

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Acts 1:12-14; 2:1-8; 2:36-41

- (Read the Text) From time to time, it serves us well to remember why we do what we do, what it is that we are to do, and how we succeed at it.
 - *A hurricane had struck. People were huddled together. An old preacher was praying with great oratorical effects in the midst of this violent storm, crying out "Send us the spirit of the children of Israel, the children of Moses, the children of the Promised land." At this, an old man with less oratory but more directness prayed, "Lord, don't send nobody. Come yourself. This ain't no time for children."* English & oratory thrown to the win, but call is clear.
 - Live in a day when our need is for the Lord. There are more lost people than ever & there are seemingly more saved people. Add to this, we have more resources than ever & yet less baptism. On church consultant says, "There is no discernable pulse or no vital signs in the church in America."
 - A Church in Washington DC closed its doors & put this sign over it "Out of business--forgot what our business was."
 - Could it be that we have become so:
 - Comfortable in our local churches that we have become an exclusive CLUB of "believers (like us) only." New generation makes us so uncomfortable because they are too animated, not church broken, sit on my pew, & crowds my class room. Have we become so comfort & exclusive that outsiders can come, but they have to know the local rules?
 - Cultural in nature that should an honest seeker walk thru the door, He cannot connect. Do we have so many 'buzz words' & expectations of lost people that they are not just lost spiritually but rather lost in the culture of the church? Inside the 'belt-way', have we lost our connection?
 - Complacent- This begs a couple of questions: First, do we believe that people are actually lost? Or have we lost the concept that if we don't reach them, they'll spend eternity in Hell? Do preachers advance this by not preaching on horror of hell? When we don't hear about something & are not reminded, we forget & become complacent.
 - Could it be that we, the church, are so wrapped up in our own "little world" that we have forgotten about "HIS WORLD, CREATION, and PEOPLE?" The question which follows is this: Have we forgotten our business?
 - I Believe that we, like the 120 in upper room, are placed here to make a difference/ HOW do we do this & what do we need?
1. PRAYERS OF THE SAINTS – The left the Mt of Olives & went to the upper room for the purpose of praying. The disciples had good spiritual instincts. Through the good times, bad times, intimidated, hurt, & even threatened; they resorted to prayer & prayed through.

Making a Difference – Pg 2

- Suggest they didn't use "rote or standard" prayer. Probably didn't have all the 'right' words (**ILLUS:** blessings of life, sick, missionaries, those to whom it is our duty) Real prayer is pouring our heart before God/Jer 33:3
 - Jim Cymbala tells the story about their prayer service. The sound at their meeting is more like a cry to God. They live in Brooklyn, NY.
 - D. Jeremiah's knew the power of their prayers so when he was diagnosed with cancer, he requested them to pray for HIM
 - Spurgeon is quoted as saying "The best style of praying is that which can only be called a cry." How long since you cried out to Father? Not so dignified but dramatically. I submit, it was the last time you felt helpless. Contentment has a way of taking one's pray life to the point of being dignified, homogenized, & pasteurized; some would say petrified!
 - Could it be: the reason pulpits are so power-less & pews are so listless is that the prayer altars are so tearless? Could it be that the reason so few are getting saved that so few are concerned enough to weep in prayer?
 - CHURCH BODY IS ONLY AS STRONG AS PRAYER LIFE of the membership.
 - We say this country needs a spiritual awakening, or say the "church needs", or Christian needs. To make a difference, we need prayer.
2. PRESENCE OF THE SPIRIT – With the small crowd praying in upper room for quite a while, it was all of a sudden, a sound was heard. Those who think God does best work in silence need to hear this. This was a sound like that of a tornado and candidly, it is a rare thing when a great movement of God done in silence. (Illus. Exo 14:21 Moses stretch out hand over red sea-- "strong east wind"; EZE 37- dry bones—rattling as the wind came from back of the valley.) God the Holy Spirit had arrived!
 - How will we know when we pray thru?/ I believe the wind of God will blow through. As far as I can determine from scripture, generally, God moves in where He is welcomed in. Truth is, too often too many Churches, & too many Christians don't really care to have the dominating presence of Almighty God because something might have to change. Today, it seems we are suffering from a deficiency on His sufficiency. We need His presence.
 2. POWER OF THE SOVEREIGN - This is one of many reasons I like Acts 2. I love the language part! Why? It is something only explained by God! There was no gibberish. There was nothing "unknown" about it. It was simply that God gave a gift which was required to confirm the believers, and to convict & convert non-believers. Here's the best part; when we Pray thru & sense His Presence, we become endued with His Power, and new things begin to happen. The supernatural becomes the natural, the abnormal becomes the norm because the environment is changed!

Making a Difference – Pg 3

- Did you realize that turning water to ice is impossible? In days past, it would have been thought 'magic'!!! But inside a freezer, it is the norm.
- This generation has never seen all that God can do. We need His work!
- 4. **PASSION OF THE SAVIOR-** Jesus' words were & are, "See the fields." He saw the people, and not the already convinced. He saw Zacheus, Nicodemus, the Woman at Well, the adulterous, the rich young ruler, and he even saw Pilate & Judas wanting to offer eternal life to them. He saw the multitudes and was moved with compassion.
- Now, empowered by that same spirit, these 120 or so believers led 3000 to faith in the Lord. There was no speaker system, no 3 pt outline, no ppt, no music, no 'playing the song while everyone closes their eyes; it was simply the gospel & the saved people telling the lost people how to be saved.
- All of us have passion--but for what does that passion exist? How about for Jesus and bringing people to Jesus. I submit we are missing an opportunity.
- Jesus' passion was for Jerusalem. He wept & prayed over her. What is your passion? Our Passion must be His passion if we are to be a member of Great commission Church? If we are to be a Great Commission Church, it is required that each one becomes a GC Christian! Suggest to you that when we make reaching people our passion then we have touched the heart & intent of Christ Himself. And, at that point, we will make a difference.
- We live in a crazy culture. We must make a difference. God's call to us is a Great Commission challenge and it requires of us some sacrifice.
- In the early 1900 the pastor got all got dress, came to church building early, and rung the church bell. This was the thing to do because people would hear the bell & come to worship. Somewhere along the way they stopped coming. Today, amid rapid transportation non-believers are no longer coming to find answers. Yet in large measure, we are still standing in the church building ringing the bell & wonder why we are so ineffective.
- One of the priceless programs in the Andy Griffith TV Show occurred in the early life of the series. Following the death of his wife, Sheriff Andy Taylor decided to invite his spinster Aunt Bee to come live with Opie and him, thinking that she will add the missing feminine touch. Surprisingly, Opie is not too pleased for Aunt Bee to come in and try to "replace" his mother. Andy tries to help the situation by inviting Aunt Bee to go fishing and frog-catching with them so that Opie can become attached to her. Instead, she fails miserably at fishing, frogging and later football. Finally, late at night, after Opie is in bed, Aunt Bee talks Andy into taking her to the bus station. Opie hears her crying beneath his bedroom window and guesses that she is leaving. He runs down the stairs and to the truck exclaiming, "We can't let her go, Pa, she needs us. She can't even catch frogs, take fish off the hook, or throw a football. We've got to take care of her or she'll never make it."