



Acts 1:12-26

“Healing A Deep Wound”

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The 6th Sunday of Easter

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“Following Christ from City Center”

ACTS 1:12-26 "HEALING A DEEP WOUND"

Witnesses To Ascension Obey = Wait On God 's Action!

1) 1:12-14 THE ELEVEN AND OTHERS AT PRAYER.

Response To Promises = Pray!

Obey

How To Receive Benefits Of 1:4-8, 9-11

a) vv.12-13 List Of Eleven Apostles In Three Clusters.

Faithful Jews: .75 Miles Max (Ex. 16:29)

12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey away;

Obey, When Waiting For God To Act, Pray!

13 and when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Lk. 22:12; 24:49, 53

1) Peter and John and James and Andrew, Acts 3-4, 12:2 (James) 2 Sets Of Brothers, Others, Tags

2) Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, Only First Three Mentioned In Acts, Formal Succession List

3) James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. 6:13-16, Jn. 14:22, Reordered List

John Listed Second, Last Cluster Has Designations

b) v.14a Unity And Prayer (What The Fully Instructed Do). The Fully-Instructed Seek God

14 All these, with one accord, DEVOTED THEMSELVES TO PRAYER, Lk. 11:2-4,9-13,18:1-8,21:36,22:46b

//6:4, Waiting + Prayer For Spirit/Return/Protection

a') v.14b List Of Other Disciples In Three Clusters. Women, Lk. 1-2, 8:1-3, 19, 23:49, 55; 24:10, 33

1) together with the women, 2) and Mary the mother of Jesus, 3) and with his brothers. 12:17, Mk. 3:21, 6:3; Jn. 7:5

In Lk./Acts Prayer Is Setting For Guidance

2) 1:15-22 JUDAS' FATE AND THE NECESSITY OF A REPLACEMENT (12).

Big Problem! = Circle Broken, Complete Number For Jewish Mission

a) vv.15-16 The Necessity Of Scripture.

120 Men = Sufficient For Local Sanhedrin

Irony: Peter As Denier! First Speech Men And Women Count!

15 In those days Peter stood up among the brethren 22:31-32 Peter Restored From Failure

(the company of persons was in all about a hundred and twenty), and said, God Guides History

16 "Brethren, it was necessary (edei) for the scripture to be fulfilled, God's Purpose, Lk. 22:32, Ps.41:10

which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David, 4:25

concerning Judas who became guide to those who arrested Jesus. Lk. 22:3, 47, 54

Was Judas Fated? Only After The Fact?

b) vv.17-20 Judas' Fate (Falsely Accuse Righteous One), Two From Psalms.

12:23, Jn. 12:4-6, Ministry/ Service (1)

17 1 For he was numbered among us, and was allotted his share in this ministry (Gk. diaconia = service).

18 2 (Now this man bought a field (farm) with the reward of his wickedness; 2 Sam. 20:10

and falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out. Wis. 4:19

19 And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Lk.'s Aside (vv.18-19)

so that the field was called in their language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.) Aramaic

1:18-19(Betray Righteous, False Charge), Mt. 27:3-10(Betray King), Papias (False Charge)

20 2' For it is written in the book of Psalms, Double Meaning: Farm/Office

Lost farm 'Let his habitation become desolate, and let there be no one to live in it'; Ps. 69:25 (LXX)

Lost office 1' and 'His office (Gk. episkopen = oversight) let another take.' v. God's Enemies, Ps. 109:8 (LXX)

Office/ Oversight (2)

a') vv.21-22 The Necessity Of Replacement (Lk. 22:28-30: Mission 12 To Israel).

Qualifications, No More Apostles In This Sense

21 1 It is therefore necessary (dei) that one of the men who have accompanied us Larger Pool Of Followers

2 during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, First Hand, Zeugma (A-Z)

22 2' beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us- Lk. 3:23, Acts 4:33

1' one of these men must become with us a witness (Gk. martura) to his resurrection." Witness/ Martyr (3)

Strong Doctrine Of Over-ruling Providence

1') 1:23-26 THE ELEVEN AND OTHERS AT PRAYER (Symbol Completed).

a) v.23 List Of Two Candidates.

Brothers James Not On List (Jn. 7:5)

23 And they (i.e. the community) put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.

Lk. 6:13-19, Acts 1:8, Church Proposes, Jesus Chooses

b) vv.24-25 Prayer For Guidance And Discernment.

AND THEY PRAYED and said, Lk. 10:2 For Laborers: Address, Ascription, Petition = You Choose!

