

THE UNSTOPPABLE WORK OF JESUS

ACTS 28:30-31

How are you all doing this morning? Glad that you're here this morning. Well we are wrapping up our series in the book of Acts. A couple of things before we get started just in terms of direction that we're heading in over the next several weeks. Next week we'll be going into a four week series called Fearfully and Wonderfully Made... gender, singleness and marriage. The Gospel in the OT. So hope you'll be with us. Excited about those series and where God is leading us and what he's going to be teaching us over the next several weeks.

Twenty years ago, way back in 1994, some of you weren't even born then, there was a movie that came out with Bill Murray - not What About Bob? Great movie that one.... It was called Groundhog Day. The movie tells the story of a Pennsylvania weatherman named Phil Connors who travels to Punxsutawney Pennsylvania Feb. 2 to cover the groundhog day festivities. A blizzard ends up stranding Phil and his crew in Punxsutawney and when he wakes up the next day it's a repeat of Feb. 2nd. Phil discovers that he's stuck in a time loop with every day playing out the same, beginning with Sonny and Cher's *I've got You babe* blasting over his clock radio each morning. Eventually Phil gets totally fed up with being stuck in this loop and does crazier and crazier things to get out of the loop, or at least make the repeated day more interesting.

But the movie is funny because the reality is that all of us have times in our lives where we feel like it's groundhog day. Sometimes just ordinary everyday life feels like a bit of a time loop and we're often grasping for something to give us meaning and purpose.

And honestly, life in church can even start to feel the same. We just go through the motions every Sunday. Life becomes this series of consecutive events without any overarching purpose.

What we're going to see today is that if there was anyone who had reason to feel like life was stuck in a time loop, it was Paul here in Acts 28. But I want us to see that there is a reality going on in Paul's life and through the book of Acts that can infuse ordinary everyday life, for us as individuals and corporate as God's redeemed community, with incredible meaning and purpose. Rephrase.

Let's give some context for where we are this morning. If you've been following Acts with us you'll know that throughout the whole second half of the book we're following Paul's life and ministry. And in Chapter 20 Paul wraps up his second missionary journey and travels to Jerusalem where he ends up getting arrested by the Roman authorities because of a dispute with the Jews there. And after standing before religious councils and testifying in front political leaders Paul ends up appealing his case to the highest courts, to Caesar himself, and he is eventually sent to Rome. Paul sets sail for Rome and on the way encounters a storm, gets shipwrecked, washes up on an island where he gets bitten by a snake and the natives think he is a god. And after all this he arrives in Rome where he is placed under house arrest. And in verse 30 which we read this morning we discover that Paul actually ends up spending the next two years under house arrest in Rome.

Now we've followed the church from being this tiny Jewish sect in Jerusalem at the beginning of Acts, to now at the end of the book the church spreading out to the center of the Roman Empire in Rome. We've followed Peter and Phillip , Paul and Barnabas as Appolos. But the book of Acts more than anything isn't about these characters, it's about Jesus.

Remember the opening verses of Acts again with me. Luke is writing Acts to a friend of his named Theophilus. I the book is a sequel to his first volume, the story of Jesus in the gospel of Luke. And how does Luke introduce this second volume? He says this... v. 1-2.

"In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day he was taken up,"

That word "began" is so important, because Luke is saying that his gospel covers the beginning of Jesus' work, while this sequel covers the ongoing work of Jesus. So when we began Acts we started by saying that it is the story of the *ongoing work of Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit, through the church*. Acts is about the work of Jesus.

And so what I want to do this morning is look at three truths from this text about the work of Jesus. These three truths about Jesus' work can give us meaning and purpose in the midst of ordinary, everyday life. Then we'll look at how we should live in light of that truth. Do you got that? You'll have to track with me a bit, I'm making you think here. Three truths about Jesus work that give us meaning and purpose in the midst of everyday ordinary life and three implications for how we live in the midst of ordinary, boring, repetitive everyday life.

1. *Jesus work happens in the midst of ordinary boring monotonous everyday life.*

Turn back to the end of Acts again. Paul is under house arrest. If there is anything that is ordinary, boring and monotonous it is being stuck in the same house day after day after day for two years and not being able to get out. I mean, seriously, imagine being in your house for two years without getting out.

