

Acts of Jesus – part 7

--Gen. 11:1-9

--One of the best companion texts to the story of Pentecost is not in the New Testament but in the Old Testament.

--There are some unmistakable similarities between these two stories:

--All gathered in one place.

--God coming down.

--Resulted in people speaking different tongues.

--From there people were scattered

--The circumstances were similar but the results were vastly different.

--Babel resulted in confusion but Pentecost was an eye-opening experience.

--In Babel, tongues separated people but in Pentecost it drew them in.

--In Babel they started off in power and went away in weakness, but in Pentecost, they started off in weakness and went away in power.

What made the difference? It all had to do with what they were filled with.

--On the one hand, they were filled with themselves.

--On the other they were filled with God.

--We might make a similar comparison and find similar results to any two of our days

--Some days we are confused --- some days we are as clear as the sky is blue.

--Some days our tongues are divisive -- other days we draw people in.

--Some days we are filled w/weakness -- other days filled with power.

--Some days we are filled with ourselves -- other days filled with God.

All about what you're filled with-- Every day we make a decision between Babel and Pentecost

1. Let's jump back to our passage in Acts 2:1

--I would suggest to you that these people were as opposite to the group there in the plains of Shinar as anyone has ever been.

--I say that not because they were any less sinful or any more powerful or any less together—I say that because I believe they, as opposed to the people of Babel, were completely empty of themselves.

--Their journey over the past 3 years had brought them from a position of strength to weakness – from a place of being full of themselves to being empty.

2. Peter is a good example of this -- his progress is pretty easy to track.

1. We are introduced to him as a business man of sorts—self-supporting, independent fisherman.

2. He's self-made and self-confident – full of himself.

--On the Mount of Transfiguration where Jesus changed into His real glory and in the presence of Elijah and Moses, Peter has the gall to interject a suggestion!

--He's the only one bold enough to step out of the boat when Jesus walked on the water.

--He's so full of himself that he's unafraid to take Jesus aside and scold Him when He announced His death in Caesarea Philippi.

--All these resulted in a rebuke or a humbling of some kind for him, but it wasn't enough...

--Even when Jesus predicts Peter's denial he flatly disagrees with Him.

--Then again after Jesus' resurrection by the Sea of Galilee Jesus asks him three times if he loved Him mirroring the three times Peter denied Him resulting in Peter being grieved.

--Why did Jesus do this? There was still some of Peter in Peter – still some Babel in him.

2. In Acts 2 we find the apostles at a place where the process of God has stripped them of all the Babel in them.

--They watched Him die – they saw Him face to face after the resurrection many times – they watched Him ascend.

--Their life before was nothing more than a dream compared to the stark reality of their Messiah now.

--To say they were humble would be an understatement.

-they had a keen sense of their own inadequacy.

-they had been leaves caught up in the wind of the Acts of God.

As a direct result of being empty – They were filled.

--Peter who couldn't confess Jesus before a servant girl before not only confesses Him but proclaims Him before all of Israel and 3,000 are saved.

--Why? It's all about what your filled with.

3. The power of being filled begins with the process of being emptied.

--Being empty of yourself is a good thing

--A sense of our own inadequacy is a GIFT!!

--Feel inadequate? What a blessing! **Matthew 5:3**

--But our world pushes us back to Babel

--Self-confidence and a sense of one's own adequacy is the rule of the day

4. Believer, here's something you may not know – God is in a continual process of emptying us so He can fill us with Himself.

--You may not like the process: it may be embarrassing – it may even be painful, but it's the best thing for you.

--You're going to want to fight it – You'll ask God to stop it ---

--We ask God to change our circumstances, but God may be using our circumstances to change us.

5. Two illustrations from Scripture then we're done.

1. One from the New Testament. **Rev. 3:16-17**

2. One from the Old Testament -- Elisha and the widow with two sons: **II Kings 4:1-5**

We have no shortage of full vessels today in the church.

--Someone has likened the modern church to a flock of geese attending meetings every Sunday where we talk passionately about flying and then get up and walk home.