

SERMON NOTES: MAY 5TH
SCRIPTURE READINGS: ACTS 1: 1-11, JOHN 16: 16-42

THEME: We begin a study of Acts. Luke starts in Jerusalem with Jesus' farewell to his Disciples and ends with Paul teaching in a Roman jail. Luke doesn't end with PAUL'S DEATH. His last recorded words:

Paul welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming God's Kingdom teaching about the Lord Jesus with boldness, without hindrance Paul didn't quit till his heart stopped. All the Disciples died but the JESUS MOVEMENT kept going. The last chapter of the EARLY CHURCH is the first chapter of the LATER CHURCH. Christianity is CONTINUED IN US.

THE WAIT WAS ALMOST OVER...Disciples had been in PERPTUAL WAIT MODE since Easter. Jesus popped in/out of rooms. Was he coming or going? Their wait was almost over. The future scared them. What would happen next? They had a BIG STORY to tell. Yet notice what they ask him as he leaves: WILL YOU NOW RESTORE THE KINGDOM TO ISRAEL? He had been with them 3 years but instead of being ready to share the Gospel with the world, they are focused on private agendas and small nationalistic dreams. They weren't ready to preach. They needed maturity. They clung to the JESUS THEY KNEW. Wouldn't we have begged him to stay?

THE CHOICE JESUS HAD...this was his hardest choice: he had to leave them to remain with them. He left them PHYSICALLY so he could be present SPIRITUALLY. He equipped them by cutting them loose. He was more powerfully present in the Holy Spirit than during his earthly ministry.

THE JESUS MOVEMENT...it may sound strange, but the Church had to get past Jesus. They could never BE A PART OF HIM until he became a PART OF THEM. Ready or not, they had a BIG JOB to do: to be his witnesses in the world. They'd soon pick up his torch and carry his message beyond the little world that they'd known. Jesus would be WITH THEM-not the WAY HE ONCE WAS- but in POWERFUL NEW WAYS. If Jesus is going TO BE PRESENT in the world, we are THE WAY HE CHOOSES to do it.

GOD IS UP TO SOMETHING BIG...our God is always doing new things. He sends us into the world WITH GOOD NEWS and AS GOOD NEWS. What could be more exciting than knowing JESUS IS COUNTING ON US? God is always up to something big, but it isn't CHURCH BUSINESS AS USUAL. Where is God at work in our lives, in the tragedies/joys of this world?