

What are you doing?

A message delivered to
MAYER COMMUNITY CHURCH

May 9, 1999

TITLE: What are you doing?

TEXT: Acts 1:1-13

THEME: Witnessing for Jesus

THRUST: *Power* for the task from the Holy Spirit!

INTRODUCTION:

Last week we considered the question: “What are you?”

We, hopefully, came to understand
that we are first and foremost “Christians” and
that any other considerations should be secondary.

As Christians, we are anointed by God
through Jesus Christ with the Holy Spirit.

That initial anointing both of the Church as a whole
and the disciples as individuals
is recorded for us by Luke in Acts chapter one.

Periodically, I have the opportunity
of spending several hours of personal time with Caleb.

In case you haven’t noticed, this is one busy kid.

If he is not busy running and jumping
or trying to wrestle with his Old-Pa,
then he is leading me around
pointing to things he wants to know about.

It is not unusual for me to have to sit down ...
invariably when I do, it becomes very quiet – too quiet!
When that happens, I always ask “What are you doin’?”

Unfortunately, that same type of “quiet”
takes place in the Christian Church.

It’s not the quiet of reverential worship
or deep meditation, but the quiet
of lack of normal Christian activity.

Consequently, the question before us this morning is:

“What are you doing?”

Acts 1:1-13

Last week we saw Jesus Reveal
the *Promise of the Father* to His disciples.

This morning I want us to see Jesus
as He Redirects the disciples in their purpose.

One of the lessons we have come to learn through Peter
and the other disciples,
is that they are remarkably similar to us!
Their desires were much the same as ours,
but they had the added physical advantage
of seeing with their eyes, and hearing with their ears,
and touching with their hands, the Word of Life!
That is why Jesus told Thomas a few weeks before
“Blessed are those who have not seen and believe.”
In other words – according to Jesus, we are blessed!
Keep that in mind!

One of the things those disciples longed for
was the restoration of Israel as a world power.
Not just freedom from Rome,
but a force to be reckoned with in the world.
It was this desire that formed the depths of their disappointment
when Jesus was crucified and died.
It was this desire that formed the crowd that chanted
“Hosanna to the son of David.”
It was this unfulfilled desire that fermented the crowd that chanted
“Crucify him, Crucify him.”
Remember, the topic of discussion for the past 40 days
had been the Kingdom of God.
Hence their question of v7
“Are You going to restore the kingdom to Israel at this time?”
That is one of the great topics of the modern church.
Denominations have been formed over the interpretation
of Scripture passages that have to do with
the Second Coming of Christ
and the establishing of His earthly kingdom.
Christians have been barred from fellowship
with other Christians because they differed
in their understand of these things.
Theologians have a whole school of study on this issue,
the Doctrine of Eschatology.
It almost seems that every time you turn around
there is another book, another revelation, another viewpoint
as to the timing of the events of the last days.
I must confess – I don’t know, nor do I understand
the intricacies of the end times. I am still bewildered
by some of the events recorded by Daniel,
Ezekiel, Zachariah and John in Revelation.

At times, I get caught up in the wave of popular beliefs

But as that wave crests or I feel myself drowning
in the sea of uncertainty,

I am reminded *that* is not to be our purpose.

There are major pieces of that puzzle missing!

Daniel was instructed to “Seal it up....” (Dan 12:4).

He was told, “Many will run to and fro ...
knowledge will increase.”

John was told to “Seal it up....” (Rev 10:4).

He was told in Rev 3:7

that there is a door that is shut that no one opens
and an open door that no one will be able to shut!

If the full meaning of the prophecies of Daniel is a shut door

who do we think we are to try and open it?

Jesus said it’s shut! You *can’t* open it!

If the full meaning of the prophecies of John is a shut door

what are we doing trying to open it?

Jesus said we *can’t* open it!

Many have put their knowledge of “end times”

on the same plane as Salvation,

equal to their knowledge of Salvation.

Others have even equated certain viewpoints

of the end times *with* salvation.

The word of God is very explicit

about what we can know and what we can’t know!

1 John 5:20

The word *know* here means “progress of knowledge,”
or the progress in understanding.

In what area are we to have *progress of knowledge*?

We have *progress of knowledge*
in our relationship with Jesus!

