

Sermon Date: July 21, 2013
The Story of God: The Bible as Narrative
Prequel to the Book of Acts

In the book of Acts, “The presence of Jesus haunts the whole story” (NT Wright). It is the story of Jesus present, alive, known through the Holy Spirit. It’s not God far off, but God in continuing relationship with His followers. It sets the stage for the story of how God becomes present in centuries of followers from here on out. The landscape may look different for us today, but the human heart is the same today as it was then, with same needs, longings, desires, and with a God shaped vacuum. The story of Acts is the story of us. Change the scenery from thousands of years ago, yet the story is still playing out.

1. Throughout time God has given us a contiguous story that explains Him and Explains His desire to relate with us. “God is glorified, He is seen accurately for who He is when we relate as the Trinity does.” What does that mean to you?
2. Keeping in mind that Luke is the author of both Luke and Acts, read and reflect on Luke 24:44-53.

Overview:

- *The book of Acts is 28 chapters long; however it can almost be divided into 6 or 7 major parts.*
 - *After Jesus ascended, the promised Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49) is poured out on the new believers in Jerusalem (Acts 2:1-47). The New Covenant message is firmly established in Jerusalem as commanded by Jesus (Luke 24:49 & Acts 2:3) and the Christian church is birthed.*
3. Read and reflect on John 20:49-22
 4. Notice in Luke 24:49 and Acts 1:3 Jesus’ words that they remain in Jerusalem for the initial pouring out of the Holy Spirit.
 - *Faith in Jesus Christ and the promised Holy Spirit starts with a small band of ragamuffins in Jerusalem, include Gentiles and spreads like wildfire to outer regions to reach “the ends of the earth.”*
 - *Below is an outline that represents a frame and structure for the movement of faith in Jesus and growth of the church from Jerusalem to outer regions, i.e. – “the ends of the earth.”*

- *Acts 1:1-6:7: Pentecost - the Holy Spirit given. The Word is **established** and the church birthed in Jerusalem.*
- *Acts 6:8-9:31: The New Covenant message **expands** beyond Jerusalem. The church is growing and on the move, being **extended** beyond Jerusalem's borders.*
- *Acts 9:32-12:25: The message of salvation through Christ is **expanded** to include Gentiles. The Word is being offered, given and **extended** to include Gentiles. The church is growing and on the move.*
- *Acts 13:1-16:5: The message is **extended** and **expands** Cyprus & Asia Minor as momentum builds to spread the gospel message "to the ends of the earth" (Matthew 28:19).*
- *Acts 16:6-19:20: The message continues to burst out the seams, **extends** and **expands** out to more regions to Greece.*
- *Acts 19:21-28:31: The gospel message, salvation in Christ continues to the ends of the earth as it **extends** and **expands** to Rome.*

5. The verses below could be considered transitional points sandwiched between the shifts as stated above. Look up these verses and find a common theme:

- Acts 2:42, 43, 44, 46-47
- Acts 6:7
- Acts 9:31
- Acts 12:24
- Acts 16:5
- Acts 19:20
- Acts 28:30-31

6. Consider how this theme applies to us as part of this story, part of the "ends of the earth."