

Acts Series #1 —Anticipation

Title

Today we begin a new series in *The book of Acts*. Long title of the book—*The Acts of the Apostles*. It's an historical account of the early church, written by Luke, the same man who authored the Gospel by that name. Particular attention is given to the Apostle Paul's ministry. And since Luke was a close associate of Paul's and travelled widely with him, that makes sense.

Our sermon title for today is
“ANTICIPTATION”.

That little girl in the Title Slide just exudes anticipation. For what exactly we're not told—but I'll bet it has something to do with Christmas or a birthday. Or maybe a new puppy.

You know, once in a while, it's possible to actually experience a sermon title. You know, as something you can more or less feel.

Well, I came across a meme this week that actually accomplishes that in this context. Would you like to experience some anticipation right now? Here it comes...



At any rate, it seems to me that having a sense of anticipation is important when it comes to living the Christian life.

Unfortunately, anticipation seems to be on short supply in a lot of Christian's lives. And, I might add, the same thing holds true for a lot of churches as well.

The only anticipation there is, is anticipating more of the same. Just the usual religious routine.

Not that there's anything wrong with routine. Not at all. It's important to have a great deal of routine in your life. It's what keeps you on track.

But it is anticipation that keeps us moving forward. And for that reason, spiritual anticipation is an essential base of operations for the Christian. And here's why: Routine that is not shored up with anticipation leads inevitably to stagnation.

Paul alludes to this principle when he speaks of how we are to serve the Lord.

Romans 7:6b

...we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.

Anticipation recognizes that something new is up ahead. Something good is on the horizon.

So why not ask ourselves the obvious question: Have we had reason to anticipate something new in our Christian life lately? Or have we contented ourselves with the assumption that this is as good as it gets.

Well, I would like to challenge that way of thinking if I may. I believe there is more up ahead to be pursued by every Christian who is here. And the topic we discuss today will be a key factor in moving towards that realization.

As it stands now, there will be somewhere in the neighborhood of 30 sermons in this series, Lord willing.

And every one of those sermons will have a one-word title that uses this suffix:

Suffix

“...ation”

Someone is moaning inwardly and saying, ***“Why must preachers do this? All the time, they insist on using things like alliteration, or words that rhyme.”***

I get it. We definitely overdo it at times. I remember this sermon a preacher was doing on the Gadarene Demoniac. You know, the guy that would go running naked through the graveyard and cutting himself. Powerful story of the absolute healing power of Jesus.

Anyway, the preacher needed a title that people would remember, so he came up with a real doozy.

“A Nude Dude in a Rude Mood”.

OK, maybe that was a little over the top. But I still remember it, so I guess it worked the way he intended.

In my own defense, I actually have a good reason for titling these sermons the way I am. It is very functional.

Track with me for just a moment. We'll have to indulge in a little review of English 101, alright?

That suffix **“ation”** has the magic power to turn a whole bunch of verbs into nouns. Just like that. In point of fact, that is the sole function of that suffix.

So that **“Inform”** turns into **“Information”**. **“Explore”** becomes **“Exploration”**. And **“Educate”** becomes **“Education”**.

It doesn't work on all the verbs. But it does on a large swath of them. Over 5,000 words in the Oxford dictionary end with that suffix.

So here's the deal. These titles are going to be the basis for our homework assignment every week during this series.

And what might that assignment be? To go from here, back to our daily lives, with the intention of turning that noun back into a verb, and live that verb out during the week.

Either experiencing it for what it is, or simply by doing what it says.

So here are a few samples of the titles:

- Anticipation (that's today)
- Orchestration
- Alteration
- Determination
- Supplication

You get the idea. And while we're doing a study on the Acts of the Apostles, I think it's fitting to think in terms of producing some acts of our own.

So there will be the Acts of Ean. Or the Acts of Kim. The acts of Charles. And so on.

And perhaps a daily prayer could be something like this:

“Lord, help me to act on this particular word in Your name, for Your glory, and to bless others.”

With that kind of commitment, you can definitely anticipate getting the Lord’s attention.

So, let’s get underway, shall we?
Anticipation is the word of the day.

Acts 1:1-11

1 The former account I made, O Theophilus,

of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,

2 until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen,

3 to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

4 And being assembled together with *them*, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, “which,” *He said*, “you have heard from Me;

5 for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

6 Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?”

7 And He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.

8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be

witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

9 Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.

10 And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel,

11 who also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This *same* Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.”