We can *progress in our understanding*
that our knowledge of Jesus is growing!

This same word is used by Luke in **Acts 1:7**

and in *that context* Jesus said we **cannot** have

progressive knowledge of the “times or the seasons.”

That sounds like a shut door to me!

But notice that He has specified the areas

of the limits of our knowledge: times or seasons (NIV dates).

The popular way of interpreting this passage

has always been against “date-setting.”

i.e. In 1988, Edgar Whisenant wrote a booklet proving that the world would come to an

end in 1988, probably on September 12. When that failed to happen, Whisenant re-checked his mathematical calculations and found his error. The end was then predicted to be September 1, 1989.

In remarking on that event, one preacher stated:

“Like so many date-setters before him, Whisenant was wrong.

Our Lord said no one would be able to predict the time of the second coming.

We must always be ready.”

The Apostle Paul used the same wording in 1 Thess 5:1-2

But of the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need that I write unto you. ² For you know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. (KJV)

Evidently, this concept was something
that was readily understood in the early church,
but it is more than simply setting a date.

Now, in fairness to those who believe this is speaking
of our not knowing a specific date and time,
Mark 13:31-33 talks about no one knowing
the day or hour....

But what Jesus was saying to His disciples,
in Acts 1:7 goes beyond the meaning
of setting a specific date and/or hour.

Acts 1:7 He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. (NIV)

I like the words of the KJV better,
because when we think of time and date,
we think 8:30 on Sunday morning.

The KJV says, “the times or the seasons.”

Time: chronos, means a space of time,
whether short or long. i.e. from January - June
Season: means a characteristics of time;
~ prescribed sequence in time, a specific order!
~ a fixed and definite period i.e. from 8:30-9:45.
~ specific features of the period being referred to.

One of the *characteristics* of this period of time
is that the Father has set the boundaries of what is known.

If the Father has set a boundary that states
we cannot progress any further in our understanding
of this period of time – then, that’s it! Don’t you think?

If the Father has set a boundary that states
we cannot know the specific features of that time
then, that should be the end of it!

You may wonder how that fits with what Daniel said
about knowledge increasing?

Knowledge about the feasibility of prophecy
becoming a reality is now more readily understood.

i.e. 100 years ago, Peter's prophecy
about the elements melting with a fervent heat
was hard to accept because there was no
corresponding understanding of such a thing
being feasible (see 2 Peter 3:10, 12).

Today, because of the A-bomb, and the H-bomb
and all the other things that go with molecular physics,
it is understood that the elements
can melt with fervent heat!

Therefore, while knowledge has increased
we are no closer to knowing the time or the season
of Jesus' return!

You may also wonder about
all those little pieces of information
about Jesus' return: like the fact of wars,
and earthquakes, and all the *signs*
that will precede His coming.

What does all that mean? What is it all for?

Our purpose here is not to strip our watchfulness from us
but to make sure that we are not
wasting our time in areas
where the door is closed, or the prophecies are sealed.

The purpose of all the scriptures
that surround the second coming of Jesus,
whether those scriptures reveal details of judgements,
or details of the rapture,
their purpose is to increase our awareness,
to the end that we will be more alert.

Instead, what has happened for millions
is that they have fixated on a specific event,
have worked out the sequences pertaining to that event
i.e. the rapture
and as a result, have ruled out a wide awareness
because of an event centered focus!

Those individuals become obsessed
with the sequence of events.

If this is speaking of you, you may think you are looking
for the return of Jesus,
but the truth is you have tunnel vision!

I heard of one famous preacher who made the remark

that he didn't want to worship a God
that wouldn't rapture His people before the tribulation.

His viewpoint on the rapture
was distorting his picture of Jesus!

Jesus' disciples were also obsessed with Eschatology!

Mt 20:21 The mother of James and John
seeks the best seat in the coming kingdom for her sons.

Mk 13 The disciples want to know
the timing & signs of fulfillment.

Lk 17:20 The Pharisees were demanding to know
the timing of the Kingdom of God.
Jesus answered that the Kingdom of God was among them!

Lk 24:21 The two disciples on the road to Emmaus
confessed that they thought Jesus was the one
to restore Israel as the Kingdom.

