

Amity Bible Church

“Knowing God and Making Him Known”

Sunday Bible Study

Series: Preparing the Church to Leave the Building

September 10, 2017

Text: Acts 1:12-18

Theme: When God is preparing His church for ministry, the hardest task may be waiting for God to do something.

Central Message:

The central message in this lesson is that God prepares the church for its mission, but He expects the church to wait until that preparation is complete. We are not equipped in and of ourselves to do anything for God. In fact, God will use us, but He does not need us. He wants our availability...not our ability.

Lesson #1: When God gets ready to do something through us, He first has to do something within us. (Acts 1:12-15)

After Jesus ascended into heaven, the eleven disciples stood gazing into the sky. They were shocked back into reality by two white-robed figures who told them that, just as they saw Jesus ascend into heaven, He would return in much the same way.

The disciples and a group of about one hundred and twenty others went into the upper room to wait and to pray. Jesus had promised that He would send his empowering Spirit in a few days. They would only receive the power for ministry if they waited. In our own lives and ministries, we believe that God is going to do something if we wait, but the hardest part

for us is the waiting. Waiting becomes more tolerable when we choose to pray while we wait. Praying demonstrates our dependence upon God. Prayer changes things but it does not always change our circumstances. More often than not, the change is *in* us. God wants to do something through us, but first He has to do something *in* us. Prayer is one of His tools.

Lesson #2: When God gets ready to move in the church, He raises up the minister before He raises up the ministry. (Acts 1:15a)

God was preparing Peter to stand up from His very first encounter with Him. Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee and He saw two brothers, Simon and Andrew. Jesus invited both men to follow Him and they immediately left their nets to go after Him. Jesus told Peter right away what His task would be...to go from being a fisherman catching fish to a fisherman catching men.

When God was ready to release the Israelites from bondage, God raised up Moses to lead His people. When Moses had completed the task that God have given him to do, and the people were ready to go into the Promised Land, God raised up Joshua. When the ministry is ready, God will raise up the minister.

Lesson #3: When God gets ready to move in the church, He will exercise absolute sovereignty over the leadership selection process. (Acts 1:15-18)

There are times when we wring our hands and obsess over the fact that God allows men and women to hold positions of high authority in the church and in the world who are unfit. Our responsibility is to recognize that we are citizens of two kingdoms, one temporary and the other eternal. God is absolutely sovereign in the leadership selection process in the church and in the government.

Jesus chose Judas. He chose Judas knowing that one day he would betray Him into the hands of His enemies for thirty pieces of silver. But just as God is sovereign over the selection process, He is equally sovereign over the dismissal process. When leaders have served their purpose, they are summarily dismissed.

The central focus is always on God's plan and purpose. Everything God does, including allowing the selection of despicable leaders, is with purpose. If it serves God's purpose, He ordains it to happen. We may not understand or agree with it, but God is working His plan and His purpose through others. It does not matter whether they are willing or unwilling. The only thing that matters is God's purpose.

Lesson #4: When God gets ready to do something, His program is more important than the people He chooses to carry it out. (Acts 1:21-26)

There are several things that are noteworthy about the process of selecting the replacement for Judas among the disciples. First, it should be noted that the entire process was bathed in prayer. This is a good lesson for the churches when they have important decisions to make or when leaders are being selected. The whole process should be bathed in prayer.

The disciples also paid close attention to Scripture. This is a good reminder for churches as they go through the leadership selection process. Leaders must satisfy the established biblical criteria in order to be considered for an office.

Perhaps the most significant factor in this whole selection process is that. After he was selected, Matthias was never heard from again. No doubt he played a significant role as one of the twelve disciples, but nothing is recorded in Scripture about what he did. The message in this seems clear. God's program is more important than the people He chooses to carry out that program.