24 "Lord (i.e. Jesus), who knowest the hearts of all men, show which one of these two thou hast chosen Dt. 8:2

25 to take the place in this ministry and apostleship (Gk. apostolais) 15:8, Officially Sent Out (4)

Missed destiny from which Judas turned aside, to go to his own place." Euphemism, Lev. 16:8, Not After Pentecost!

(See Ex. 18:14-25, Num. 27:12-23 On Model For Supplemental Leaders)

a') v.26 One Chosen (By Jesus!) To Complete The Twelve Through Casting Lots. Prov. 16:33

26 And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias; and he was enrolled with the eleven apostles. 6:1-7

A Brief Treatment Of Acts 1:12-26

This thought unit- the second in Acts- gives insight into the workings of the earliest community as they wait in prayer for God to act upon them in the gift of the Holy Spirit. The inclusion which sets the boundaries of the unit are two: 1) *devoted themselves to prayer* (v.14) // *And they prayed* (v.24a), and 2) a listing of the *eleven* (v.13) // *the eleven apostles* (v.26). The thought unit is a 3:1 concentric pattern in three paragraphs: 1) vv.12-14, 2) vv.15-22, 1') vv.23-26). Judas' defection and the necessity of a replacement is quite literally the central concern (2b. vv.17-20). Four terms describing the multiple roles of the twelve are invoked: 1) *ministry* (Gk. *diakonia* = service) in vv.17, 25a; 2) *his office* (*episkopen* = oversight) in v.20c, 3) *witness* (*martura* = testimony) in v.22b, 4) *apostleship* (*apostolais* = one sent out) in v.25a. The twelve are leaders who serve the community Jesus created and are send out as official witnesses of his life and resurrection. All were long-term, eyewitness companions of Jesus. Together they guard the tradition.

That the community is obedient is indicated in v.12 as they return to the upper room to wait as Jesus commanded (Lk. 24:49). Parallel lists of disciples (v.13, 14b) frame a unity and prayer report (v.14a). The list of Luke 6:13-19 is slightly rearranged; Judas is now absent. First are two sets of brothers (v.13b), then four others (v.13c), then three with qualifiers to distinguish them from others of the same name: James *the son of Alphaeus*, Simon *the Zealot*, Judas *the son of James*. The risen founder is now absent, but the followers remain as his witnesses. The gathering also includes *the women* (Lk. 8:1-3) who were at the cross and saw where Jesus was buried, Jesus' mother Mary, and his brothers (See Mk. 6:3 for four: James, Joses, Judas, Simon, who were not followers during the ministry and so not eligible [Jn. 7:5].) The community is inclusive of male and female, early and late followers, the called and Jesus' family. Their unity is in their relationship to Jesus as demonstrated in continuous prayer. We soon learn the gathering totals one hundred twenty (v.15b), enough for a local sanhedrin/council; that women are included in the count is at variance with current Judaism. This community is the true fruit of Jesus' life.

The central paragraph (2. vv.15-22) is a 3:1 concentric pattern (a-b-a') with *it is necessary* (v.16a/v.21) as a bracket. It is Peter's first speech. Jesus designated twelve from his circle as a potent symbol of his mission. Israel of old was composed of twelve tribes, each led by a patriarch; God's renewed people also have twelve leaders, which puts Jesus in the place of Yahweh! The symbol has been temporarily shattered and must be restored for the mission to Israel. This is a necessity, meaning *required by God*. As with all events in Jesus' life, even the betrayal is in continuity with the God's will as witnessed in Scripture properly read with David as a prophet (v.16). That Judas was a full participant is clear in his being *numbered among us* and *allotted his share in this ministry* (v.17). His fate, according to current understanding, fits the crime. Those who betray the righteous with false charges are judged by God so their insides are exposed (Wis. 4:19, 2 Sam. 20:10). The land purchased with the betrayal money is aptly named *Akeldama*, translated for non-Aramaic speakers as *Field of Blood*. Two Psalm quotes indicate Judas has become an enemy of God whose plans were forfeited (v.20b, Ps. 69:25) and whose treachery will not frustrate Jesus' mission (v.20c, Ps. 108:8). Judas is easily replaced from one of two disciples who are long-term witnesses (vv.21-22). The literary model Luke uses is the choice of supplemental leaders in Exodus 18:14-25 (p.15). There will be workers for the harvest. Evil will pierce but not disable the church.

The final paragraph (1' vv.23-26) shows how the community participated in the decision. They vetted the qualified, then prayed for Jesus- who alone was qualified- to make the choice. Judas' horrible choice and even more horrible judgment are bluntly recorded, *from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place* (v.25b). Judas missed his destiny; Matthais found himself in a new role. The church goes on!