Several major events and concepts are covered in this passage. There is a brief mention of Jesus’ activity for the first 40 days following His resurrection. Then you have the description of His ascension into Heaven.

There is also an announcement made by the two angels regarding Christ’s second coming.

But most of our attention today will be directed at the promise that Jesus spoke of, just as He was leaving His men for the last time. He called it the promise of the Father.

That promise comprised the very last words Jesus would speak to His followers before ascending into Heaven. That fact alone should merit some special attention on our part. Last words tend to be important ones.

But before we begin to deal with the nature of that promise, there is something else to consider first. You see, before this promise would be fulfilled, the disciples were instructed by Jesus to wait.

Most of us have probably been in a situation where something like this phrase was used:

Well, on this occasion, Jesus gave the opposite instructions:

Don't do anything? That was not an easy assignment, given the things these Apostles had just experienced. After all, they were just given the command to go to the end of the earth with the message of Jesus.

Now I think it is universally true that people don't like waiting very much. And that sentiment has certainly become more pronounced in our current culture. Because we have grown used to getting what we want right now.

And if you were to have a question about something during the movie—like wanting to know the name of one of the actors—the answer is as close as your smart phone. No waiting required.

And then of course there's always some waiting associated with driving in traffic. Drive into Marysville from Sacramento during the work week at the wrong time of day, you will really get some practice in the waiting department.

You know that phrase that Jesus once said—*“In your patience possess ye your souls”*? Well, that was mostly for the guys. At least I’d like to think so.

A clear Starbucks cup with a white receipt taped to it. The receipt is a list of items ordered, including coffee, cream, and various toppings. The Starbucks logo is visible on the cup. The background is dark and out of focus.

Let me interpret the instructions that are on the cup.

The drink this person ordered is a vanilla bean cream Frappuccino, with the following modifications:

- *Instead of the standard pre-mixed liquid base, they want a combination—in precise quantities—of:*
 - *Soy lactaid milk*
 - *Almond milk*
 - *Heavy Cream/Coconut milk*
- *And then in lieu of the sweet syrup that would normally be added to the base, this person has instructed the barista to replace it with...*
- *Raw sugar, agave, Frappuccino chips, caramel drizzle, coconut flakes, Greek yogurt, green tea powder, protein powder, and some banana and strawberry.*

In addition to that, the drink is to be placed in an oversized cup, so there is room to top it off with foam and blueberries instead of the usual whipped cream.

Oh yeah—they also expect their drink to be served at precisely 34 degrees Fahrenheit.

That's aggravating enough for the person behind them. I can just imagine how aggravating it is for the Barista.

And then on top of all that, this individual's order has caused me to waste approximately 2 minutes of perfectly good sermon time.

Anyway, not many people are good at waiting. Except perhaps those who are like that little girl in the title slide. She seems quite contented. Of course, she was

obviously anticipating something wonderful.

Well if Christians are living in faith, then anticipation should come quite naturally to them. And that's a good thing, because faith is what it takes to please the Lord.

Hebrews 11:1: 6a

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen...But without faith it is impossible to please Him...

In our text in Acts chapter 1, Jesus gave them a couple of details regarding exactly what it is they'll be waiting for.

Acts 1:5b

...you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

Of course, this was not the first time they had heard Jesus speak of the Holy Spirit. There were several times where John recorded Jesus' teaching on what the Holy Spirit would do for them.

He said that the Holy Spirit would be Another Comforter. Another Helper. Just like Jesus was helping them to walk with God, so the Holy Spirit would be a Teacher who would lead them into all truth. He would be their Guide, and their constant source of divine inspiration.

Well, that's all well and good. But what does any of that have to do with what Jesus said when He said, "*You will be **BAPTIZED** with the Holy Spirit...*"? What in the world did He mean by that?

There are three points of clarification that Jesus offers here in **verse 8** of our text.

Acts 1:8

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

So here are the three things the Apostles should be anticipating:

First of all, the mechanics of the experience gets described this way— “...the Holy Spirit will come **upon** you...”

He also explains what they can expect in terms of the results of this experience: “...you shall receive **power** when the Holy Spirit has come upon you...”

And then He points out the purpose for which they will be given this power:

“...you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

So Jesus said that in the very near future they would be baptized in the Holy Spirit, with those specific details playing out.

Now I think that Jesus’ use of the term “**baptized**” in this passage is to emphasize the external aspect of this promise being fulfilled.

What Jesus has described is more of an external thing. And that needs to be clearly understood from the outset. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit that Jesus spoke of is more of an external thing than an internal one.

