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Easter 7 • Acts 1:12–26 • June 1, 2014

Paul Raabe
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, raabep@csl.edu

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true God. Jesus is the man to whom Paul referred, the one whom God raised from the dead. The resurrection would have certainly been another new teaching in contrast with the philosophers’ understanding of death as the end.

Verses 17:32–34 are not included in the reading for the day, but it is important to note that there were some who pondered Paul’s words and were brought to faith in Jesus Christ. Among them was Dionysius, who Eusibius identifies as the first shepherd of the diocese of the Corinthians.

**Preaching Suggestion**

The preacher could use this text as an opportunity to help equip and encourage the saints in the pew to be ready to give a defense of their Christian hope. He can bring in parts from the Gospel reading to encourage the hearers primarily that they are never alone in this world. Christ has not abandoned us for we are baptized children of God (Epistle for the Day). Because the Spirit of truth dwells within us, we are encouraged to give a defense of our faith when asked. One does not need to have a theological treatise in hand in order to give a defense. Rather, like Paul, we can reflect on God’s work in our lives (Psalm of the Day, Psalm 66:8–20), and simply tell the story of God who became human, like one of us, in Jesus Christ and the wonders he has done and continues to do.

This is also an opportune time to encourage building non-judgmental relationships with those with differing worldviews. Get to know them and find out what shapes and forms their thinking and outlook. When God provides the opportunity to share Christ, they will have a better understanding in order to tailor the gospel message. After all, you catch more flies with honey than with vinegar.

Michael J. Redeker

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The word ὁμοθυμαδὸν (with one accord) recurs in Acts. It can be used to refer to the unity of the opponents (Acts 7:57; 18:12; 19:29), but here it stresses the unity brought about by Jesus, in the teaching, confession, and prayer, shared by the followers of Jesus (Acts 1:14; 2:46; 4:24; 5:12; 8:6; 15:25). This emphasis on unity in Acts 1:14 correlates with the gospel lesson of John 17:1–11, where Jesus prays for those whom the Father gave him, that they may be one even as Jesus and the Father are one. Acts 1 records the beginning of the fulfillment to Jesus’s prayer.

Peter as the first among equals then proclaimed to the group of about 120 believers. He began with the vocative, “Men, brothers.” He spoke to males who are now “brothers.” Whereas in verse 14 “brothers” refers to Jesus’s natural brothers, here it refers to “brothers” in the faith. Jesus creates the family of God so that he is our “brother” and we are “brothers” with him and each other. Peter explained that the Old Testament Scriptures had “to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before hand by means of the mouth of David.” The Scriptures are inspired by the Holy Spirit, and he spoke them by means of human instruments. In this case Peter was referring to Psalms 69 and 109, both Davidic psalms.

The story of Judas Iscariot is revealing in many ways, two of which are these. First, it shows the resistibility of the grace of God. Jesus himself had called Judas and numbered him among the twelve. Yet, Judas betrayed Jesus. His story serves as a warning to every follower of Jesus to “take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor 10:12). It calls for daily repentance and faith in the forgiveness of sin. Second, the story of Judas fulfilled what God himself had foretold. Even something as dark as that episode ultimately was not an unforeseen accident. The two psalms (69 and 109) focus on the hostility faced by David, the anointed king, and thereby also on the greater hostility faced by the new and greater David. Yet God will vindicate his anointed king, both the OT king and the NT King. We should not pit “rectilinear” and “typological” against each other. Both psalms refer directly to both the OT type and the NT antitype. David, inspired by the Spirit of the Messiah, was speaking as the OT occupant of the Messiah’s office. Psalm 69:25 emphasizes that not one of the Twelve will continue Judas’s hostility. Psalm 109:8 prays that another person would take the wicked leader’s επισκοπή (office, overseership).

It was important that they have twelve apostles to match the OT twelve. God has one covenant people of God, including his OT people built on the twelve sons of Israel/Jacob and his NT people built on the twelve apostles, with the Messiah Jesus as the chief cornerstone for the entire people of God.

God fulfilled the prayer of Psalm 109, not in a magical way, but through the responsible decision and action of the remaining followers. Only two men met the requirements necessary for being an eyewitness of Jesus’s public ministry from the baptism of John until Jesus’s ascension. The record of Jesus’s public ministry was given and normed by eyewitnesses. Peter says that the man selected by God will be “a witness of his [Christ’s] resurrection with us.” When we bring the Christian message to people it is not enough to speak only of ideas. We must speak of history. For we do not follow cleverly devised myths. The bodily resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth is as historical as
his crucifixion under Pontius Pilate, attested by eyewitnesses. God chose Matthias to serve as an apostle and official eyewitness together with the other eleven.

Sermon Idea

The sermon could develop the theme “Built on the Twelve Apostles.” Our text narrates how Judas Iscariot was replaced by Matthias. It was necessary that the church have twelve apostles to correspond to the twelve sons of Israel/Jacob. For the church is built on the foundation of the twelve apostles, with the Messiah Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. You, by faith in Jesus the Messiah, belong to the new Israel. And this Messiah was crucified and bodily raised for you. That is not a myth but historical, testified by the official eyewitnesses of Jesus’s public ministry, such as Matthias. That is also good news for you, a promise and guarantee that you will inherit the eternal kingdom bodily together with all of God’s Israel.

Paul R. Raabe

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Pentecost • Numbers 11:24–30 • June 8, 2014

Gift giving frequently accompanies celebrations. The birth of a child, the joining of man in woman in marriage, confirmation, graduation, and the like are all occasions for giving and receiving gifts. Some gifts are received with great joy and gratitude. Some gifts have caused recipients to express gratitude while simultaneously thinking of how that gift might be re-gifted or returned because the gift is a duplicate or not what was really wanted.

The Israelites, as we see earlier in Numbers 11, were dissatisfied. Actually, they were more than dissatisfied. Their grumbling and complaining and anger with God was at a level that would have seemed more appropriate had a pandemic struck their community or had the Egyptians returned and killed most of them. Those gifted with freedom from slavery, with God’s visible presence with them on their journey to the Promised Land in the fire by night and cloud by day, and with manna fresh every morning, were not one bit pleased. They were ungrateful. What did they lack? Nothing. What did they want? Meat, fish, cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic. Granted, any simple meal would be more appealing if it was accompanied by juices from roasted meats and seasoned with savory vegetables. Ungrateful hearts see not what they need and have but what they want and lack.

How did Moses, their leader, deal with their ungratefulness? The anger of the Lord was ablaze and Moses was “displeased.” It can be frustrating when a pastor cannot please the people because what the pastor has to give the people do not want, and what the people want the pastor does not have to give. We are tempted to side with Moses and add our displeasure to what pours out from the heart of God’s servant. Moses is charged with leading these people and yet the people do not respond to him, and we naturally wonder, and even demand to know, what God is going to do about it.