HEALING A DEEP WOUND

“All these, with one accord, devoted themselves to prayer...”

A sign something big is about to happen.

A C T S 1 : 1 4 a

The story is told that Leonardo DaVinci painted *The Lord’s Supper* while living in Milan. Before he could paint the thirteen figures, models had to be found, each with a face that expressed DaVinci’s vision of the apostle he would represent. It proved a tedious task.

One Sunday in the cathedral for Mass, the master saw a young who fit his notion of how Jesus must have looked. Pietri Bandinellito sat as the model for Jesus.

Years went by; still the painting was not complete. Da Vinci could not find his Judas. He was on the look for a man who face was marked with despair, wickedness, greed and sin. Ten years after starting, he found an imprisoned man whose face had the qualities. Consent was given, and he sat as the model for Judas.

Leonardo worked feverishly, but as the work went on, he noticed changes in the prisoner. His face was filled with tension, his bloodshot eyes filled with horror as he gaped at the likeness of himself on the canvas. One day da Vinci sensed the man’s uneasiness so greatly he asked, “What seems to trouble you so?”

The man buried his face in his hands and sobbed. He then raised his head, “Don’t you remember me? Years ago I was your model for the Lord Jesus.”¹

The next time you see *The Last Supper*, examine the faces of Jesus and Judas; they are the same man. Pietri might have once have looked like Christ, but he became like Judas, a change so deep he was not recognized by one who studied every feature of his appearance only a decade earlier.

No one is saved against their will; none are dragged into the kingdom of God, and no one is restored without an ongoing response to God’s grace which yields the

¹ Brian Cavanaugh, *More Sower’s Seeds* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1992), 23-24.

fruit of a changed life. Trust in Christ is a transforming relationship with real effects. Salvation is not a thing we possess as if it were a deed to a piece of property. It is not a static status but a dynamic relationship and requires the ongoing participation of both parties. Jesus' superior side is utterly reliable; he alone has the love and power to heal us totally, and will if we surrender to his friendship and Lordship. "Here, I am, Lord. I'm yours. You know the mess. Do what I cannot do for myself. Give me a new heart and new desires. Make me into a new man because this old one is making me weary." I not only recommend this prayer; I pray it often after forty-one years of being a disciple and wondering why I'm not any further along than I am.

On the other hand, rejecting Christ and his benefits is always a possibility as long as we are free in any real sense and as long as cooperation with evil is a live option. As long as there is a devil, and as long as I am capable of sin and treachery and a hard heart and self-deception, I need to live in holy sobriety, not that Christ will reject me but that I, like Judas, could be seduced and lulled into abandoning him and turning away to another path, something perhaps with more immediate security and less trust. So take no comfort that once you said *Yes* to Christ unless you are walking with him and saying a fresh *Yes* every day. He is always the initiator in this relationship, but we must follow by responding to his invitations. To stop responding to his probing offers of love is a dangerous path. He does not change, but we do.

One of the points of doctrine that distinguishes us children of John Wesley from some of our Baptist and Reformed friends in the Calvinist camp is the issue of perseverance, or as it is popularly titled, *once saved, always saved*.² It is intended to highlight the faithfulness of Jesus, that he is fully able to save us, and with that I agree, but what it omits is the ongoing freedom and necessity of human response. The grace that saves us is the same grace that upholds our freedom to reject the grace that is offered. God protects our capacity to say *No*. God desires to save real persons, not robots. We do not have to take the ongoing medicine that heals our souls of this systemic and deadly disease called *sin*. We can refuse the transfusions of grace at any time and thus begin again the slide back into the illness from which we've been rescued. Like a course of antibiotics, salvation is a curative process, and we must take the medicine over the whole of our lives, and if we resist the care and wisdom

² For a review of this position, see Roger E. Olson, *Arminian Theology: Myths and Realities* (Downer's Grove, ILL, IVP, 2006); for a sharp, polemical angle, Roger E. Olson, *Against Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), also Jerry Walls and Joseph Dongell, *What I Am Not A Calvinist* (Downer's Grove, ILL: IVP, 2004).

of the Great Physician, we regress; we slide backwards.

