

Acts: The Gospel Gone Viral
Lesson 14 “The Divine Encounter”

I. Introduction - Easter is my favorite day of the year because it is a reminder of what Jesus did for us at the cross. Our entire faith and the Bible hangs on this one truth. Did Jesus die for our sins on the cross and raise from the dead three days later? If He did, the Bible is true and our faith is true. If not, everything we believe is a hoax. We might as well eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die.

A. Last year, I taught about how we can know that Jesus was who He said He was and that the resurrection story is true and thereby the rest of the Bible is true.

1. This year, I'm going to go a different direction. Typically on Easter, ministers teach about the crucifixion and resurrection and remind us all of what Jesus did at the cross and why we can have hope today.
2. This year, I want to put the story of the resurrection into a context of the story of the book of *Acts*. We've been studying through *Acts* on Sunday mornings to learn how the early church thrived in a time of hardship and what could have been apparent chaos with Jesus ascending to heaven and leaving the Apostles in charge.
3. Through 7 chapters of *Acts* we've seen the church grow without Jesus physically present and in the midst of challenges and persecution. Why? The preached the crucified and resurrected Christ. It was their centerpiece message!

B. Sometimes what Jesus did for us on the cross gets isolated into an event in history that we celebrate on Easter, but we lose sight of it for much of the rest of the year.

1. The focus often shifts into Christian living, behavior, codes of conduct, etc.
2. Sometimes we focus on stories in the Old or New Testament and isolate them from the main narrative about what Jesus did for us on the cross. This is why people take the Bible and say God is judging America by sending an Earthquake.
 - a. The whole point of why God send Jesus to the cross was so He would be judged in our place. **John 12:31** Jesus said 2,000 years ago that “*Now is the judgment of the world.*” He went on to say, “*He would be lifted up and draw all to Himself.*” **Jesus was the lightning rod for judgment.**
3. This doesn't mean everyone is saved. We do have to believe in order to be saved and today I want to show you from the book of *Acts* an example of how far God went to reach a man in order to see him saved.
 - a. I want you to hear your story within this story.
 - b. I want you to hear the story of someone your praying for within this story because it speaks to the love of God for humanity.

II. Divine Encounter - This morning I want to talk to you about Divine Encounter and as much as we celebrate revival around here, how much God will do just to reach one person.

A. Acts 8:1-5

1. After Steven is martyred, the Sadducees and Pharisees began to persecute the church in Jerusalem. This caused them to have to scatter. **The opportunity in this was they would be able to take the message to the rest of the world.**
2. Those who were scattered began to preach the gospel everywhere and the kingdom of God began to expand.
3. God sent a man named Phillip to Samaria and he preached Christ to them. What did he preach? Did he preach the 10 commandments? Did he preach Noah's flood? He preached Jesus!
4. Out of his preaching began a **GREAT REVIVAL** with signs and wonders began at Samaria. A whole region was impacted. We'll look at that story in a few weeks, but I want to show you today how much God loved one single person.

B. Acts 8:26-40

1. God sent the initiator of a revival 100 miles south to a town in the desert called Gaza. And He's doing it for one person. How much did He love that one man that He would pull a man out of revival to save just one!
2. Steven comes across the Ethiopian who had a heart for God, but didn't know God. He had been to Jerusalem and received God's word which is why he's reading *Isaiah*, but he doesn't have a clue what it means.
 - a. God is hungry for those who are hungry for truth.
 - b. We live in a world today where there is more knowledge available than ever before, but less knowledge of truth.
 - c. A person who is hungry for truth will believe the truth wherever it leads. This is why I try to teach on the unconditional love and goodness of God so much. I believe if people understood how much God loved them and how invested He is in them, they would want to follow Him anywhere.
 - d. A wrong view of God's nature, keeps people's hearts closed to truth.
3. Steven walks this man through the scripture he is reading from **Isaiah 53:7-8**.
 - a. He asks if Isaiah is talking about himself? This is how lost he is.
 - b. Many Jews in that day thought this passage referred to Israel itself or to Isaiah the prophet. **They had no concept of the Greatest King of all time suffering for them.**
 - c. Steven takes this passage and uses it to lead the man to Jesus. He preached Christ to him. The whole Bible points to Jesus.
4. Notice how Phillip led him to salvation. He didn't point him to all of his sin or tell him he had to repent of all his sinful actions and habits to be saved.
 - a. I'm not saying we should get saved and keep living in sin or not try to change. I'm saying it takes getting the Holy Spirit inside of us to change.
 - b. Phillip baptized the man (public profession of faith) and symbolic of sin being washed away. Then the spirit led Phillip away to another place.

III. Conclusion - Do you see what God went through to reach one man who was hungry for truth? He pulled a man out of revival (do you know how hard those things are to start?) to reach one man. But isn't the nature of God to leave the 99 to reach the one.

A. If this is all new to you, it's quite possible you have never heard the gospel before. You may have heard the Bible taught through a religious lens, but the true gospel is all about everything God did for you.

1. Jesus was the lamb slain from the foundation of the world, just for you.
2. God has gone through extraordinary efforts just to get you here so you can here how much he loves you.
3. Today isn't an accident. It's a day of divine encounter.

B. Call Up Prayer Team

C. I'm going to pray for all of us to receive a fresh revelation of the love of God and after I'm done if you would like to receive Jesus as savior, come down and someone on our prayer team would love to pray with you so you can receive Jesus.