

Acts 1:1-9

“Be Prepared”

Do y’all know this song?

“Should I stay or should I go now?  
Should I stay or should I go now?  
If I go, there will be trouble  
And if I stay it will be double  
So come on and let me know  
Should I stay or should I go?”

Written by Joe Strummer & Mick Jones,  
performed by The Clash, “Combat Rock,”  
Universal Music Publishing 1982

This song was written by Joe Strummer and Mick Jones, and performed by a little band called The Clash back in 1982. Church, What is the name of the song? (pause) “Should I stay or should I go?” In this morning’s passage Jesus and the disciples are facing this same question. Should I stay or should I go? They are both left to figure out who is asking them to move. They are both left to figure out what being faithful to God’s calling actually looks like. They are left wondering, “What am I supposed to do?”

This morning’s passage takes place after the crucifixion. Jesus has been killed, buried and three days later Jesus rose from the grave.

Amen? **Amen.** Jesus has presented Himself to the disciples on several occasions over a span of 40 days. Jesus has given specific instructions to the disciples. Then Jesus is taken up in cloud, and disappears from the disciple’s sight. I think the word play is very interesting. The passage begins with Jesus presenting Himself to the disciples, and appearing to them many times over 40 days. However, in verse nine Jesus is taken in a cloud. There is a difference between choosing to be some place and being taken away. I think this is another example of Jesus being faithful. Jesus had chosen to reveal Himself to the Disciples. Now Jesus is allowing Himself to be taken away. In this passage I think Jesus is not only giving directions to the disciples - I think Jesus is setting an example for the disciples to follow. (pause) When the Holy Spirit calls us to move; we should move. When the Holy Spirit calls us to go; we should go. And here’s the thing. It is not a matter of “if” the Holy Spirit calls. The Holy Spirit is always calling. The question is will we stay or will we go?

The disciples have been following Jesus for three years. They clearly have this idea Jesus is coming to restore the Kingdom of Israel. However, they have still misunderstood the reason Jesus came to be Emmanuel, God with us. So Jesus tells them to stay in Jerusalem and wait for the promise of the Father. John Baptized with water, but you will be baptized by the power of the Holy Spirit (v4-5).

Sisters and brothers have you ever noticed there is a difference between waiting and doing nothing? (pause) We have probably all felt like waiting was doing nothing, but it does not have to be. Waiting can also be preparing. By a show of hands, how many of y’all played sports in middle school or high school? What did you do with yourselves in the off season? Did you lay around the house like a big old lazy dog? (pause) Or, did you work on your sport so you could be even better the next season? (pause) That’s what I mean when I say waiting does not have to be doing nothing. Waiting can be preparing for what God is about to do next.

How did the disciples spend their time waiting for the promise of the Father? The disciples spend the time between Jesus’ ascension and the coming of the Holy Spirit taking care of some household business, addressing odds and ends and praying for the guidance of the Holy Spirit (1:12-26). The point is they did not sit around doing nothing. They were trying to get prepared for whatever the Holy Spirit would call them to do. Then the Holy Spirit fell upon the disciples at Pentecost and the disciples became conduits for the power of the Holy Spirit. They became like wires or pipes in your house to deliver God’s grace to those who needed to hear it most. The disciples are equipped for the work by being able to share the good news of Jesus Christ to the world.

The trouble is the disciples did not go right away. They stayed in Jerusalem. The disciples struggled with that question, "Should I stay or should I go?" Then persecution came and the followers of Jesus Christ were driven from the city. Perhaps that should be a lesson to all of us. If we drag our feet when God calls us to move God will find other less pleasant means of moving us along. The question for me is what do I need to be doing to be prepared when the Lord calls me to serve? What does our church need to be doing to be prepared for God calling us to get up off of our pews?

How many of y'all know people who profess to be Christians who refuse to do anything without a clear, burning bush, kind of sign from God? (pause) They say, "if" God calls me, I will go. Do y'all know people like that? (pause) Are we that kind of people? (pause) This morning we sang "Here I am Lord." Did you notice we changed some of the words? (pause) Yeah. We did. We changed the lyric from "if" you lead me, to "**WHERE,**" you lead me because God is always calling us. God is always leading us down the roads God would have us to walk. There are but two questions we need to answer. Will we stay or will we go? Are we prepared to make that choice? Some spend so much time worrying about these questions. They think if I go down that road it will be hard, and there will be lots of trouble. While others want to jump in every direction but the right direction for fear if they stay right where they are there will be double the trouble they had before.

My brothers and sisters, why is it we have such a hard time following God's direction for our lives? (pause) Why is it we have such a hard time responding to the call of Christ given power through the Holy Spirit? Could it be we are poor listeners? Could it be we have not prepared for what God is calling us to do? Perhaps we should take a page from our Scouts this morning.

Scouts learn first aid, knot tying, camping skills, how to use a map and compass, and entrepreneurial skills selling Girl Scout cookies or Boy Scout popcorn. Scouts learn to sew on their own patches, iron their own uniforms, to dress for the job they want, and a host of other valuable life skills. Scouts prepare for what life will look like when they are adults. Scouts prepare for life by developing a strong work ethic, and work to become physically strong, mentally awake and morally straight.

Perhaps we the church, need to do a better job of preparing for the work God is calling us all to do. How many of us intentionally spend time in God's word? How many of us search the Scriptures for the messages God would have us to hear? How many of us are too uncomfortable to pray publicly and won't make the time to pray privately? How many of us know the voice of Jesus when He calls us? Only those who prepare for the calling hear it clearly. Only those who prepare are ready to drop everything and go. My sisters and brothers, when the time comes we should be ready to run. Like a fire fighter with all of their gear hanging and piled in the most efficient way to head out for a fire we need to be prepared for what God is calling us to do. We need to hear God as clearly as we hear the siren go off here in Denton when the fire department is about to roll out. There should be no hesitation. There should not have to ask, "Should I stay or should I go?" There are children at the elementary school who need lunch buddies. There are children who need socks, underwear, food and school supplies. There are people going to the South Davidson Family Resource Center who need food, clothing and help with their power bills. SDFRC is looking for people right now to go and pick up food from the Second Harvest Food Bank three days a week. There are the people of Siloam United Methodist Church who are trying to raise the money to rebuild. There are people in this community who need to hear and see the good news of Jesus Christ. (pause) God is calling. God is calling right now? Are we prepared to go? (pause) Are you prepared to go? (pause) We sure better get prepared.

In the name of Jesus Christ,  
Amen