Judas is our prime example of one who said *Yes* to Jesus' call initially, but who later opened his life to darkness and its consequences. He was not destined to this fate from the beginning but freely yielded to the temptation to sell Jesus out. There is grace sufficient to save us, but we must draw on it and walk in it, not presume upon it and think that we can play with sin and evil without consequences. Peter's denial was the frailty of cowardice revealed in a moment of testing, whereas Judas' sin was greater; it was an active cooperation with the Evil One that required planning and treachery. It was a conspiracy in the truest sense, one that darkened his mind against all the mercy he'd seen in Jesus over the years. The final consequence of this course of action is to despair of grace and think ourselves beyond repentance. That's what finally killed Judas. Not his betrayal, bad as it was, but the lie he believed about it. To say *There is no forgiveness for me* is colossal arrogance; no sin is greater than the cross of Jesus, including the despair of suicide. A moment after death he must have said, "What a fool I've been! I was duped."

In his book *Methodist Doctrine: The Essentials*, Dr. Ted Campbell of S.M.U. writes, "In affirming the possibility of losing faith and justification, Methodists reject the doctrine of 'eternal security' taught in some churches."³ No one is lost over trivial issues or human frailty and understandable weakness. It's not the solitary action that severs us. It is repeated decisions and the cumulative consequences they carry that matter. Christ is faithful and able to save to the uttermost; that is our confidence. But we dare not presume upon him by ignoring the means of grace that keep us in the faith or by flirting with sin and evil. Having ones name on a baptismal certificate or on a church roll is a lie and a deception if you are not presently walking with Christ and letting his fellowship change you. It is a fraud, and one in which too many of our Methodist members are trusting. To put the name "Main Street" in your obituary when you've chosen not to be here for years is a lie against Christ and his church. I do not particularly like having to do the funerals of such persons, but with church membership go certain legal rights, one of which is Christian burial, and I do the best I can to honor Christ, speak the truth in love, and reach out to the family with care and grief counseling and home visits and prayer. But at some point one has to say, "Life would have been better had they been faithful. What a loss to them and this church." That is not a judgment on their future, which is up to God who is merciful beyond human knowing; it's a statement about missed opportunities.

³ (Nashville, TN: Abington, 1999), 60.

Jesus is merciful to all who call on him, but he is no man’s fool for those who live as if he doesn’t exist. It is the church *as a body* that is saved and individuals to the extent that they are in Christ and in that body. Persons who turn to Jesus at the end can be saved; the thief on the cross proves that.⁴ Persons who walk long with Christ can also be lost; Judas proves that. God’s grace is amazing and abundant, ever-persuasive, but it is not coercive, and so the only way to be sure today is to stay sure every day. Put your trust in Jesus Christ; keep it there; cling to the community that bears his name; live every day in holy fear and reverence with the sobering knowledge that you are still capable of great evil and real treachery. Every day is a new battle, and every day the grace of God is available to carry you through.

A Diverse And Unified Community (vv.12-14)

Because of much of our art, we often picture Jesus surrounded by *the twelve*. They were the new, restored Israel. Twelve tribes and twelve patriarchs, now twelve apostles- all men, or else the symbol would not work.⁵ What we often miss is that Jesus’ traveling band was much larger and more diverse. There were *the women*- Mary Magdalene and others-⁶ and also a larger pool of men who’d been with Jesus from the beginning and from whom Joseph and Matthias were drawn. On one occasion, after the sending out of the twelve, Jesus sent out seventy, so we know the entourage was larger than just Jesus and the twelve whose names are so familiar.⁷ Then there was the family of Jesus, his mother who was at the cross, and his four brothers who were not followers during the ministry but are now included,⁸ most likely because of a resurrection appearance to James.⁹

⁴ Lk. 23:43.

⁵ On Jesus choice of the twelve as a living symbol, see Darrell L. Bock, *Who Is Jesus?* (New York, NY: Howard, 2012), Chapter 3, “The Choosing Of The Twelve: The Power To Restore,” 39-47; for a technical treatment Scot McKnight, “Jesus And The Twelve,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 11 (2001), 203-231.

⁶ Luke 8:1-3.

⁷ Luke 10:1ff.

⁸ John 7:5, Mark 3:19b-21, 31-35.

⁹ I Corinthians 15:7.

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It was a diverse community: men and women, family and friends, those who'd been with Jesus during his entire public ministry and those who knew his early years in Nazareth. They were like the crowd at a funeral, held together by their relationship to one person, a hundred and twenty in all. In Jewish tradition, a hundred and twenty men were necessary to form a council, but here in the new community of Jesus women also count.¹⁰ Here is a new model of partnership, and all these, with one accord, devoted themselves to prayer. We also know from the end of Luke that time was also given to praise in the Jerusalem temple.¹¹ Prayer and praise, listening to one another, coming to terms with the defection of Judas and waiting on God to fulfill his promise that they would receive divine power for the mission ahead: this was the ten day agenda. It was the retreat before the advance. Jesus told them to wait, but a merely passive waiting it was not. It was an active waiting, a refusal to act independently before the Spirit came, a waiting on God with one another in prayer, and undoubtedly in much conversation.

