this has done to the church!
 - If we expect God to work among us, we *will* purge out the leaven so that we will be prepared for His blessing to come.
 - Like John the Baptist preached, we will prepare the way of the Lord—every mountain of opposition and every valley of unbelief will be removed.

TRANS> But that is still not all the church does when she is expectant...

IV. When disciples are expectant, they also prepare leaders for mission.

A. In the case of the apostles, it was necessary that there would be twelve.

1. Jesus had appointed twelve to be His official witnesses.
 - They had been with Him and they had seen His ministry from the time of His baptism to the time of His ascension.
 - They were eyewitnesses of His resurrection,
 - and as we saw last week, they were officially called to lay the foundation of the church in Jerusalem, Judea, and to the ends of the earth.
 - They were to provide for us the Holy Scriptures in which we have all that Jesus did interpreted for us and all that He taught set forth—
 - that is, of course, all that we need to know.
2. It was especially necessary that there should be twelve at Pentecost because they were to witness to Israel who consisted of twelve tribes.
 - The New Covenant was the fulfillment of the promise made to the twelve tribes and so there were to be twelve apostles.
 - It would not do to have only eleven.

- After this initial witness to Israel at Jerusalem was complete, it was no longer necessary to have twelve...
 - When James was killed, as recorded in Acts 12, there was no seeking of a replacement for him.
 - James did not forfeit his office by apostasy as Judas did, but rather died the noble death of a martyr, thereby confirming his faithfulness.
 - So unlike Judas, he was still one of the twelve and will always be so.
 - None of the apostles but Judas was replaced because none but Judas apostatised.
 - But you see, Judas' replacement was a necessary preparation for Pentecost.
 - The Jews were gathered from all over the world and of course, that is when the Holy Spirit was poured out as a witness to them of the kingdom.
 - But you see, with that outpouring, there was also the witness that there were twelve apostles showing that God's promise to the twelve tribes was fulfilled!
 - The Jews put great importance on such symbols—they had been taught to do so by the Lord.
 - So the church replaced Judas because she was expectant that the twelve would be witnesses to Christ not many days hence.
3. The method that was employed in replacing Judas is shown to us...
- a. First, the assembly acted in accordance with what they knew...
 - They looked for those who met the unique qualifications for apostleship...
 - Peter lays this out in verses 21-22:
 - **Acts 1:21-22: "Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection."**
 - It had to be someone who had known Jesus throughout His ministry.
 - b. Two men are nominated, but rather than taking a vote, the assembly prays and asks the LORD to indicate which one He wants through the casting of lots.
 - 1) The casting of lots was usually done by placing stones in a container and shaking it until one fell out—and that was the one who was chosen.
 - You see in verse 24-25 they prayed and asked the Lord to make the decision between these two men:
 - **Acts 1:24-25: And they prayed and said, "You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place."**

- 2) Casting lots was used in the Old Testament—
- and this was still the time of transition between the Old and the New, for the Holy Spirit had not yet been poured out.
 - Therefore, it is not given to us a pattern for us to follow in choosing officers for the church today...
 - We are told to choose elders and deacons by a vote of the congregation after qualified nominees have been identified.
 - We do not choose apostles.
 - The very qualities that are required of an apostle cannot be met after the first generation—
 - no one in later generations has been with Jesus from the beginning.
 - Paul states that his apostleship is highly exceptional.
 - Moreover,
 - Apostles were unique because they were chosen and appointed directly by the Lord Jesus...
 - For this reason, the disciples in the upper room were hesitant to choose between those who met the necessary qualifications—
 - so they turned it over to the Lord.

- 3) Verse 26 tells us the outcome:
- **Acts 1:26: And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles.**
 - This man had been among the seventy that Jesus sent out during his earthly ministry, but now he became one of the twelve and so forever shall be...
 - The history books tell us that he served as a missionary to Africa.

B. But the important lesson for us is that the expectant church organises for future ministry!

1. We need to be always preparing ourselves for the work that God has given us to do!
- We need to be seeking out men who can serve as ministers and we need to encourage them to prepare for the ministry.
 - We need to be seeking out men who can serve as elders and deacons so that we will be prepared for God to give us an increase.
 - When a congregation loses faith in the promise of Jesus to build His church, she does not think about preparing for the future.
 - She lets the elders grow old and die with little thought of replacing them!
 - And because she has no expectation for missions or for church expansion, she does not provide for these endeavours.
 - She only wishes to survive—she does not expect to grow!
 - She does not even expect her children to go on for the Lord but leaves them to the world.

- The fathers in such a congregation do not teach their sons and daughters and train them up to serve Christ because they have little hope for the future.
 - Because they have no faith in God's promise, a generation grows up that does not know the Lord.
2. My brothers and sisters, we must keep before us the future!
- Our desire is not to have a church in Halifax, but a whole Presbytery!
 - We want to plant daughter churches.
 - But some of you younger men need to desire the office of elder!
 - In 1 Timothy 3:1, Paul says:
 - **1 Tim 3:1: This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work.**
 - You need to desire it and you need to take steps to be a faithful man who is qualified for the office.
 - You need to pray and ask God to make you qualified...
 - We all need to pray that the Lord would raise up those who can serve among us.
 - And to pray that He will pour out His Spirit on us and on our community...

TRANS> And that brings us back to the place we began!

Conclusion:

The expectant church eagerly gathers together because they expect God to work in their midst,

- and they pray for God to bless them—to give them His Holy Spirit—so that they will be blessing to their community...
- and because they expect God to work among them, they purge out the leaven and they appoint leaders so that they will be ready to receive His blessing.

Perhaps Sinclair Ferguson is right when he says that after the church had prepared herself for the promise of God by prayer and by replacing Judas,

- that the LORD Jesus turned to the Father and said,
 - They are ready now...
 - Let's pour out the Spirit among them.

My brothers and sisters, there were only 120 of them and you see what God brought forth through them!

- Are we ready for His blessing?
- Are we praying and purging and preparing leaders because we expect Him to work among us?