

BUT WAIT...THERE'S MORE!

LAUMC All Services – June 15, 2014

Acts 1:1-14

Pastor Samuel Yun

Acts 1:1-14

1 In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning 2 until the day when he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. 3 After his suffering he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. 4 While staying[a] with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. “This,” he said, “is what you have heard from me; 5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with[b] the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

6 So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?” 7 He replied, “It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” 9 When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. 10 While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. 11 They said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”

12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day’s journey away. 13 When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of[c] James. 14 All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.

INTRODUCTION: THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO GINSU

I want to begin this morning by naming a few things that I’m very mindful, very conscious, of today, as I’m sure you all are as well. First is the fact that it is Father’s Day, and unfortunately (or maybe fortunately) I am not preaching a Father’s Day Sermon this morning. So, I want to get my well wishes out of the way and just say Happy Father’s Day to all the dads, granddads, uncles, and all those who have ever filled that role of father for someone in one way or another. Your presence and faithfulness really matters. And especially, I want to give a shout out to my dad who has been the inspiration for much of who I am today, especially my dry sense of humor and my particularly long sermons. Thanks dad, you have given me some of my best talents! Not

to mention, the good old classic, “Pull my finger” trick. Seriously though, my dad is awesome and he has taught me much!

Second, I am also very conscious and mindful of the fact that I am preaching just one week after Pastor Mark gave us his final sermon last Sunday. And I need to say that I not only feel quite humbled right now, frankly I also feel quite a lot of pressure. I mean, how do you preach after an amazing worship like the one we had last week. Some of us are still wiping our tears, amen? Pastor Mark hit a home run last week with his finale sermon, and he was truly for me, and for many of you, throughout all the years just an amazing Senior Pastor, amen? And now, for the day, I am standing in the midst of that great, great void that was left behind. I am very, very conscious of that today. Lord have mercy.

Third and last, I am quite mindful of the fact that we – this church, LAUMC – is on the eve of a new era, a new season, a new thing. We are smack dab in the middle of a transition, and as you all know, we will be going through quite a bit of change very, very soon. And for you, for me, Pastor Debbie, Pastor Dirk, and the rest of the LAUMC community... it's time that we all finally come out of the river of denial – we have been in there way too long, and our skin is starting to get wrinkly. And I know that the big challenge here is that for many of us, if not all of us, we love to look backwards at what we had and cling on to the things that have gone before... WHY? Because it's so good! 22 years with Pastor John and 15 years with Pastor Mark... lot of you believe that these were the glory days of LAUMC for sure! And honestly, I'm right there with you. I feel exactly the same. And I've only been here three and a half years... but man, I gotta tell you, those three and half years have been sooo good. And so I wrestle also with this tendency to hang on to the past. That's my confession.

But lately, and by lately, I mean these past few days during which I have been frantically trying to write my sermon, I felt convicted to revisit the ways in which God seems to work. This sense that in the working patterns of God, there always seems to be something better and better that is coming. That is, no matter how good or great things

have been, God is the type of God who will always make things even better. Things are never quite finished.

And as I was thinking about that, I could not help but remember those late night infomercials in the late 70's and 80's, and some even into the 90's. Remember those? The Thigh Master, The Pocket Fisherman, The Chia Pet, and the God-forbid, dreaded Flowbee (remember the Flowbee? that combination vacuum cleaner, haircutting system)? Oh my goodness. And those commercials were always on after midnight. Why? Because basically you could only get people to buy those things when they were at their very worst or sleep-deprived vulnerable and desperate selves, right?

Now perhaps the most famous of those infomercials was the one for the very popular Ginsu Knives. Remember that one? I loved that commercial. It started with that off-screen narration saying, "In Japan, the hand could be used like a knife." And then you see this guy in a Karate uniform whacking a piece of wood in half. And then the narrator says, "But this method doesn't work on a tomato." And you see the same Karate guy try to Karate chop a tomato only to have it go splat! And then the pitch comes in: "That's why we use the Ginsu – a knife that no kitchen should be without." And then for the next couple of minutes, the infomercial lists one amazing quality of this Ginsu knife after another – it's ability to cut a slice of bread so thin that you could see through it, it's ability to cut through meat better than an electric knife, it's ability to cut through a can, chop wood, and slice a pair of sneakers in half. You know, all the stuff you're typically looking for in an every day kitchen knife, right?

And then the narrator asks, "How much would you pay for a knife like this? But before you answer, listen. It even comes with a matching fork to make carving an even greater pleasure. But wait, there's much, much more. You also get the six in one kitchen tool that peels carrots, peels potatoes, grates cheese and makes decorative vegetables. How much would you pay for all these now? But wait, there's more. We will even throw in these matching six precision steak knives. Now how much will you pay...? \$29.95? \$49.95? But wait there's more. To make this deal even more irresistible, we will even

give you this special spiral slicer. All these knives and tools for the low, low price of just \$9.95. But wait, there's more. If you act now, we will give you free shipping and double the whole set....All of it for the low, unbeatable price of just \$9.95.