The risen Jesus has ascended, the Spirit has not yet come, and they are left in an upper room with one another. The Lord created a laboratory of vulnerability. Two things were critical: 1) that they wait on the Lord in holy *unbusyness*, and 2) that they depend on one another. What they knew of Jesus they now have to work out face to face. Some bad poet church wrote, "To live above with saints we love, O that will be a glory; but to live below with saints we know is quite another story."

"Yes Mary," confessed Peter, "I denied your Son. He has forgiven me, will you?"

"Yes, Peter," confessed Mary, "our family thought him crazy when he left our village and began wandering around with you bunch of vagabonds.¹² We didn't understand? Will you forgive us as well?" It must have been something like this.

It is hard to do that in an hour of Sunday School and an hour of worship once a week. That is why we have Wednesday night suppers and talents shows and prayer vigils and such. We must not be strangers to one another. To give us only an hour a week between eleven and noon and then rush home is to short circuit the depth of community Christ desires to create in our midst for the sake of his mission. We are

¹⁰ Charles Talbert, *Acts* (New York: Crossroads/Herder, 1997), 30.

¹¹ Luke 24:53.

¹² Mark 3:19b-21.

not there yet. There are still too many at Main Street who carry hurts and suspicions from old church spats for us to claim much unity of heart or spirit. We are not yet a united people, but by God’s grace we are moving in that direction. *Holy unbusyness*, dealing with one another up close, coming to terms with diversity: it’s holy and hard work indeed. Even for those closest to Jesus it took ten days. They got to know each other, warts and all. Before there was *outreach* there was *inreach* to one another and *upreach* to God in prayer and praise. Church health is a prerequisite for church growth.¹³ They had to love if they were going to make much impression on the world outside the upper room. When people feel listened to and cared for, the complaint quotient and the gripe factor go way down. The Spirit has new vessels to fill.

Dealing With A Deserter (vv.15-22)

It is a sad thing when any Christian takes a moral or spiritual tumble, but the consequences for the church are greater when a Christian leader rusts out, burns out, or sells out.¹⁴ The most sobering moment Annual Conference each year is when we gather as clergy to vote on ordinands, and in the same meeting vote pastors out who have violated our standards of conduct.¹⁵ Every year there are losses, and when the vote is taken I tremble. I then go back and read my vows out loud before the Lord as a reminder of the sacred promises I took and the help I need to keep them.

There was an issue that would not go away. Judas ripped the fabric of leadership and shattered the symbol of the new Israel. Eleven would not do. So after days of prayer Peter was moved to stand and speak, not out of any moral superiority but precisely out of the known fact of his own failure and restoration. He was, in the memorable phrase of Henri Nouwen, a *wounded healer*. It fell to Peter to strengthen the church by interpreting what happened to Judas and what it meant for him to be judged by God.

In reading this section on Judas we must exercise a certain theological sophistication. We believe there is a divine necessity to the unfolding of history; it

¹³ Christian Schwarz, *Color Your World With Natural Church Development* (St. Charles, IL: Church Smart Resources, 2005).

¹⁴ James 3:1.

¹⁵ *The Book of Discipline 2012*, Para. 2702, 776.

is going somewhere under God’s guiding hand, which is why we pray, “Thy kingdom come....” to mark history’s end and new beginning. God is at work to bend events to his own appointed ends and uses human freedom without apology as part of the mix. God is able to outflank all our free choices, even the most wicked. And the revelation of that larger purpose is found revealed in Scripture when it is read through the lens of Christ’s own life.

Who would betray Christ? Someone for sure, but just who would be was a blank until Judas filled in his name by volunteering for the task under the force of temptation. He became the weak link. That Judas was numbered among the twelve and given a share in the healing and deliverance ministry of Jesus was not a sham. He did not have to sign up or sell out; he was not under divine compulsion; he was not rigidly predestined. It could have been someone else. Even John Calvin, for all his emphasis on the sovereignty of God, wrote: “Judas may not be excused on the ground that what befell him was prophesied, since he fell away not through the compulsion of the prophecy but through the wickedness of his own heart.”¹⁶ There was a compartment in Judas’ inner life that he sealed off from Jesus’ touch.

