**Acts 1 Sermon for Pomerado**

We will be focusing on Acts 1:8, but first let me give you some background to the Book of Acts and the themes in that book

1. **The Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts Or The Acts of the Holy Spirit.**

Acts of the Apostles could very well be called Acts of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 1:2 Instructions through the Holy Spirit.

1:4-5 Wait for the Holy Spirit.

1:7 Power from the Holy Spirit.

1:16 The Holy Spirit spoke the prophecies

2:1-4 The Holy Spirit falls on the apostles.

2:17-18 Pouring of the Holy Spirit prophesied in Joel.

4:8 Peter spoke, as he was filled by the Holy Spirit.

4:25 He spoke through David.

4:31 They were filled with the Holy Spirit and the house was shaken.

5:32 The Holy Spirit witnesses to the resurrection.

6:3-6 Those known to be full of the Holy Spirit chosen to lead.

7:55 Stephen was full of the Holy Spirit.

8:29 The Holy Spirit tells Philip to share with the Ethiopian Eunuch.

9:31 The Church strengthened and encouraged by the Holy Spirit.

10:19 The Holy Spirit tells Peter to go with the three Gentile visitors.

10:44-47 The Holy Spirit fell on Cornelius and his house.

11:28 The Holy Spirit tells Agabus about a famine in the Roman world.

13:2-4 The Holy Spirit set apart Barnabas and Saul for missionary work.

13:52 The disciples filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

15:28 The Holy Spirit influenced the decision of the Jerusalem Council.

16:7 The Spirit of Jesus prevents them from going to Bithyia.

20:22 Paul compelled by the Holy Spirit to go to Jerusalem.

20:23 The Holy Spirit warns Paul of danger.

20:28 The Holy Spirit makes and chooses elders.

21:11 The Holy Spirit tells Agabus how Paul will die.

Q: What does all this tell you? It tells me that we should be more aware of how the Holy Spirit works in our lives as Christians.

2. Acts is a story and it is a story of how the Church grew in numbers and spread across the entire Mediterranean basin.

Acts 2:41 Three thousand added that day.

Acts 4:4 The number of disciples grew to five thousand.

Acts 5:14 More and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number.

Acts 5:28 You have filled Jerusalem with your teaching. (Note, they have now completed the first stage of Acts 1:8)

Acts 6:7 The number of disciples increased rapidly and a large number of priests were obedient.

Acts 8:4 Those scattered preached the word wherever they went.

Acts 9:31 The Church grew in numbers throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria.

Acts 11:24 a great number of people were brought to the Lord.

Acts 16:5 the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers.

Acts 17:6 These men have caused trouble all over the world.

III. Jesus’ revolutionary vision.

Acts 1:8 A scary vision. Yet, that is what they did. (Note: wait for the Spirit)

Acts is not just a series of nice, unconnected stories. It is a record of a movement which, in the end, completely, absolutely, totally, forever, changed the world. It is hard for us to imagine how much they changed the future course of human (and eternal) history.

Logically, it makes absolutely no sense that a Jewish movement, led mostly by poor, uneducated people, from a relatively insignificant province in the Roman empire, with a world view diametrically opposed to that of the Roman/Greek world, following a leader who was executed at a young age—one who never wrote anything and who never left a 100 mile radius of his place of birth, who did not even speak Greek could do what none of the barbarians could do—conquer Rome.

This is what we need today. The only hope for this world is for us to change the world all over again. We need a new revolution like that we find in Acts.

Logically, we should not be able to do it, but they did.

Why did the church change the world in the first through third centuries?

1. Early on it was the incomparable zeal and personal conviction of those who had personally known Jesus of Nazareth and those directly influenced by these witnesses.

This was a Jesus movement. What do we learn from that?

2. Add to this the powerful truth-claims related to fulfilled prophecies, miracles and the resurrection.

The movement was based on truth-claims which were supported by evidence and which made sense. What do we learn from that?

As the immediacy of the events faded and as these influences naturally were reduced somewhat as well, why did the church continue its exponential growth? These two alone were not enough for Christianity to conquer the Pagan religions and Greek philosophy.

3. Because of the obvious and inescapable moral/ethical superiority of the adherents to this growing Christian movement.

4. Because Christianity answered the questions that thinking people ask far better than any other world view out there.

5. Because the Church gave meaning, purpose and dignity for both poor, the disenfranchised, the outcast, the women—something Greek and Roman society as well as Greek philosophers did not do.

6. Because it is the truth and God was behind this movement.

I. Early on it was the incomparable zeal and personal conviction of those who had personally known Jesus of Nazareth and those directly influenced by these witnesses.

This was a Jesus movement. Ours needs to be a Jesus movement. Our commitment needs to be to get people to know Jesus.

You cannot explain the explosive growth of the Christian movement without noting the effect of the person Jesus.

Acts 4:12-13 Fear to Fearlessness

“They took note that these men had been with Jesus.”

Why did Paul “become all things to all men.” Why did Paul make himself a slave of all so that he might win as many as possible?

Simple: He met Jesus on the road to Damascus. Acts 9:1-16.

The early Christians could not be intimidated. You kick them out of Jerusalem, they spread the word everywhere.

Christians flocked to persecuted cities.

For us: We need a personal encounter with Jesus of Nazareth.

We need to be a Jesus church.

II. Powerful truth-claims related to fulfilled prophecies, miracles and the resurrection.

You cannot explain the growth of the Jesus movement without the fact of the resurrection.

Acts 2:22-24 Gospel sermon:

Jesus fulfilled the messianic prophecies He is Messiah

Jesus worked signs, wonders and miracles He is Lord

Jesus was raised from the dead Repent and be baptized

I love doing presentations about the resurrection of Jesus. It answers just about every question. People say to you, well what about this contradiction….. What about divorce in the church…. What about this other religion….