Allow me to explain. On previous occasions, Jesus had taught about the **internal** work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer.

John 14:15-17

15 “If you love Me, keep My commandments.
16 And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—
17 the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.

He summarized that inner ministry of the Holy Spirit with these words—“**He dwells WITH you, and He shall be IN you.**”

The disciples were ushered into that precise experience soon after the Lord was raised from the dead.

John 20:22

And when He had said this, He breathed on *them*, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.

At that point in time the Holy Spirit took up residence within them. And from that time forward any person who put their faith in Christ would experience the same thing. The Holy Spirit would take up residence within them, on the spot.

There are those who will teach that what we just read about in **John 20** was not where the disciples received the Holy Spirit. They will say that it was either a symbolic foretaste—or at best a partial impartation—of the Holy Spirit.

I cannot accept that interpretation, simply because there is nothing in the verse that would indicate anything of the sort.

On the contrary, the form of the Greek verb used here strongly indicates an immediate or present command and its fulfillment.

In other words, if we could read this verse in the way it was written in the original Greek, Jesus was commanding the disciples to receive the Holy Spirit right then, at that moment, as he breathes on them.

It does not grammatically point to something that was only partially given or off in the future somewhere.

To say that the disciples did not in fact receive the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in **John 20** is to ignore the definite assertion that Jesus makes there.

So here is how it works. The Holy Spirit dwells within the hearts of all Christians. That happens at conversion.

And with that indwelling comes the wonderful privilege of experiencing internal fellowship with and communication from the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit opens us up to the truths of God's Word, speaking to our hearts as we read and study it.

He leads us and guides us. He counsels us, inspiring us with ideas, impressions, and convictions.

Paul speaks of this reality in the lives of all Christians in this rather general way—

Romans 8:14

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

This is not the super deluxe version of the Christian life he's describing. No, this is just the standard equipment. We all experience this kind of inward interaction with the Holy Spirit when we get saved.

That is one thing. But here in **Acts 1**, Jesus isn't emphasizing an inward experience with the Holy Spirit. He frames this Baptism in the Holy Spirit as something primarily external.

Acts 1:8

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you

He says, "The Holy Spirit will come **upon** you." **On**, not **in**. He has already taken up residence inside. Jesus is speaking here of the Spirit subsequently coming to rest **upon** them.

Let me add one more thing here. This experience of the Holy Spirit is not given to enhance your relationship or your communion with the Lord.

Rather, its purpose is to enhance our effectiveness as a witness for the Lord. That's it. That's all. It doesn't make you holier. It simply makes you more effective.

Listen to Jesus' words from **Luke 24**:

Luke 24:49

"Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem **until you are endued with power from on high**.

I say this in all seriousness. God has a ministry with your name on it. Unique to

you. A ministry that is desperately needed by a world trapped in despair.

And the fullest expression of your ministry cannot be experienced without this power from on high.

Now I am fully aware that we have a blended congregation here. You folks come from both ends of the spectrum when it comes to the topic before us today.

Some of you have a Charismatic background, and some of you come from an Evangelical one.

Or if you're like I was as a new convert, you don't have much of a religious background at all.

Let me be clear about the approach I'm taking with this series. My teaching will at times take issue with both ends of the spectrum. Charismatic and Evangelical alike.

Why? Because I think I know so much more than others do? No. But I can't help but notice that a great deal of confusion exists on this subject. And this confusion comes when people superimpose their pre-conceived ideas over the plain wording of Scripture.

So, am I setting myself up as some kind of authority on the subject? No. I can only promise you an honest journey of discovery. Let's do our best to let the Scriptures speak for themselves, and then we'll let the chips fall where they may. Agreed?

Luke 11:10-13

10 "For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

11 If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if *he asks* for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish?

12 Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?

13 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"

Now here is a very interesting thing in closing. We are all agreed that when a person gets saved, they are automatically indwelt by the Holy Spirit. He comes to live inside of us. That happens immediately upon conversion.

But if that is the case, then why does Jesus speak of an experience with the Holy Spirit that is given in response to specific prayer for it? Is there more to this than we've been led to believe?

That is the question I'd like you to be thinking over in the coming week.

The Apostles knew what Jesus had in mind was very important. But they really didn't know what it would look like, or feel like, or any of that.

But it's safe to say that the anticipation was running very, very high. Because God was just about to do something.

Anticipation. It will keep us moving forward. To keep up with what the Lord wants to do in this community. And I personally find that very exciting.