

“And So It Begins...”

2 Kings 2:1-11; Acts 1:1-11

June 2, 2024

Introduction

- For some reason I missed the “enjoy exercise” gene
- I don’t really like it BUT I need it.
 - o So about two years ago, I got a trainer.
- She’s really neat and she doesn’t take much guff from me
 - o She tells me what to do and I do it trusting her expertise
- So, we do circuits, a series of 4-5 exercises that you do in a cycle.
- Usually, we do each exercise 3 times but sometimes she makes me do 4.
- But, you see, I don’t know exactly what we’re going to do at the beginning, I don’t at least
 - o So, we get to this point in every session where I want to know, “Is this the last rep or is there another?”
 - Sometimes she answers me, sometimes she leaves it ambiguous.
 - But, believe me, when I ask, I want to know the answer.
- Natalie, as she delivered Ben, pushed for over 3 hours.
 - o As she was going through it, she would ask the doctor, “Am I close to being done.”
 - To which she would always answer, “You’re doing so good, sweetheart” or something like that.
- We all want to know when the difficult times will be over, it’s only natural
 - o If we know how long we must endure, it fortifies us, strengthening us in a way.

The State of the World

- Right now, as we look at the state of the world, we might be wondering, “How long must we endure?”
 - o With political season in full swing and nasty rhetoric and dirty tricks reign supreme and we find ourselves at odds with our friends and our neighbors.
 - We wonder – How long must we endure?
- Believe it or not, that puts us right in line with those earliest apostles and disciples of the church that were gathered with Jesus here at the very beginning of Acts.
- They, too, wondered how long must they endure?
- So, they gather with Jesus and, they ask him directly, ““Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”
 - o Here, their minds were filled with Old Testament prophecies like were found in Amos
 - There, they read about what would happen when the Messiah came.
 - They were looking quite specifically for the resumption of a KINGDOM of ISRAEL that would be strong and triumphant again.
 - o So, their hopes very clearly are on that.
 - o They’re ready to stop losing and start winning.
- The Historical Condition
 - o Israel had a brief period of world dominance under Solomon but, since that time, with divisions and wars and life in exile, the Kingdom of Judah was weak and without allies
 - o In fact, they’d been conquered by the Romans and now existed as a satellite state of the Roman Empire.
 - o This wasn’t an easy domination. There were taxes, the resentment that came after the Temple was sacked, there were bad times here.
 - o So, the people wanted to know, “Is now the time?” “IS the suffering over.”
- They ask Jesus this and his response, well, it may be left them feeling still like a statue of desire. Why? Because he doesn’t answer their question directly.
 - o Instead, he tells them – “It ain’t for you to know!”
- And, as we’ve talked about, nothing can lead to greater internal distress than NOT KNOWING!

- Make no mistake about it, this warning of Jesus is one that he's uttered before, I believe.

End Times

- Sometimes, the church or its' members have become obsessed with figuring out when the end will arrive.
- While it's an understandable curiosity, it's one Jesus gently warns us not to concern ourselves with here.
- But He makes it even clearer in Mark 13.
 - o **Mark 13:32-36** – *“But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake. Therefore, stay awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning—lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake.”*
- It is very clear; these things are above our paygrade.
 - o Yet you're still going to hear people speculate.
 - Let them, just stay unconcerned with what you hear because you've heard it from Jesus yourself now twice.
 - Not our deal.

Okay, so it stinks, we've just got to deal with the difficulty.

- DON'T MISS THIS – This is why we have church
 - o We live in difficult times that, if we're to hear the Bible clearly, will only get, MORE DIFFICULT as it gets to the end.

But, and, thankfully, there's a pretty big BUT, we have something to make it all better.

The Holy Spirit

- Jesus tells us about this Holy Spirit and man are we going to hear about that Spirit next week, call it Pentecost act 2, if you will.
- Jesus tells us that we are going to receive a blessing and BOY do we.
- The Role of the Holy Spirit is to testify alongside with us.
- Because this passage has a definite instruction
 - o YOU WILL BE MY WITNESSES
- The Third Wall in television
 - o Jesus is looking RIGHT AT YOU AS HE SAYS THESE WORDS

Witnesses

- We are called to sacrifice our lives, to present them to God ready to be used to His glory
 - o And where is His glory to be found most clearly?
 - When men and women find themselves taken by His Spirit introduced to the Gospel by men and women, exactly like ourselves.
- The very ends of the Earth
 - o This is part of the Grand Commission, that is to say, we've got a job to do and we need to be doing it now at a higher rate than ever before.
- Acts of the Apostles is all about the mission of the church, to make disciples.