As Peter and others reviewed Scripture afterwards, there were fragments of two psalms that illumined the tragic story of Judas. He had betrayed the Righteous One with a lie and received a fitting punishment.¹⁷ He had separated himself from the others and tried to establish his own security through the purchase of real estate, but he only succeeded in separating himself from life itself. Spiritual betrayal and independent acquisitiveness are mirror images of mistrust. If I no longer trust the Lord and his followers, then I break fellowship and become an independent. It’s not a good deal. Judas was doubly vulnerable. As one of the twelve he was high on

¹⁶ Quoted in John Stott, *Acts* (Downer’s Grove, ILL: Inter-Varsity, 1990), 55.

¹⁷ See Charles Talbert, *Acts* (New York: Crossroads/ Herder, 1997), 32-33 for a creative (and convincing!) solution to the apparent contradictions between Matthew 27 and this account. In Jewish tradition the punishment fit for the betrayal of a king is to hang oneself on the model of 2 Sam. 17:1-23, thus Matthew who presents Jesus as a rejected king. For one who betrays a righteous man by false accusations the typical punishment is to be thrown down and for the entrails to burst open, as in Wisdom 4:16-19 and Josephus, *War* 11:3-4, para. 447-453. Thus Acts 1:18-19 is less a history of Judas’ death and more a statement of how Luke views Jesus as a righteous martyr, whom God vindicates in resurrection and in the punishment of his enemy, i.e. Judas. This is charted in the appendix at the end of this sermon (p.16).

Satan’s hit list as one of Jesus’ lieutenants; as a loner he was easy prey. Christians outside of fellowship are no match for the Evil One, who- as Peter reflected in his first letter- *prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour*.¹⁸

It must have been difficult for the core leaders, now termed *the eleven* because they were one short, to hold together in one head and heart the fact that Judas started with such promise and ended with such horror, his belly ripped open from a fall. They traveled together for three years, but now they didn’t know him at all. He was gone forever, and the language that Judas *had gone to his own place* was a polite euphemism for ultimate separation from God.¹⁹ For the symbol of twelve to have integrity again, his slot had to be filled. If they were who Jesus made them, Israel restored, then the gap had to be filled, but who? And what were the required credentials? It was a leadership issue, one that required the discernment of the whole community. God will provide leaders for what he calls us to do if we pray and wait and discern together as these did.

The qualifications were straightforward. Whoever was chosen had to know the Jesus story from baptism through resurrection as an eye-witness. Only so could the accuracy of the revelation be preserved. It is the Jesus story that is determinative for the church; it is in this solitary life that we believe God to be revealed most fully and most truly. Which is why the Four Gospels, and saturation in them, ought to be the first obligation of any Christian. Four portraits; one life. Four perspectives; one revelation. God’s quadraphonic speaking. Choose a gospel and saturate your thinking and praying in it. It will make you a radical, one who goes to the root of issues and is not content to live on the surface. When you finish all four you will be a different person, with transformed affections and new priorities. You will have become a disciple of this man Jesus, and you will learn to hear him speak.

Let me say this carefully. You and I matter greatly to God, but not ultimately, and that is not a contradiction. The purposes of God are not held hostage to any one person. God will save the church, and me along with it if I choose to cooperate with the workings of grace. But if I forsake the Lord and my calling, I can quickly be replaced. The church is rooted in God and cannot be stopped by the failings or infidelities of any one person. You matter enough for Christ to die for you, but you

¹⁸ 5:8

¹⁹ Darrell Bock, *Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007), 89.

do not matter enough to put even a small dent in what God promises to bring to pass, which is a kingdom where Jesus is utterly vindicated and all sin and evil expunged forever. It is coming, either with me or in spite of me.

God has given us everything in Christ and bridged it across the years by the presence of the Holy Spirit in and through the church. It is not God who is lessened in any way by my rebellion but me alone till I become such a distortion of a human being I am fit only for the refuse heap of the universe. The Bible gives us no hope for Judas. We are not his judge, but his fate is portrayed in such a way as to warn us all not to follow him. Life is for keeps; your decisions really matter; temptations are real; the devil is on the prowl looking for strays and loners; turn to Jesus anew every day and never voluntarily turn away from him and go your own way in foolish independence. There is no secure place in the universe apart from Jesus Christ and his people. You are so important, but you can also be so easily replaced. God's work goes on, and God's kingdom will one day crash across the shores of this world changing everything once and for always, and this is why we sing. "O Lord, I want to be in that number, when the saints go marching in..." God wants you to follow Jesus with others and is working to that end, *but God's work will go on without you.*

The Importance Of The Divine Vote (vv.23-26)

