

**Theme:** As You Are Going: The Church on Mission

**Message:** Now What? – Acts 1:12-26

**Aim:** Examine how the disciples waited for the promise/power of God.

**Intro:** Well, the holiday season is over. What started w/Thanksgiving ended w/New Year's – extra days off, family gatherings, special church services...& football. It's all over until next year. Now what? Some of you will start your Christmas shopping for next year, already. Others will anticipate baseball season. Others have set your attention to New Year's resolutions. I would suggest that we head out into this year learning to wait upon God & then learning to act as God leads. On a much grander scale, the disciples must have asked themselves "Now what?" after Jesus' ascension. They had spent 3-1/2 years w/Jesus, their lives had been turned upside down, they saw Him betrayed & crucified, mourned His death, then saw Him as the resurrected Lord. They rejoiced in the perplexity & wonder of that great miracle, enjoyed their times w/Him after His resurrection, then watched as He was taken up, ascending into heaven. Now what? They didn't have to wonder what to do immediately. They were told by Jesus "***...not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, He said, 'you heard from Me' ...***" As Pastor Derek taught us last week, the promise of the Father was the baptism of the Holy Spirit, who would come upon the Church at Pentecost, tho the disciples didn't know when. They were also given the promise of God thru the angels, who said, "***This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw Him go into heaven.***" So, between Jesus' ascension & His promised return, what were they to do? Theme: As you are going: The Church on mission. I would submit to you that, if we are to be the church on mission, we must do what those early disciples did. **Acts 1:12-26 [READ].** They were told to wait; but waiting on God is not an idle activity. It's not doing nothing, but it's also not doing our own thing. I) **They were united in obedience.** "They returned from Jerusalem from the" Mt. of Olives. This picture was taken from the Mt of Olives, so you can see it is a short distance to old Jerusalem, "a

Sabbath day's journey away," which commentator David Brown suggests is "about 2,000 cubits," or 1000 yds. When they arrived to Jerusalem, they went straight to "the upper room." It seems probable that this was the same upper room where they ate the Passover seder with Jesus. It most likely became a gathering place for them. All the remaining apostles were there – Luke named them. How important for them to immediately obey Jesus' command: don't depart from Jerusalem & wait for the promise. If we're going to be on mission for God, we must be an obedient people – together. We're told they were "with one accord" – they made Hondas bigger those days. We must be united in obedience – as a church committed to obeying God, being about His business. It's a mindset we must have together: waiting on God but moving when He moves. II) **They were united in prayer.** In one accord they devoted themselves to prayer. This involved not only the 11 apostles but all the disciples, including Mary, the mother of Jesus, the other women who had been followers of Christ, & His brothers, who rejected Him as Messiah until they saw the resurrected Lord Jesus. Possibly Jesus' ½ sisters were among the group as well. Probably not all the disciples fit into that upper room, tho they may have, but all of them devoted themselves to prayer – praying individually & as a group. I'm sure the apostles were leading them. They were seeking God's will, pondering what God had in mind. If we're going to be serious about making disciples, being on mission, that needs to be an integral part of our prayer lives, individually & collectively. Pastor Derek & I & the elders will take the lead, but you must also engage & commit to praying for the lost & praying for God the Holy Spirit to give us that mindset & use us to fulfill the Great Commission in our areas of influence – Vernon, Northfield, Hinsdale, Bernardston, Gill, Brattleboro, etc. We will include the mission to which God has called us in every public prayer we pray together & you/I must include it in our daily prayers as well, asking God to do a work among us, thru us. It won't happen w/out faithful prayer. Would you commit to praying that God would make us a Great Commission church, a people who are on mission – God's

mission? III) **They were united in seeking God's will.** I believe that as a result of their united prayer, God prompted Peter to urge the replacement of Judas, who had betrayed Jesus. Luke tells us that "about 120" disciples gathered together. Peter took the lead. This was the same Peter who had denied Jesus, but was restored by Jesus & given charge of the group: "Tend My sheep." Peter reminded the disciples that Judas' betrayal of Jesus was the fulfillment of Scripture, part of God's plan all along. Luke pointed out that Judas killed himself, regretting that he had betrayed an innocent man. He didn't actually buy a field w/the 30 pieces of silver, but threw them down before the chief priests & Pharisees, who ignored his plea that Jesus was innocent. Then they bought a field w/the "blood money" & used it as a cemetery for strangers (prophesied by Jeremiah). Then Judas "hanged himself," most likely hanging & impaling himself on a spear, since Luke said his "bowels gushed out." Read Matthew 27:3-10. Peter contended that David's words in Psalm 69:25 (camp desolate) & 109:8 (another take his office) applied to Judas & that someone should replace him as apostle. He listed criteria which I believe was prompted by the Holy Spirit: it should be someone who had been w/them since the baptism of John (particularly his baptism of Jesus), someone who followed all along until the ascension of Christ. The one chosen would bear the responsibility of witnessing to the resurrection of Christ – we serve a risen Savior! That is essentially our calling as well – to give witness to the living Savior & Lord. The 120 disciples suggested 2 men, one "Joseph, called Barsabbas ...also called Justus – I think that might have been the one who was later called Barnabas – son of encouragement – but not sure. The other nominee was Matthias. Then they prayed again, specifically concerning this, asking God to "show which of these 2 you have chosen;" & then cast lots. They weren't gambling w/this important decision but trusting God to show them whom He had chosen. "The lot fell on Matthias..." It's interesting that this is the last time we hear anything about Matthias. Little is known about him, tho it is speculated that he was one of the 70 sent out by Christ during His earthly ministry. His name

means “gift of God” & he was surely involved in the missionary work of the church in that 1<sup>st</sup> century. David Gudzik wrote, “Even tho we read nothing more of Matthias, we should not assume he was a failure as an apostle. Except for Peter & John (& James), none of the original 12 are mentioned again after Acts 1.” The book of Acts concentrates mostly on the ministries of Peter & Paul. God chose Matthias to be an apostle, & everyone here who has come to faith in Christ has been chosen by God to be a follower of Christ. God chose you! You don’t have to be well known to be a Christ-follower. The main thing is to be known by God, like Bruce Parker & Robert Gilbert are known by God. Again, Gudzik wrote of the disciples “notable obedience, notable unity, notable prayer, notable reliance on God’s word, notable desire for God’s will, notable sanctified common sense, & notable [dependence] on God.” If we’re to be the church on mission, we must be united in obedience, in prayer, & in seeking God’s will.

