

5/14/2023

**“STAY FOCUSED”**

**Acts 1:7-8**

**7 He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.**

**8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”**

SPECIAL MUSIC:

“Turn Your Eyes”

Celtic Worship

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2M958SHs1Qc>



## **THE SAILOR AND THE CAPTAIN**

The sun was low  
The sea was calm  
No land in sight  
The air was warm

I looked at the chart  
On the bridge of the ship  
Measured our course  
And thought for a bit.

Then I called for the captain  
“We can save time  
If we change to this course  
And we follow this line.”

The captain stood fast  
As if I'd not spoken,  
Hand to his beard.  
I felt a bit broken.

It was as if  
I had stepped from my place  
And said something I shouldn't,  
Having fallen from grace.

His gaze never broke  
But there was something inside,  
Finding restraint  
Though he had nothing to hide.

Slowly, he turned to me  
Looked me straight in the eye  
And said, "Stay the course,"  
And left nothing implied.

"But captain," I said  
As I spoke out again.  
"We have nothing to lose  
And all is but gain."

Again, he turned to me  
Looking me straight in the eye  
And said, "Stay the course,"  
My suggestion denied.

In utmost humility  
I begged ask him why?  
Knowing he need not answer  
Nor try to justify

His decision  
To the likes of me  
A simple, plain sailor

**A true want-to-be**

**The captain stood silent.**

**His patience had grown short.**

**But he knew that my question**

**Came from my heart.**

**He slowly returned**

**To watching the sun**

**Slip the horizon.**

**The night had begun.**

**And then Without turning**

**He said this to me**

**“You see the map,**

**But I know the sea.”**

**Legacy occupations are very hard on most children. Do you know what a legacy occupation is? It is when parents have certain occupations and often businesses and unreasonably expect their children to follow in their footsteps. That is always going to result in a clash at some point. It is so very easy for parents to get their hearts dashed with John or Julie goes off to become something else. And suddenly, mom and dad are facing retirement with a farm or business that they had planned to give to their children, only the children don't want it. They have dreams of their own. Julie wants to be a doctor and John wants to be an engineer.**

**Nobody sets out to destroy the family dynamic, but mom and dad have a hard time reconciling the choices that their children make. After all, they worked so long to give their children something that was enduring and easy to step into. In return, their children basically turn up their nose without so much as a serious consideration. Or so it seems. The children can't understand why mom and dad expect them to live their parents dreams, even if it is tied up with a bow.**

**Now, I will admit, sometimes it works out so that John actually does want to be a farmer like his dad. But, it's not the norm. And it only works if John chooses to stay on the farm and follow in his parents' footsteps. That kind of legacy is a beautiful thing to behold.**

**But what normally happens is that John and Julie grow up and realize that the world is a much bigger place than they ever thought. That they are not limited by the choices of their parents. They discover they can be doctors, lawyers, astronauts, engineers, architects, dentists, mathematicians, scientists,**

mechanics, nurses, diplomats, musicians, artists and God forbid, politicians. So many options. They gain a broader world view of the depth of humanity. The world at large is full of amazing opportunities for those who want to chase their dreams.

From a photographer's standpoint, the world is filled with objects and scenery to be captured in both color and black and white. A good photographer knows his or her tools. They know their cameras, lenses, filters, adjustments, film, and light levels. Each parameter working with others to provide the image that the photographer is attempting to create from their mind's eye. That's where the art comes in. The photographer does not take pictures. They create images meant to provoke, sustain, reimagine, give perspective, record the exact moment in time, with the exact amount of light, shadow, and color in the right place to make the viewer stop, think, and admire.

Now that everyone has a pretty good camera built into their phones, it meets their needs when recording events at the beach, or baby's first walk, or Jenny and her first prom. But that does not give the phone camera user a photographer's eye for detail, even with all the new filters and editing software that is available. The heart of the photographer strives to capture the moment with one shot that needs no editing or transforming. No additional eye sparkles or fluttering hearts.

The photographer knows that to capture the image that they are looking for, not only does their camera have to be carefully maintained and their film chosen for the occasion, but the right lens has to be selected in order for the

**focus of the shot to present the subject in the best possible way. This is true even with today's professional digital cameras. Narrow focus and telescopic lenses bring subjects closer to the camera. Wide angle lenses allow the photographer to capture a much broader image, a range of mountains for instance. The lens is chosen to restrict the focus so that the subject doesn't get lost in the background. Creating an image is all about the subject and never about the camera. The artist must always remain in control.**

**Okay, preacher, where are you going with all this? We're talking about the first chapter of Acts, and no one has even invented a camera yet. I get it. But did you know that the first crude lenses were created with polished jewels in 700 BC by the Egyptians who used them mostly for starting fires? People were already learning the principles of focus before Jesus arrived.**