The finding of Judas' replacement is a case study in discernment. There was a clear need. There was unified prayer in community. There was reflection on Scripture. There was leadership by Peter who framed the issue. Two were put forward by the people as a whole: verse 23, "And *they* put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias." That was as far as the church could discern; the two were equally fitted, but they could not see into the heart. The issue was not decided by majority vote. It was Jesus who chose the twelve, and it is the risen Lord who fills the gap through what I have come to call *the x factor*, the divine surprise, in this case through the casting of lots. They wanted the Lord's choice, and did not trust themselves as competent.²⁰

If we want to make quick decisions and head home for more important things

²⁰ See Danny E. Morris and Charles M. Olsen, *Discerning God's Will Together* (Bethesda, Maryland: Alban Publications, 1997) for a historical review of discernment and a contemporary model, also Ruth Haley Barton, *Pursuing God's Will Together* (Downer's Grove, ILL: IVP, 2012).

like a favorite TV program, Roberts Rules may work, but if the church wants to know the mind of God on a matter, other processes are required which are not nearly so cut and dry. To be efficient is not the same as being effective, and for the church to be effective we have to hear from God. It *takes time* to listen to God and to one another; it *takes patience* to search the Scriptures; it *takes humility* to admit that we don't run the church; it *takes trust* to risk hearing the word of God from another church member; it *takes faith* to believe the risen Jesus still speaks. And frankly, we don't have much practice in the matter. We turn our pastors into little CEO's and our lay leaders into business boards, more concerned with mechanics than spreading the faith. The Lord is left out, and is it any wonder we fall into decline? We need to ask Jesus to sit at the head of the table at Main Street Church and find ways to listen for his voice together. The best leadership helps the church listen by *pointing the way* and then *getting out of the way*. Peter spoke; the people nominated; the Lord voted!

The x factor. In this case it was the Old Testament practice of lots. It was a tool they inherited and used without resistance. But after Pentecost and the coming of the Holy Spirit, it's never mentioned again. It is replaced by prophecy, by divine guidance through circumstances, and through the guidance of dreams and visions, through consensus. Jesus is still speaking. Are we willing to listen?

So Matthias was elected and enrolled. Little did he know that when he began following Jesus he would one day be numbered among the twelve. But what of Joseph? Was he disappointed? At this point I find a story told by John Newton, the author of *Amazing Grace*, instructive. Newton once said if two angels were given assignments by God at the same instant... one to go rule over the greatest nation on earth... the other to sweep the streets of the dirtiest village, each angel would be completely indifferent as to which one got the assignment. It just wouldn't matter. Why? Because what God has us doing isn't the important thing. The important this is that we are doing what God wants. That is the idea of servanthood. Matthias was honored, but that does not mean that Joseph was dishonored. That takes real maturity, what the saints term *holy indifference*.

Conclusion

Conclusion: We the church are *an alternative community*, set both in and over against the world as a sign of judgment and of hope. We are *ruled* by the risen Lord, *served* by successors of the apostles, *gathered* in prayer and worship, *attentive* to the Scriptures, *in unending conflict* with the forces of evil and sin within and without,

Acts 1:12-26 14

ever-dependent on the grace of God, *continually sobered* by our own capacity for error and betrayal, and a *launching pad* for God’s mission to notify the world about the astounding new of Jesus Christ. We are the oddest of all people, a gathering only God could hold together. What an honor that in this community all our particularities and peculiarities are welcomed. Mother Teresa said it best:

“By blood and origin, I am all Albanian.
My citizenship is Indian.
I am a Catholic nun.
As to my calling, I belong to the whole world.
As to my heart, I belong entirely to Jesus.”²¹

Come to the table today. Receive the Lord Jesus as he give himself to you in bread and wine, to be digested into the details of our life.

²¹ Gaukroger and Mercer, *A-Z* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1997), 59.

OLD TESTAMENT LITERARY MODEL (Genre, German *Gattung*)
“The Choice Of Supplemental Leadership”
(Demonstrates Luke’s Use Of His Bible, The Septuagint [LXX])
C. Talbert, *Reading Acts*, 22

