Text: Acts 1:12-26

**Introduction**

Easter 7 is a weird week on the Christian calendar. It’s a few days after the Ascension. So with the creed we can say that Christ sits at the right hand of the Father. That is something of what Jesus is talking about when he says, “Father, I desire that they [might] see my glory that your have given me because you have loved me before the foundation of the world.” And that is great and all, but the bigger fact to the disciples – and I think often to us – is that Jesus in the flesh is no longer there. But what makes this week weirder is that Pentecost is yet to come. The pouring out of the Spirit and everything that means has not happened yet. And this is not just a fact of our liturgical calendar. It is not like the 40 days of lent or the 12 days of Christmas which are things chosen because 40 is a biblical number of preparation and 12 is a biblical number of completeness. No, the 10 days between Ascension and Pentecost are the actual 10 days as it happened in the life of Christ and those disciples

I hope I’m not walking too far out on a limb here, because we all do live after Pentecost, and I don’t want to forget that and the Spirit. But I think these Easter 7s – these spaces between important days – happen in all of our lives. One chapter has closed. You can even say that it has closed in victory – resurrection and ascension are victory. Although in our own lives the victory might not have been as apparent. The words the angels tell the disciples seem apt for those moments, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven?” Because when one chapter has closed, that is exactly what we tend to do. Stand around staring at what is no longer there.

Sometimes we know something else is coming down the pike. The disciples should have. They were told to wait until they were clothed with power from on high. They were told the Spirit would be sent. A new chapter of some type would be opening. But right now, we are in this liminal – that’s a fancy word for a border or a transition. We are in this liminal time. What are we to do?

Trouble in the World

So often we might just stand there staring up with a dumb look on our face. We want to hold onto the Glory Days. And in doing so we let the victory slip away. Forgive me for the sport analogy, but being a Cubs fan I think I have the perfect analogy. In 2016 they won the World series ending 108 years of misery. And don’t get me wrong, I will never forget that. But that was a young team. They had just jelled. Chris Bryant, only 24, won the NL MVP. And he was the veteran. But they never really competed again. The SS was lost to off field events. And everyone else just seemed to know that they’d never equal that moment. The only guy really still playing is Kyle Schwarber who was the most marginal guy on that team. The hopes for a second title faded. Cubs fans might have been perplexed, but nobody was ever mad.

Maybe the next chapter is not a grand as what came before, but that doesn’t excuse not opening it. Because God does have things for us to do.

**Close one Chapter, Open Another**

I think our first lesson for the day is that example of what do you do when you are between chapters.

Another of the things that we can often do when we are in a transitional time is lose track of people. We let people from the last chapter walk away without keeping an eye out for people entering for the next. We lose our history, without embracing the future.

What the disciples do is exactly the opposite. Everyone that was part of the last chapter is gathered together. Luke, the writer of Acts, tells us this was about 120 at this point. And Peter does two things. First he openly and bravely addresses the open secret. One of the twelve – the apostles – the sent ones – had betrayed Jesus. “For he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry.” Whatever else you can say about victory in the past chapter, there were also losses. Peter recognizes those. Names them – Judas. And commits them to God.

Things that are in the past, the best we can often do is commit them to God. If they require repentance, repent, and have faith that Christ has forgiven it. If they are events that should be remembered, place the boundary stone you took from the middle of the river, offer the sacrifice, and move as God directs.

In this case the movement that God directed was “let another take his office.” The mission of those disciples is going to continue. And so they drew lots and appointed Matthias. They are still waiting for the empowerment for the mission, but they are also doing what they can do to be ready.

Those disciples recognized the end of one chapter and turned to face the new one.

When you find yourself in the liminal space. Recognize that which has past and turn and prepare for what comes as best you can.

**In the Word**

Which brings up to me at least the question of how? How do we prepare? How do we discern the calling of the next chapter?

“All these – those disciples and the roughly 120 – with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer.”

Those transition times are rarely times of bold action. It is general wise advice not to make major life-changing decisions in the midst of mourning. Instead they are the times to gather thoughts. Visit with old friends. Seek the face of God in the ways that are given to you.

And the ways that are given to us are the same. We seek God in word and sacrament. Because Christ has promised to be there. In Word and Sacrament it has been made known “that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.” That Christ may have ascended, but he has never left us. And that sitting at the right hand of God is ensuring that we will see that glory. The final chapter we all will open will be the one that John say in Revelation with the water of life flowing through the city. We are to seek God in prayer and He promises to hear us. And we can seek God in the communion of saints, the consolation of fellow believers that is given to us that we might bear one another’s burdens.

In the middle of the action – in the midst of trial – we might forget these things. When the next chapter opens we should remain constant, but it doesn’t always work. Which is why in the transition we should prepare. “With one accord they devoted themselves to prayer.”

**Faith**

And now the last part of any liminal time. After you’ve recognized and memorialized the closed chapter. And after you’ve spent your time in prayer and preparation. And after you’ve decided on a course.

You have to move, and have faith in God to work all things for His glory. Those disciples identified two people who met what they thought were the requirements. They had decided that Judas needed to be replaced. They had prayed for God’s blessing. “And they cast lots for them…and Matthias was numbered with the eleven apostles.”

Do we know if the lot fell on the right person? Not really. Matthias is never mentioned again. Extrabiblical evidence holds that he was crucified preaching in what is today Georgia. There is on old Roman stone in the area claiming to be his tomb. But there are other records that have other ends. And there are plenty of people that have commented that Peter and the eleven had decided wrong and that is why Christ appeared to Paul.

But honestly whatever happened to Matthias, that isn’t the point of this last step – the step out of the liminal time. The point is you have to take it. You have to have faith that God does intend another chapter. And even if you don’t know it, you know enough. And we are called to faith.

We are called to know that the Father loves us. We are called to know that Christ sits at his right hand. And we are called “so that the world may know that the Father sent Christ and Christ has loved his own.” And that they too are called in Christ to be in the Father’s love. We are to live in faith in the midst of the world that they might see the love of God. We are called to live each of our steps in faith, that God loves us and is working everything for the best of those who believe. Amen.