But in the midst of that look at what Paul does. v. 17. Read vv. 17-24. Paul's usual custom was to go to the synagogue as soon as he entered a new city. But since he can't go out to the synagogue in Rome, he invites the synagogue to come to him. Get this. This is innovative and radical ministry strategy from one of the greatest Christians ever. He had people over to his house to hang out and talk about Jesus.

And I know you're thinking, Ben, look at v. 17... that was only three days after he got there. Life wasn't so ordinary and boring yet. But look at vv. 30-31 again. This was what Paul made a habit of doing for two years - with both followers of Jesus and skeptics of Jesus.

The point is that Jesus work happens in the midst of ordinary boring monotonous everyday life.

So here is the implication for how we live.

Because Jesus work happens in the midst of ordinary everyday life, live intentionally for the gospel.

Now we talk a lot about the gospel at Summit, but we need to make sure we define what the gospel is. The gospel is not just how you get to heaven when you die. It isn't asking Jesus into your heart or starting a personal relationship with God. The gospel is this absolutely colossal reality that Jesus, who is Creator and King of the universe, came to earth and lived a perfect life, died a bloody death on a Roman cross, and three days later was raised to life conquering sin and death and Satan. And that the risen King Jesus, through substituting himself, now offers grace and pardon to sinners, to God's enemies, inviting them into his family. This is the gospel.

So what do I mean when I say live for the growth of the gospel? A couple of things.

First, if we are a Christian, one of the marks of being a Christian is that want to love Jesus more and be transformed by the truth of what he has done. The way to see that happen is to open my life up to others in community.

Last spring we planted a garden in our backyard. Now we had lived in China the previous nine years, in a city of 13 million people, where you aren't allowed to walk on the grass... any grass... and so we didn't know a whole lot about growing vegetables. And we decided that one of the things we would grow was corn. Now, I'm sure you know this, but you can't plan just one corn plant. Corn doesn't grow well as a solitary plant. Corn doesn't even grow that well planted in just a couple of rows. It grows best planted together in blocks. Do you know why? Because corn pollinates from the wind, and to become strong and healthy it needs to be in close proximity to other plants where the wind is able to move the pollen between plants.

We work the same. If we are going to become strong and healthy as Christians we need the pollen of the gospel to be transferred between us by the wind of the Spirit. [Bonhoeffer quote](#).

This is why Community Groups are so crucial to us here at Summit. Because it's in community that we are able to God's word to one another, and remind each other of the implications of the gospel in our lives. And that doesn't just happen in events. It happens as we live with gospel intentionality while we're washing up after dinner, and as we chat in the fellowship hall after church, in those everyday moments of life.

One of the things I've done, and I'm embarrassed that it's taken this long - certain people in my life that I want to call on a regular basis. Seahawks over. So we need to live intentionally for the gospel in the midst of everyday life by opening our lives up to others in community.

Secondly, living for the growth of the gospel happens in the midst of everyday life as we engage those who don't know Jesus.

Look how simple this is for Paul. He open his life and his home to cultivate relationship with others. Practice hospitality. Invite your neighbors or your coworkers over for a meal. "Well, I don't really feel comfortable inviting people over to my house... it's too chaotic with the kids running around, or it's not clean enough or it's too small." Look, if there was anyone that should have had an excuse for not having people over it was Paul. Dude was in chains.

If the gospel is transforming us it should be natural to practice hospitality. While we were God's enemies he extended the invitation to us to enter into the life of his family, to share fellowship and enjoy a banquet at his table. How much should we delight demonstrate the gospel by inviting others into our homes to be a part of our life around the table together.

Dawson Trotman who was the founder of the Navigators ministry, which had a huge ministry to Naval men during and after WWII in America's port cities, used to say that there were "a million soul saving stations in America." And he meant people's dinner tables.

After a year and a half of living in our neighborhood we're finally getting to know our neighbors. We had our next door neighbors over for a meal two weeks ago. There was nothing monumental about it. The closest thing we came to talking about the gospel was when we started talking about the Mormons that had come around to our houses the week before. But I was able to drop a little bit of truth about the real Jesus and we got to know each other. Eli joined the same neighbor last week to watch the season finale of Downton Abbey.

Because Jesus work happens in the midst of everyday ordinary life we can believe that's it's through ordinary everyday life that we can introduce others to Him.