In answer to Jesus' disciples' question as to the "timing"
of His return, Jesus answered:

"Watch out that no one deceives you...."

Matthew recorded it (Mt.24:3-4).

"Watch out that no one deceives you...."

Mark recorded it (Mk 13:4-5).

"Watch out that no one deceives you...."

Luke recorded it (Lk 21:7-8).

"Watch out that no one deceives you...."

Mark went on to record Jesus saying:

Mark 13:33 Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. (NIV)

Now here in **Acts 1:7** they are at it again, and Jesus says,

"It's not for you to know...."

Here we are, almost 2000 years later,

we are still running to and fro;

we are still increasing in knowledge;

we are still trying to find out the timing

refusing to hear, "It's not for you to know."

In effect, Jesus was saying,

"Your job, your priority, your responsibility

is to focus on being *witnesses*, **not**

on becoming convinced about the timing

and sequence of events just prior to My coming!"

There is too much of a "silence" in the Christian Church

brought on by **not doing** what we've been command to do

and by doing what we've been told we *can't* do!

We've been distracted from our mission.

We've been deceived in our ministry.

What are you doing?

Acts 1:10-11 recount for us the manner in which Jesus left
and the manner in which He will return.

Scripture informs us:

that we are to be looking for the return of Jesus.

that His return is the blessed hope of His people.

Acts 1:10 states that Jesus' disciples

were looking *intently* into the sky.

That word means "to stretch, to strain,
to fasten your eyes upon."

If our stretching,

if our straining,

if our fastening our eyes is upon Jesus,

then such intensity is right and proper.

But, if our intensity is focused

on what has hidden Him:

the clouds obscuring the *sequence*

of events surrounding His coming,

the clouds obscuring the *specifics*

of events surrounding His coming,

then we need to be reminded,

as those disciples were reminded,

that our mission begins in Jerusalem.

Our mission involves Judea.

Our mission penetrates Samaria.

Our mission encompasses the whole world.

But our mission *cannot* penetrate the clouds!

What are you looking up there for the Kingdom of God is among you.

The Kingdom of God is where Jesus is!

The Kingdom of God is here!

That is not to say it is the *totality* of the Kingdom,

but it is to say that it is the portion of the Kingdom

that we are presently to be concerned with.

That *Dynamite Power of the Holy Ghost*

is not for discerning the times and the seasons of Jesus return

but for gathering as many into the fold as is possible

before His return!
That promised power is not for watching the clouds,
but for witnessing for Jesus.
Therefore, we need Jesus to redirect us in our *purpose*.
We need Jesus wants to redirect us to ***His Purpose***
witnessing with dynamite power
taking the stand for Jesus!
We need Jesus to send the light of His witnesses
to help us return to our mission to Jerusalem and the World.
What has happened is people are taking the stand,
but they are taking the stand for an eschatological viewpoint.
they are taking the stand as witnesses *for* the Holy Ghost,
for Holy Ghost power and *for* His gifts,
instead of *for Jesus!*

What are you doing?

So, to recap, that which we can know is too often set aside
by our pursuits into that which we cannot know.
As a result, we are no longer committed
to doing what Jesus told us to do.
We've been deceived!

What are you doing?

CONCLUSION: "*What If It Were Today?*" Mrs. C.H. Morris ~1912

1
Jesus is coming to earth again –
What if it were today?
Coming in power and love to reign –
What if it were today?
Coming to claim His chosen Bride,
All the redeemed and purified,
Over this whole earth scattered wide –
What if it were today?

Chorus:
Glory, glory!
Joy to my heart 'twill bring;
Glory, glory!
When we shall crown Him King.

Glory, glory!
Haste to prepare the way;
Glory, glory!
Jesus will come someday.

2

Satan's dominion will then be o'er –
O that it were today!
Sorrow and sighing shall be no more –
O that it were today!
Then shall the dead in Christ arise,
Caught up to meet Him in the skies;
When shall these glories meet our eyes?
What if it were today?
[Chorus]

3

Faithful and true would He find us here
If He should come today?
Watching in gladness and not in fear,
If He should come today?
Signs of His coming multiply,
Morning light breaks in eastern sky;
Watch, for the time is drawing nigh –
What if it were today?
[Chorus]