

## “Authority brings certainty” Acts 1:12-26 Christ Church Huntingdon 24<sup>th</sup> May 2020

- **V21-22** What time of day is it for you that the doubts and fears crowd in on you?
  - For some it's late at night,
  - but for many of us it's early morning. It's well before 6am but your mind is already racing.
    - Is this the day I catch coronavirus at Tesco's or on my walk?
    - Will I be one of the unlucky ones to end up on a ventilator?
    - And if I do, what if I die?
    - Will it turn out that Christianity is just a fairy tale and there's nothing afterwards.
    - Have I misunderstood matters of heaven and hell because I didn't understand properly
    - Did I accidentally fall into the company of a church that believes some narrow and extreme things that weren't true after all?
    - What if I discover that after life there's nothing there?
    - What if I discover that Jesus isn't real?
  - Apologies if you find this a negative start to a sermon,
  - But I guess these kinds of fears and doubts will ring true with many of us.
- It's where Luke's writing in his gospel, the book of Luke, and in his sequel, the book of Acts, is so helpful.
- Because he said that he wrote it to give his friend Theophilus certainty about the Christian message.
- Johnny started us with those verses about certainty from the start of the gospel.
- But today's passage doesn't look that relevant to our current situation.
  - It's a history lesson about a football substitution
  - Judas who betrayed Jesus has left the field
    - (we read about it in those words in brackets in v18)
    - And this story is about how his replacement Matthias came onto the pitch.
  - But why is that relevant? To us in Lockdown?
- It raises this question. “Why do we need to know about Matthias replacing Judas?”

- Well stick with us, because actually the answer to this question can really help us with those early mornings.
- I've got various answers to that question. "Why do we need to know about M replacing J"?
  - 1) IT HAPPENED
    - Ok, that's encouraging.
    - Luke is an accurate historian and he's telling the truth.
    - But so what?
    - Why did he include it in his account? (he only had a certain amount of space on his scroll, why include this)?
  - 2) A TIME FILLER
    - Is it to fill the 10 day gap between Jesus' ascension (last week's story)\_
    - And the coming of the holy Spirit at Pentecost (next week's story)
      - Incidentally do you see we've chosen the passages v carefully to fit with those times of the church year (if you are into those things!).
    - But surely Luke could have finished in verse 14 if he's just filling the gap. V14.
  - 3) A WARTS AND ALL ACCOUNT
    - Is it that Luke doesn't want to edit out the bad news so feels he better include the bit about Judas?
    - Actually there's plenty of other bad news which is going to come.
    - So he doesn't need this passage to
  - 4) Is it that Matthias is A KEY PLAYER IN THE STORY
    - Like the arrival of Paul on the scene, we need to know about his joining the team because he played such a key role?
    - Well actually Matthias isn't mentioned again in the Bible!
    - In fact the other guy who didn't get chosen does get mentioned in acts.
    - We don't know much about Matthias (though some early church traditions say that he went to Ethiopia to share the gospel with meat eaters there!)

- 5) Aha- is this a manual for recruiting “TOP TIPS FOR CHURCH RECRUITING”
  - We are recruiting a new worker for CCH soon, God willing!
  - Should we follow the advice and flip a coin at the end?
  - Well we need to be careful not to read Acts straight into our situation.
  - We are not choosing an apostle, and lots is never used again in the Bible.
- Well without further ado we better look more closely at the story.
  - It's in four parts, the first you could call the *SETTING*.
  - V12-14.
  - Wonderful example to us of how the church didn't go back to Jerusalem for
    - a strategy meeting or
    - a consultation meeting
    - but a prayer meeting!
      - (we'll see this devotion to prayer again in the early church, and we need to learn from it!)
  - But those names are important. There's only 11 of them.
- Is the choosing of Matthias about making up numbers “TO MAKE UP THE 12”
  - I do think there's great significance in the number 12.
    - There were 12 tribes of Israel in the OT people of God , and
    - Jesus is building the foundations of the NT people of God.
      - In fact later in Ephesians Paul will speak of the “foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone”.
      - You can't have a church sitting on an incomplete foundation.
      - It will be built wonky!
    - But there's more than just numbers.