2. Jesus work is ongoing.

Have you noticed how abruptly Acts ends? I mean, the first things that you think when you end Acts is, "what happens next?" To give you the quick historical overview, most historians for a number of reasons I don't have time to go into, believe that Paul was released from this house arrest and went on to Spain to preach the gospel and plant churches there and eventually he was arrested again and executed by the Romans. But I think there is a reason Luke doesn't draw Acts down to this slow wrap up and satisfying end with an epilogue tacked on. It's because he wants us to understand that the story doesn't end.

Luke's sequel - the ongoing work of Jesus by the Holy Spirit through the church - is still being written. We are Acts 29. Jesus is still at work by the Holy Spirit through his church. And so what gives us meaning and purpose in the midst of ordinary everyday life? It's that we are swept up as a part of this epic story of what Jesus continues doing in the world.

- Because Jesus work is ongoing, live intentionally for the church.

The story of Jesus' work is the story of his church growing. It's amazing to think that the center of every other major religion has remained where it started. Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam. Christian has spread. Europe, NA, now SA, Africa, China. And as we look at what happened in Acts as the church grew outward, it happened as Paul went into cities and established churches and those churches after Paul left began to look to these outlying pagan areas where there was not gospel witness and plant new churches. The growth of the church

always involves churches being planted. And so if we are being faithful as the church we need to be looking to plant churches. That task/heart isn't just for pastors and ppl in Christian ministry it's for all the people of God.

So even though we are small Summit Christian, we need to be thinking about what the implication of giving our lives for the growth of the church means. A lot of churches measure success by the three b's - buildings, budgets and butts (in the seats). We measure success by gospel impact. In 10-15-20 years from now we may still have 80 people in this building on a Sunday morning. And I'm happy about that, as long as it's not the same 80 people. If we are seeing lives transformed by the gospel, growing to maturity and being sent out to live intentionally for the growth of the gospel in other places that is something we should celebrate.

Over the next few years one of the things we are praying for is that God puts the pieces together for us to be a part of planting a church. "Well there are already so many churches around." Let me tell you this, we need all types of churches to reach all types of people. And as fewer and fewer churches are standing by the gospel we need churches solid in proclaiming God's word.

God might not be asking you to go overseas, but I want to ask you this morning. Might God be asking you to take ordinary life and infuse it with gospel intentionality in a place like Enumclaw, or Orting, or Eatonville, or Edgewood - in light of the ongoing work of Jesus will we live intentionally for the church?

3. Jesus work is unstoppable.

Jesus work is not only ongoing, it is unstoppable. How often does it feel like the church in Acts is going to be snuffed out. Stephen is martyred, the church faces persecution, Paul and Barnabas are imprisoned, Paul almost goes down to Davy Jones' locker... And yet the church thrives and grows. The story of Acts is the story of a sovereign God who accomplished his work no matter what.

In 1949 when the communists took over power in China they kicked all the western missionaries out. And many people thought the tiny church that existed at the time would be gone within ten years. Do you know what happened? Christianity exploded. In the face of persecution, in the face of suffering and injustice, the church grew - to where now there are more Christians in China than any other country in the world.

The victory of Jesus' church and his kingdom are sure and that ought to infuse our ordinary everyday with an incredible overarching purpose.

Because Jesus work is unstoppable, live intentionally for the kingdom.

There is a theological belief with regard to the kingdom of Jesus that is very common in the American church, which is Jesus rule and reign in this world, that when Jesus came to earth he announced the kingdom, he demonstrated the kingdom, but when he ascended into heaven he took the kingdom with him and won't bring it back until he returns. So when we talk about heaven all we are talking about is heaven out there somewhere.

But the reality as we see the ongoing, unstoppable work of Jesus is that Jesus first coming inaugurated his kingdom, his kingdom is slowly and subversively demonstrated in the world as the church declares the message of King Jesus and serves like King Jesus, and one day when Jesus returns his Kingdom will come to earth in it's fullness when he will fully redeem this broken world.

When we understand this, all we do in the most everyday moments matter. How we work, how we treat others, how we serve, matters because it displays the glory of our King and his Kingdom.

As we look around us there are so many needs. So many people that need the touch of the King. So many places where we can demonstrate the Kingdom. Locally in Summit-Waller/ Midland. Schools. Appts. We need to be praying for how God wants us to do that.

FIRST FRIDAY.

Transition into communion. Kingdom meal. Declaring Jesus death until he returns.