Remember that commercial? As hokey as it was, it was actually a very successful commercial. Sold millions of Ginsu knives. Funny thing is that they weren't even Japanese knives. They were made in Fremont, Ohio, and was originally called Quikut, but it took the genius of advertising gurus named Barry Becher and Ed Valenti to make this ordinary knife quite sellable. The other funny thing is that Ginsu is not even a Japanese word. They made it up. And when Becher would be asked "What does Ginsu mean in English?" he would simply say, "It means I never have to work again." Rightfully so. The Ginsu was a success!

And there was something about those type of infomercials that just kind of sucked you in. Because even though you might not want to admit it, you were actually curious every time they said, "But wait, there's more" – curious just to see what the more really was, right? Now, some might say that was a great gimmick, but I want to suggest that in many ways that's actually the Gospel message: But wait, there's more.

And it's a message that I believe we desperately need to hear right now. We had some amazing years of ministry in the past. And this church went through and not only survived a significant transition 15 years ago, it totally rocked it! And these past 15 years have been amazing with Pastor Mark. And while we may still feel the sorrow and pain of having had to say goodbye to a dear, dear pastor Mark and a dear, dear Beloved Bonnie, I feel like God is speaking to us in that off-screen narrative voice saying, "But wait, there's more!" In other words, there's no denying the awesome, almost Ginsu-nature of what has gone before us, and though so much of it was good and amazing, God is saying to us, don't think for one minute that's all you're getting. Because there's more...much, much more to come.

FROM STARING TO PRAYING

It's like what we read in Acts chapter 1 today. Many of you are familiar with this passage. It is what I call a post-resurrection, pre-Pentecost passage, and specifically, it is where Jesus gives his final charge to the disciples. And it's important to note, what the author Luke (the Gospel writer) says here in the prologue to the book of Acts:

1 In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning 2 until the day when he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. 3 After his suffering he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

According to the text, the disciples are aware of the incredible things that have taken place! Jesus has reappeared to them with “many convincing proofs”, Luke says. So what the disciples experience should be the things that position them for faith and boldness and action. And more than that, Jesus is seen here in this scene promising the power and presence of the Holy Spirit to come upon them soon. The promise is the promise of the Gospel, that message that says, “You think you’ve seen everything, but wait, there’s more!” That’s basically what Jesus says, and then “poof”! He ascends into heaven and is gone.

What do the disciples do? Probably what many of us would do... they just stand there and stare into the sky, all the while probably thinking, “Uh okay, what now?” Can you picture that? They’re just standing there, with their mouths open, staring and just wondering. That is until these two strange, unidentified men in dazzling white clothes appear and ask, in effect: “Why are you just standing there staring?” And if I could take some liberty to fill in some of the extra conversation that might have gone on in this scene, I could imagine the two men in dazzling white clothes go on to say to the disciples: “You have just experienced some amazing, amazing things! And yes, Jesus just disappeared into the sky right before your very eyes. And that’s pretty amazing as well. But wait, there’s more...”

Now this seems to trigger something in the hearts of the apostles. They break out of their “zoned-out” staring mode, and they start heading back to Jerusalem, and I’m sure, they were now asking the question, “What next?” What shall we do? What will be our plan?” They start putting themselves in the mode of not just passively waiting but rather actively and boldly seeking.

Now granted Jesus left them with no plan, no manual, no budget. There was no transition workshop available to help lead them through change. And they didn’t even really have a precedent to look to as guidance for what they were to do. It’s not like messiahs were crucified and resurrected left and right. This was a first time and really one time deal. So this is what they did as their response to the question of “What next?” And I just love the ending to this passage. This is what we read. This is what they did:

12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey away. 13 When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of [c] James. 14 All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.

Did you catch that? All these were constantly devoting themselves to pray together – the disciples, the women, all those that followed Jesus. They prayed. Sounds simple, but it’s really the first and most important thing to do whenever anyone faces transition and change. And especially for the church, for the community of faith, when we are going through the challenge of transitions and unknowns, and when we hear the voice of God speaking to us, “But wait, there’s more...”, there is no better thing for us to do than to just pray. That’s what the disciples did, and their prayer led to Pentecost. Their prayer moved them from a “what now” mentality to a “what next” mindset. And the church has never been the same.

WHAT IF...?!

So, how do we apply this text to our lives and to our church today? How do we move from just staring to actually start praying? How do we free ourselves from wondering and worrying about “what now” and really move forward in faith, asking the intentional and strategic question of “what next”?

Well, may I suggest that we pose just one more question to help us put our hearts to the future? How about we start asking “What if” questions. If it’s true that what God is speaking to us is simply, “But wait, there’s more”, and if this is the Gospel message that needs to be infused into our living and our believing, than maybe, just maybe, we need to start dreaming and begin to wonder...

What if the best years of our ministry at LAUMC are still ahead of us?

What if as much as we have been blessed by pastors past, the blessing that is still yet to come by pastors still yet to come is going to blow us away beyond our expectation and imagination?

What if we actually believed that what God has in store for us and what God desires for us is better and always will be better than what has gone before? What if?

Well, if all of these be true, than we better get busy... and we better get waiting, and we better get praying, because friends, obviously, there’s more... much, much more to come... more than we ask and more than we can imagine. That’s the God that is speaking to us today, and that’s pretty incredible... but wait, there’s more. Amen.