



St. Paul Lutheran Church

“Your Refuge from the Storm”

LifeGroup Discussion



ACT UP | BOLDLY COMMISSIONED
APRIL 14, 2024 | ACTS 5:12-16

Dear God, stir up your Spirit in us. Help us feel your healing power coursing through our lives. Work through our hands and our hearts to boldly bring hope and wholeness to the world. Amen.

Now many signs and wonders were done among the people through the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon’s Portico. None of the rest dared to join them, but the people held them in high esteem. Yet more than ever believers were added to the Lord, great numbers of both men and women, so that they even carried out the sick into the streets, and laid them on cots and mats, in order that Peter’s shadow might fall on some of them as he came by. A great number of people would also gather from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all cured.

Boldly Commissioned

UP with God

What is Jesus’ mission? What is ours?

As Jesus leaves the disciples, he calls them to repent. In this context “repent” means to rethink, to change direction. It’s less of a call to be somber or sorry, and more of a call to embrace a new thing, a new way of thinking, a new way of living. Jesus’ mission is to inspire people to rethink everything because the Kingdom of God – God’s dream of love and restoration for the world – has begun.

What do you think? Was Jesus’ mission to inspire people to rethink their worldview? In what way? Is that still Jesus’ mission? Has this mission been accomplished?

Have we ever misinterpreted Jesus’ mission? How? Does the word “repent” evoke images that are somber, punishing, or scary? Is that how Jesus leaves the disciples? Or is Jesus’ parting message more grace-filled and hopeful than that?

Do we ever try to shrink a wide, multi-faceted economy of love and forgiveness down into a simple equation of behavior and consequences? Is God bigger than that? How do you know? Are the larger implications of this story overwhelming? Is it easier to simply try to “be good” in your life than it is to consider spreading hope in the world? Why does God ask so much of us?

What does it really mean to rethink our worldview, to be truly alive in God’s world, and to bring the Kingdom closer? What kind of life is that? What kind of God would want that for us?

Are we in this alone?

Do the disciples in this story heal and teach all by themselves? Have they suddenly become expert doctors and exorcists? Is any of this about their own power? Does God promise to be with them, to work through them?

Do you think God works through you? Has God worked through you already, in ways that you’ll never see? Does this really happen, or are we repeating empty words to make ourselves feel better about our lives, our future, or our fear? In your experience, is this promise true? Is God with you, in you, guiding you? Or have you been left alone? Have you ever found courage, hope, grace, determination or new life just when you needed it? What does that feel like? What does it really mean to be Spirit-filled people?

Is every story a God story?

Have you heard the phrase, “It was a God thing”? What does that mean? Is everything a God thing? If your situation ends badly, do you still call it a God thing? If you don’t get a God thing when you need one, is that your fault? Can you control God with your goodness, or with your badness?

IN through community

What are signs and wonders?

Are signs and wonders simply miracles or magic tricks, or do they point to something bigger? Are they supernatural events that occur outside the laws of nature? Or can something also count as a sign or a wonder if it has a physical explanation?

For example, if you put someone else's needs ahead of your own, is that a sign? If you mobilize hundreds of people to head out into the community and take care of all the children, all the seniors, and everyone in poverty ... is that a wonder? Is it miraculous? Magical? Counter-cultural? Would it point others to God? Would it point us to God? Why, or why not?

If we think signs and wonders are only supernatural events, do we miss the raw power of our commission from God, our calling to use our human hands and hearts for God's work? Yet if we use reason to explain away every miraculous moment, do we miss God's vast mystery? How do we live in that tension?

Have you ever seen signs and wonders?

Can you tell any stories of signs and wonders that you've witnessed? Do you believe stories like that? Why, or why not? Is a good deed simply a good deed? Or is it infused with something bigger? How do you know?

Is there potential for wonder in the mundane or routine parts of your daily life? Is your breath a sign of God? Are your emotions (even the ones that feel awful) a wonder? Have you ever looked around at your messy house, crazy schedule or overgrown lawn and given thanks for the life and breath that keeps you moving? Is the messiness of life a miracle in itself?

Have you been missing signs and wonders around you every day? Do you think you could begin to see more signs and wonders in the world if you open yourself up to them, and seek them out?

When you're open to seeing signs and wonders around you, do you actually create more signs and wonders? Does your openness to miracles make more miracles happen? Do your efforts make God show up? Can we control God's actions in that way? Or do our efforts reveal a God who was in action all along?

Is your faith community a sign and a wonder?

Does your faith community point you to God? Does it point other people to God? Is your faith community known for pointing to God? If so, in what way? If not, why not? What do you need to do, or stop doing, in order to become a community that points to God here and now, in this time?

OUT for the world

Can you find signs and wonders in unexpected places?

Where do you see people pointing to God's dream of love and restoration in the world today? How are you participating?

Does this work reveal God's dream of love and restoration to the world, regardless of how we choose to classify it? Does it ultimately matter if acts of love and restoration in the world are done in the name of Jesus? In the name of God? Can God – *does* God – exist outside of the box that our religion has built for God? Can God – *does* God – exist outside of the box that other religions have built for God? Can any one religion own or claim the divine?

When it comes to restoring the whole world, are we wise to avoid classifications and categories? Is it possible that every act of love, wherever we find it, is inherently a God thing?

How is this story our story?

Like those first disciples, each and every one of us, with our gifts and experiences, strengths and limitations, is entrusted with Jesus' mission. Each and every one of us is called to collaboratively bring hope and wholeness.

What do you think? How are we called and commissioned to carry out Jesus' mission in the world? What does it mean to be commissioned? Is it a responsibility? A burden? How have we been empowered by the Holy Spirit to heal, restore, and love people back to hope and wholeness? How can we possibly accomplish all of that? Where do we start?

What does this story tell us about the vision for our own faith community?