**But we will step out of that history lesson into an analogy that is important to what we are talking about today.**

**In today's world of busy diversions and endless options, the most important rule of thumb for keeping our vision in focus, is to not allow ourselves to be distracted by all the chaos. Photographers can weep over the fact that they have a beautiful image of an eagle in their lens only to have an ant bite them on the forearm and when they look back, the eagle is gone.**

**In scripture, Jesus tells us many times to not let the things of this world distract us from our purpose. In spite of those warnings, not only do we let those squirrels distract us, we actually go out looking for them. Like a young child in a**

schoolroom with windows, we find ourselves watching the trees, the birds, the squirrels, the baseball game on the playground, someone's dog lying in the sun. Our mind is everywhere except on what the teacher is saying. Even if the teacher starts out the lesson by saying this is going to be on an important upcoming test so you need to pay attention.

**7 He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.**

**8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."**

Since the birth of the Church on the day of Pentecost, people have asked and answered the same question over and over. I do not want to put any of them down. But every single generation of Christians has had a voice speaking out with some semblance of authority claiming to know things that Jesus says only God knows. Many of us believe these people present rational arguments. What they say makes sense to us. Some of them have studied various texts for ages before presented what they believe is fact. A war here, a plague there, a catastrophe over yonder, political and moral carnage, amidst the perceived debris of human civilization, we keep hearing over and over the words so aptly put in "Fiddler on the Roof" when Motel turns to his rabbi and says, "**Rabbi, we've been waiting for the Messiah all our lives. Wouldn't now be a good time for him to come?"**



**While that is exactly how we feel, just plopping ourselves down in the middle of the road and waiting for him to return has never been the answer. We have Jesus telling us that we have allowed ourselves to get distracted over things that really aren't our business. In Matthew 25, Jesus tells us what we should be doing.**

**Feed the hungry**

**Give drink to the thirsty**

**Receive the stranger in our homes**

**Clothe the naked**

**Care for the sick**

**Visit those in prison**

**When we are the hands and feet of Jesus in this world, we don't have time to speculate about things that don't concern us.**

**Well, preacher, if that is so, why does he talk about it? If He doesn't want us to worry about it, why did He tell us?**

**In this particular passage we are looking at today, Jesus is talking about the coming of the Holy Spirit. Last week we talked about how Jesus expected them to "wait for it." Does it help us to know what is coming? Would the disciples have stuck around Jerusalem if Jesus had just told them to wait. Wait for... something. That's a pretty broad request. But Jesus continues by telling them what they are waiting for. The arrival of the Holy Spirit. A Spirit delivered**

into their souls that will not only allow them to be messengers but encourage them in each step of their walk.

**8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”**

But here’s the thing, if we lose focus while we wait, we find ourselves in a quandary by not doing the things that Christ expects of us. There is a story in Mark 13:32-36 speaking to the second coming of Christ. Jesus teaches us this:

**32 “No one knows, however, when that day or hour will come — neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son; only the Father knows.**

**33 Be on watch, be alert, for you do not know when the time will come.**

**34 It will be like a man who goes away from home on a journey and leaves his servants in charge, after giving to each one his own work to do and after telling the doorkeeper to keep watch.**

**35 Be on guard, then, because you do not know when the master of the house is coming — it might be in the evening or at midnight or before dawn or at sunrise.**

**36 If he comes suddenly, he must not find you asleep.**

**37 What I say to you, then, I say to all: watch!”**

Waiting on the blessings of God is never a time to dawdle and lose focus. Just like the servants in the story, Christ gives each of us a purpose, and whether

**we are waiting on the second coming of Christ or waiting on a miracle in our lives, we have work to do. We need to pray for whatever we need help with in our lives. We need to pray for the people around us. We need to pray that we are able to find the words and the fortitude to speak truth into the world. We need to pray for the tools we need to lift those in trouble. We need to pray for the Holy Spirit to guide and move through us. And while we wait upon the Lord to bring answers into our souls, we should default to what we know Christ expects of us, the purpose He has given us:**

**Feeding the hungry**

**Giving drink to the thirsty**

**Receiving the stranger**

**Clothing the naked**

**Caring for the sick**

**Visiting those in prison**

**Jesus Christ came to earth to focus on the needs of humanity. He came to teach us that there is a better way to live, a better way to love. He came to take away our sins so that we can be justified before God and do His will. He came to show us that humility is the path to righteousness, foot washing is our key to understanding the message of Christ.**

**And, He came to teach us that waiting on the Lord's timing is the best approach to all of our issues and questions.**

**This week I wish for all of us to fix our focus on the purpose that God has given us as we await the arrival of His answers and blessings.**

**God bless you all,**

**AMEN**

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