Look at Acts 5:29-32 Again, it is the resurrection. “We are witnesses of these things.”

According to the OT the Messiah must:

Be born in Bethlehem

Be raised in Galilee near Nazareth

Be despised and rejected by men

Be meek and silent before his accusers

Be “pierced”

Be crucified

Have his garments divided and gambled over

Be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver

Come to Jerusalem to make atonement for sin in about AD 33

And many more….

Acts 26:24-32 Paul: You know it is true! It is true and reasonable.

III. The Church had ethical and moral superiority compared to the world. We HAVE to be different. We HAVE to stick out. There are a lot of loud voices out there. This was the case in the first century as well.

The church had a radical lifestyle. They were not weird. They went surfing and hung out in coffee shops, but they were unmistakably different.

Acts 17:5-9 These men who have turned the world upside down.

Acts 19:17-20 people burned their sorcery scrolls. 23f Confronting idolatry.

When the Christians came into town, the place was never the same again.

Our constitution is Matthew 5-7

Our bill of rights in 1 Cor 9

People will realize that if they become like us, the world will be very different. Amen.

“To them, every foreign country is like a Fatherland and every fatherland is like a foreign country..”

“Their peculiarity is not their strange clothes or lack of use of technology; their strangeness is their embrace of an ethic the world considers nonsense.

The Christians were what the Greek philosophers thought only a tiny fraction of the highly educated elite could ever be. They lived like true philosophers.

the Stoics and Epicureans philosophers felt that an honorable and ethical life was attainable only for the educated few, not for the uneducated masses. The church proved this expectation to be wrong.

The Roman philosopher/physician Galen pointed out this striking feature of the Christian church. He said that their teaching of “rewards and punishments in a future life” let do a lifestyle “not inferior to that of genuine philosophers.” To Galen, this fact was especially notable in the disciples’ “restraint in cohabitation,” “self-control in matters of food and drink,” “keen pursuit of [social] justice” and “contempt of death.”

What a great testimony the lives of these early Christians provided!

As early as the second century, Ignatius had to admonish the churches against using too much of church funds to purchase the freedom of slaves.

These folks had a vision which was so intense it was downright frightening.

That can be you.

The church in the first century had one advantage we do not. There was little “competition” from other Christian groups which were not setting a bad example.

What should we do about that? Dare to be different. Do not be weird and different for its own sake, but do not try to blend in to the religious milleau. Be like the early church.

IV We need to engage people with respect to world view. We have THE answer.

Acts 17:16-34

Paul confronted the Stoics and Epicureans of his day.

Theology and evangelism:

Notice Paul in Acts 17:16-34

v. 17 he reasoned in the Synagogue in the market and with the Greek philosophers

He found common ground. “I see that you are extremely religious in every respect.” v. 22

v. 18 He confronted Epicurean and Stoic philosophy of his day

v. 22f Paul expounded on Christian theology.

God is Creator. (v. 24, 28) He exists outside of Creation. (disproves pantheism and Stoicism)

God is close by. (v. 27 he is not far from us) (disproves deism and Epicureanism)

God is personal and has given us a purpose. (v. 27)

God will bring everything into judgment. Evil will be defeated (disproves dualism) v. 30,31

Paul quotes from Aretas, a Stoic Philosopher. “For we are his offspring.”

Finally, ¾ of the way through his treatise, he introduces Jesus.

He had to confront their idea of God before Jesus could make any sense to them.

V. The church gave compassion to the outcast, the poor, the disenfranchised, to women, the disabled and more.

We need to get out there and meet needs of one an other and of the hurting in the world.

Acts 2:44-45 All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling…

Acts 3:6-10 Silver and gold we do not have, but what we have we will give. In the name of Jesus, get up and walk. What a testimony. We do not have much but what we have we will freely give.

Acts 4:32-35 All needs were met.

Acts 5:12-16 Meeting needs, healing.

Jeremiah 22:15-16 Does it make you a king to have more and more cedar? Did not your father have food and drink? He did what was right and just, so all went well with him. He defended the cause of the poor and needy, and so all went well. Is that not what it means to know me? Declares the Lord.

Note: not just helping them, but defending their cause.

James 1:27 Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

A good example of incomparable Christian behavior and its effects on pagans is provided by the events surrounding the great plague which struck Egypt in the 250s. Eusebius “most of our brethren, by their exceeding great love and brotherly affection, not sparing themselves, and adhering to one another, were constantly superintending the sick, ministering to their wants without fear and without cessation, and healing them in Christ, have departed most sweetly with them.” He reports that elders and deacons joined in the work; many sacrificing their lives in order to care for the sick, both among the Christians and the pagans. They risked their lives to give a decent burial to all alike. “Among the heathen it was the direct reverse. They both repelled those who began to be sick, and avoided their dearest friends. They would cast them out into the roads half dead, or throw them when dead without burial.” Although many Christians died in this manner, in the long run the church in Alexandria actually grew faster than before, both because the disciples had a greater survival rate because of the care received and because of the wonderful example of the Christian lifestyle to the heathen.

Julian “the apostate.” (332-363) Reviving pagan religion

“Atheism (i.e. Christian faith) has been specially advanced through the loving service rendered to strangers, and through their care for the burial of the dead. It is a scandal that there is not a single Jew who is a beggar, and that the godless Galileans care not only for their own poor but for ours as well; while those who belong to us look in vain for the help that we should render them.”

Do you understand that this is a huge part of our evangelism program? Matthew 9:35-38

VI. Back to Acts 5:38-39. God is with us.

Truly, God did amazing things in their days, but he can do the same today. Do you want to be part of this?