Components	Exodus 18:14-25, Num. 27:12-23	Acts 1:12-26, Later 6:1-6
1. Problem/ Crisis	<p>Workload:</p> <p>Moses is unable to continue judging alone on the bedhoin chieftain <i>solo</i> model. Justice is compromises; conflict is high.</p> <p>Ex. 18:14-18, Num. 27:2-14</p>	<p>Fractured Identity:</p> <p>Judas’ defection breaking the symbol of the New Israel (12)</p> <p>Acts 1:15-20</p>
2. Proposed Solution	<p>Choose others to judge the people on the majority of concerns; big stuff goes to Moses</p> <p>Ex. 18:9-23, Num. 27:15-17</p>	<p>A replacement must be chosen so the symbol of Jesus is restored</p> <p>Acts 1:21-22</p>
3. Qualifications	<p>Fear God, Trustworthy, Hate Bribes</p> <p>(Theological, Ethical, Cultural Pressure)</p> <p>Ex. 18:21, Num. Num. 27:18-21</p>	<p>With Jesus from the beginning (Baptism) through the Ascension</p> <p>(Disciple/Eyewitness Criteria)</p> <p>Acts 1:23-26</p>
4. Setting Apart The New Leaders	<p>Moses chose able men, appoints them over different size groupings (1000, 100, 50, 10)</p> <p>Ex. 18:25, Num. 27:22-23</p>	<p>Propose Two, Pray, Cast Lots, Enrolled in the Twelve</p> <p>Acts 1:23-26</p>
5. Outcome	<p>People judged rightly, Hard (Supreme Court!) cases to Moses, Justice done, Peace restored (to people, to Moses’ family!)</p> <p>Ex. 18:24-27</p>	<p>Community Reconstituted. Now wait for Father’s promises of the Spirit/Power for mission</p> <p>Acts 2:1-21</p>

COMPARISON OF PETER AND JUDAS IN MATTHEW’S GOSPEL

	<u>Peter</u>	<u>Judas</u>
1. Under a curse of their own making	26:74 (third denial, curse added to oath)	28:4 (innocent blood)
2. Both are remorseful	26:74-75 (weeping, Joel 12-13)	27:3-4 (remorse + actions, 26:24)
3. Treachery of both foretold during Last Supper (forgiveness, 26:28)	26:30-35	26:20-25
4. Both resist Jesus’ words	26:30-35, 69-75	26:26 (“Is it I, Master?)
5. Re-gather with others	28:16-20 (implies forgiveness)	Now dead by suicide.

Judas went back to the temple, now no longer the place of God’s presence or forgiveness. He sought forgiveness through his co-conspirators but not the disciples or Jesus. He was turned away by shepherds with no care for the sheep. Jesus does not turn away repentant sinners. What Judas craves is found only in him.²² Judas’ mistake was to act as judge, jury, and executioner in his own life. Better to weep than to hang.

COMPARISON OF ACTS, MATTHEW, AND PAPIAS ON THE MEANING OF JUDAS’ DEATH²³

1. THE THREE ACCOUNTS OF JUDAS’ DEATH IN EARLY CHRISTIANITY.

<u>Matthew 27:1-10</u>	<u>Acts1:18-20</u>	<u>Papias (early church father)²⁴</u>
Sorry he betrayed Jesus	Judas bought a field/farm	Died from much swelling after great torment
Returned the money	Fell headlong and burst open	in his own place, burst asunder, bowels scatter.
Hanged himself		
Leaders use money to purchase Gentile cemetery		
Hakel-dama (Jesus’ blood) + Scripture	Hakel-dama (Judas’ blood) + Scripture	

Matthew and Acts agree that Judas died a violent death and was connected with the “Field of Blood.” Attempts to harmonize these accounts have not been successful but contrived and artificial. A more fruitful approach is to see them as alternative traditions dealing with various perspectives on what is appropriate for the death of such a sinner. Various models or literary types existed in the culture.

2. THE TYPE OF DEATH FITS DEPENDING ON HOW THE CRIME IS UNDERSTOOD FROM TRADITION.

<u>Matthew 27:1-10</u>	<u>Acts1:18-20</u>	<u>Papias</u>
Jesus is Davidic king (1:1, 2:2)	Jesus as the Righteous One, 23:47	Draws from the Lukan tradition.
Judas death is betrayal of a king.	a. Judas betrays righteous blood	Judas as traitor who makes false accusations
2 Sam. 17:1-23 Ahithopel betrays David. His advice is not followed; he hangs himself.	Fall to ground, Wisdom 4:16-19 “God dash... to ground”	In <i>Ahikar</i> , traitor Nadin swells up and dies.
	b. False accusations Insides spill out.	Josephus, <i>War</i> , 11:3-4. 447-53, Catullus, the Roman governor makes false accusations, dies miserably, entrails fall out of body
Judas dies as the betrayer of a king.	Judas is a false accuser of the Righteous One.	Judas dies as a false accuser.

²² David E. Garland, *Reading Matthew* (New York, NY: Crossroads, 1993), 255.

²³ Adapted from Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Acts* (New York, NY: Crossroads, 1992), 31-32.

²⁴ Fragment 3, “Judas walked around in this word a sad (literally *big*) example of impiety; for his body having swollen to such an extent that he could not pass were a chariot could pass easily, he was crushed by the chariot, so that he bowels gushed out.”