- Let's read section 2. *THE SCRIPTURES*
  - So is the reason we need to know about Matthias about the BIBLE PROMISES HAVE TO BE FULFILLED
    - V15-17
    - Fascinating insight into how the early church understood the Bible.
      - We looked at this dual authorship in our series (see online) about the Bible.
      - And how it had an absolutely central place in the direction of the church.
    - Then we get an aside from Luke about Judas' death (it's a bit gory!)
    - And then the actual scriptures that were fulfilled
      - Psalm 69 praying for the one that betrays the King
      - And Psalm 109 predicting his replacement.
  - So is the reason we need to know about Matthias about the *BIBLE PROMISES HAVE TO BE FULFILLED*
    - Well yes- that's clear from how Peter, the leader of the pack interprets the Bible.
    - But why was it so important that it had to go in the Bible.
    - (It's an encouragement to us that when bad things happen
      - like the coronavirus
      - like the most horrible betrayal and murder of God's King
        - God is still in control, and working out his purposes.
        - It was always meant to be like this.
- But it's the next part section 3. *SIGNIFICANCE* that I think is the most important, and explains why we need to know about Matthias. EXPERIENCED OFFICIAL SPOKESPERSON
- V21-22.
  - Let me just pause to give you an analogy.
  - ▲ Nearly every day during this coronavirus outbreak we have been having governmental briefings from the experts. The prime minister, the the chief medical officer, the chief scientific adviser.
  - Who do you want to be doing that job?
  - Someone official or madge from the local coffee shop?

- You want someone with **authority**
  - Now there are others that could have been chief medical officer
  - But Professor Chris Whitty was chosen
  - And he's official.
    - He has qualifications from
      - Oxford University (2 of them)
      - London school of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine
      - Northumbria University
      - Herriot Watt Universtiy
      - The Open university
  - He's official, but also he's **experienced**.
    - He's an actual doctor, practising for the NHS at various London hospitals.
    - He doesn't just talk about stuff, he's experienced in it.
    - He even got coronavirus for in March and April and then came back to work.
  - Now there are always going to be people who complain about what officials say
  - But I don't think we could have done a better job.
- Can I tell you about Matthias?
    - Is he qualified to be a spokesperson for the Christian faith?
      - Look at verse 21-22.
        - The whole time the Lord Jesus was living among us.
        - From A ; John's baptism
        - To Zee: the ascension.i
      - And most importantly v22, a witness of the resurrection.

- So why does it matter who replaces Judas?
  - Answer, these apostles, (and there have to be 12 of them to constitute the New Testament foundation of the church) have to be experienced and official.
- EXPERIENCED. (EVENT)
  - So they actually saw
  - If anyone was qualified to speak it was him!
- OFFICIAL (EXPLANATION)
  - May sound like a dirty word to those anarchists in Greece, but we're talking about something probably close to their hearts- someone who has the right to do the job, not because of privilege or birth, but because of JESUS.
  - And Matthias was official in the sense that he was chosen by no less than Jesus himself, and that's what we see in this final part
  - SELECTION
  - So Jesus is Alive, he's just as much at work in the church from heaven as he was on earth.
  - And we can take great comfort from that
- These apostles are SO important.
  - If things go wrong in passing the baton on from Jesus to generation 1,
  - Then it's going to go wrong down the track.
  - We need an official spokesperson
  - But particularly one who experienced Jesus in person.
  - And can tell us that Jesus IS alive.

- Do you now see how what looks like a strange old story
- Actually, can help us have confidence in the certainty of Christianity.
- None of us were there when Jesus walked the earth
  - So none of us know what he said or did.
  - But he authorised and sent out 12 apostles to speak officially on his behalf.
- Maybe you have struggled with doubt or fear in recent days
  - We don't talk about it much
  - Though we can, doubt is not the enemy of faith.
  - Acknowledging and Addressing doubts can lead to strengthening the muscles of faith.
  - As we look deeply at the evidence in the Scriptures and see through their eyes: **Jesus IS alive.**
- Maybe you are dipping your toe in the water of Christianity and you want to know more.
  - Well come back to 1<sup>st</sup> generation. Their writings in the Scriptures.
  - See Matthias stand with Peter as he says in Acts 2: "God has raised this Jesus to life and we are witnesses of this". **Jesus IS ALIVE**
  - Well if Jesus was alive then, he's alive today
  - You can know him. You can talk to him. You can trust him.
- Maybe one of the reasons you feel nervous about the idea of spreading the message of Christianity
  - Is because you sometimes struggle to know if you believe it .
  - Well **Jesus is alive.**
  - He was seen by his apostles
  - And he says that ultimately this brings real joy....

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched – this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. <sup>2</sup>The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. <sup>3</sup>We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup>We write this to make our <sup>(a)</sup> joy complete.

**let's pray.**