

A Communion Meditation, DaySpring Baptist Church

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“The Act of Not Acting”

Acts 1: 1-11

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Jesus said, “**If I be lifted up... I will draw all humanity unto me.**” And he was... lifted up. And some folks point to the cross and some to an empty tomb and some to the sky. And they’re all right.

He’s lifted up into death...

... into life

... and into glory...

And because of it all, we are drawn to Christ... and Christ takes us into the reality of God. He’s lifted up and so are we. That’s the kind of theological vision Charles Wesley had when he wrote the last verse to *Christ the Lord is Risen Today*.

Soar we now where Christ has led... Alleluia.

Following our exalted head... Alleluia.

Made like him, like him we rise... Alleluia.

Ours the cross, the grave, the skies... Alleluia.

Made like him, like him we rise. He has been lifted up... on the cross, from the grave, to the skies... and all of it belongs to us.... The same path and the same destiny.

It’s a great and exalted vision, isn’t it?

Jesus lifted up...

you lifted up...

humanity lifted up.

It ought to take our collective breath away this morning... just like it surely did that at the Ascension Luke remembered for us. They were standing there in awe and wonder, which is what happens when we catch a glimpse of all that is beyond us. It’s humbling and expanding all at the same time and they were deep into both.

Then... they started walking back to town. And I’d be willing to bet a couple of them started talking... maybe some making plans even... about what they needed to do first.

They were just on cloud nine... their hearts had ascended to some other place... you know how that can be. And Jesus had told them they’d be going to the “ends of the earth.” And so in the excitement of the whole deal, some of them surely got to talking and planning... dreaming some about how to get on with the mission.

Peter’s casting a plan... Matthew’s taking notes... that sort of thing.

Then someone... probably one of the quiet ones, like Thaddeus, said, “**We can’t do that... not yet... he told us to go and wait. Remember... he just said we had to wait... that’s all.**”

“**Yeah...**” James responded, “**but maybe we should get some plans in the works... and maybe have some trial runs for a revival or something... maybe a mission trip... do some networking**”

“Or maybe...” Thaddeus jumped back in insistently, **“we should just do what he said and stay in Jerusalem and wait.”**

Which is what they did... they waited... He'd said it'd be a few days... what is that, three? That's a few, right? And... that's how long he'd been gone before, so... on day three they're expecting something huge but nothing happens. Just more waiting...

Day five... day six... Day seven... just a lot of waiting. No witnessing like he said... just waiting...

It's interesting isn't it? The book of Acts begins with the act of not acting. That's interesting. The whole narrative is about all the Church is going to do... out there... but the first thing they do is wait. Luke's gospel says they were praying daily... but just how long can they do that without getting on with things.

“Someone needs to do something...” I'm sure some of them were thinking that... praying is fine but the world needs saving. Sitting and waiting, is okay, if you're into that sort of contemplative thing...

but there injustices to fight...

and there are wrongs to right...

and there's just so much to accomplish...

Ladders to climb.

Journeys to make...

Waiting seems like a waste and would have been real difficult for most of us. And praying that long... worshipping that much??? As Marva Dawn wrote, **“It'd just feel like a Royal Waste of Time.”** Just sitting there in prayer.

It's what some of us start thinking on Sundays when the silence goes too long. We can't just enjoy it... we start thinking...

“Who's next... what's next?”

You all start looking over at me...

“Is Burt worried... does he know who's next?”

You know how you are.... **“She's praying too long... we're not going to get out of here until 12:07...”**

Some of you look at the front of the worship guide... **“Christ is risen??? Easter was a month ago... lets get on with things...”** We're always moving to the next thing, aren't we? Always reacting, responding, figuring, and fixing... Get in, get out, get on with your life.

We really don't know too very much about waiting. ... Especially, when we've been so inspired by something so exalted as the Ascension. We've got a vision and it's time to get on with it. Make something happen...

And of course, that's the problem. We're always prone to want to make something happen. That was really the first sin in the garden. Adam and Eve eat the fruit to get a jump-start on growing up... So they could know what they wanted to know... and know it right away. Maybe make something happen there in the Garden.

The first act of the Apostles was not to act. That was the spiritual prescription that Jesus gave his friends. Which is to say that something important would happen as they waited... like

maybe learning, **“That if they were going to go into all the world and preach a gospel of grace... they’d better learn up front that their ability to do that was also grace.”**

They couldn’t go... in their own ability, with their own schemes, under their own power and then stand up at the pulpit and tell hungry people that salvation comes as a free gift from God.

“You guys go back to Jerusalem and wait.”

Waiting is *not... nothing...* though... is it? Waiting is, spiritually speaking, the activity that must proceed our activity. Have you tried it??? Ever??? Gotten still enough, long enough, to listen?

Become insignificant long enough to let your agendas die? Let your dreams fade? It’s hard, isn’t it... not to be in control of your life... And for some of us, not to be in charge of fixing the world.

There’s a reason the earliest church made Paul become a student first for a number of years before they sent him out. I suspect he needed to go out ... too much. And just like he’d ravished the Church as a Jewish zealot... he’d have still been ravishing folks as a Christian zealot and so The Church, in its wisdom, said, **“Wait.”**

“Your first act... Paul... is to not act.”

I’d be willing to bet, it didn’t set well with him, as smart and as capable as he was... as driven as he was. Don’t you imagine that some wise disciple made him learn the first Beatitude? **“Paul, the Lord said, ‘Blessed are the poor in Spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven’. You just go meditate on that for a couple of months... and don’t talk while you’re at it... You talk too much Paul.”**

And he’d go meditate on being poor in spirit... that first thing... that you have to get to your own nothingness... your own insignificance... your own incapability... your own need and when you arrive there at the bottom... then and there everything that matters belongs to you. If you can let yourself do nothing and be nothing... just repent your way down... descend down into that... you’ll have all you ever really need.

Apparently... Paul eventually got it. So... in time he could write about glorifying in his own weaknesses. Taking delight in his brokenness... because that’s where the grace gets in... In the cracks in our lives and holes in our buckets... In stories that aren’t perfect and Mondays that are sometimes just a mess.

The more in need we are, the more of God’s love we can know. The Church along the way even spoke of that “happy fault” ... our sin. Our sin and our awareness of it... leading us right into the reality of God. It’s such a paradox that leads us to love. A humble glory. Is that what Bach was trying to say in *Jesu, Joy of Man’s Desiring*, when he wrote in conclusion “soaring, dying, around the throne.” Ours is **“The cross... the grave... the skies.”**

Your need is your entrance into God. Your descent is the beginning of your ascent. Your hunger is your invitation to God’s table of grace... where you meet the one who is the **fullness of God filling everything in every way.**