**Series OVERVIEW**

 “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” -Acts 1:8

As Jesus left earth to return to his Father in heaven, he promised that the Holy Spirit would come empower his followers to carry his mission forward. He left. They waited. They prayed.

Then, on the day of Pentecost, a small group of Christ-followers were gathered together. Suddenly, a powerful wind filled the room! Visible bursts of fire came to rest on each person! The promised Holy Spirit had come! Heaven was breaking through!

For the next six weeks, we are going to study the book of Acts to learn how the Spirit was at work in the early church and how God wants to breakthrough in our lives today.

Over the past couple years at COMMUNITY, we have sensed God doing a new thing in us and through us. As we move forward, we are asking God for breakthroughs.

* Breakthroughs in PRAYER as we grow in our dependence on the Holy Spirit.
* Breakthroughs in PEOPLE as we ask the Spirit to not only transform our own lives, but to use us to transform the lives of others as well.
* Breakthroughs in PLACES as each COMMUNITY location takes a next step in helping people find their way back to God.
* Breakthroughs in PLANTS as we continue to partner with the Spirit in reproducing the mission in new places.

We believe that what God wants to do in us and through us in this next season will also require a breakthrough in generosity. So during this series, we will be launching a 3-year BREAKTHROUGH Initiative. Each week of the series, we’ll learn about opportunities we have to be generous “above and beyond” our regular giving to make breakthroughs in people, places, and plants possible.

Finally, as this series is based on the book of Acts, we’ve decided to do a Monday - Friday “Turn the Page Bible Experience” as we read and study the book of Acts together.

**Docent Requests**

Static Docent Requests (in order of priority):

Commentary (WORD) on key passages.

Relevant quotes that correspond with Big Idea.

Intro/hook ideas (WOW) that correspond with Big Idea.

Illustrations/metaphors that correspond with the Big Idea.

Pertinent brain/social science insight.

Practical responses/applications ideas. (WHAT NOW?)

**Week 1 | October 20, 2019 | Breakthrough in Prayer**

**Join a Team Sign Up – Hand out Breakthrough Prayer Bracelets to all attenders
Every location should have a Breakthrough Table in the lobby this series.**

**Scripture**

Acts 1:8-9, Acts 1:12-14, Acts 2:1-4,14, Acts 2:42, Acts 3:1-10, Acts 4:23-31

**Message Big Idea**

Breakthrough begins with the partnership between a praying people and a powerful Holy Spirit.

8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

9 After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. -Acts 1:8-9

12 Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives,a Sabbath day’s walk from the city. 13 When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. 14 They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers. -Acts 1:12-14

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them...14 Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd…” -Acts 2:1-4, 14

42 They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. -Acts 2:42

Peter and John went to the Temple one afternoon to take part in the three o’clock prayer service. 2 As they approached the Temple, a man lame from birth was being carried in. Each day he was put beside the Temple gate, the one called the Beautiful Gate, so he could beg from the people going into the Temple. 3 When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for some money. 4 Peter and John looked at him intently, and Peter said, “Look at us!” 5 The lame man looked at them eagerly, expecting some money. 6 But Peter said, “I don’t have any silver or gold for you. But I’ll give you what I have. In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, get up and walk!” 7 Then Peter took the lame man by the right hand and helped him up. And as he did, the man’s feet and ankles were instantly healed and strengthened. 8 He jumped up, stood on his feet, and began to walk! Then, walking, leaping, and praising God, he went into the Temple with them.

9 All the people saw him walking and heard him praising God. 10 When they realized he was the lame beggar they had seen so often at the Beautiful Gate, they were absolutely astounded! 11 They all rushed out in amazement to Solomon’s Colonnade, where the man was holding tightly to Peter and John.

23 On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. 24 When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. “Sovereign Lord,” they said, “you made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. 25 You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David: “‘Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? 26 The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the Lord and against his anointed one.’ 27 Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. 28 They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. 29 Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. 30 Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”

31 After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly. -Acts 4:23-31

**Message Description:**

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you…” -Acts 1:8a

As Jesus left earth to return to his Father in heaven, he promised that the Holy Spirit would come empower his followers to carry his mission forward. He left. They waited. They prayed.

A lot of us want breakthroughs...breakthroughs in our lives, our families, our church...but we don’t want to wait and pray. However, what emerges in the first few chapters of the book of Acts is a pattern:

The people pray (Acts 1:12-14) - the Spirit breaks through (Acts 2:1-4, 14)

The people pray (Acts 2:42, 3:1) - the Spirit breaks through (Acts 3:2-10)

The people pray (Acts 4:23-30) - the Spirit breaks through (Acts 4:31)

Breakthrough begins with the partnership between a praying people and a powerful Holy Spirit.

This is a pattern that has continued throughout history. In this message, we may include a brief synopsis of some of the historical revival movements that started with a small group of people who committed to pray such as:

* The Moravians and Count Zinzendorf in Germany in 1727.
* “The Holiness Club” with John and Charles Wesley and George Whitfield that led to the First Great Awakening during the 1730s-1740s.
* Story of Charles Finney that led to the Second Great Awakening in the United States in the late 1700s and early 1800s.
* We’ll want to include a modern example of a female. Perhaps Heidi Baker?

Back to the early church... notice the results of these breakthroughs.

In Acts 2, the Spirit breaks through and Peter is empowered with a bold faith to confidently proclaim the good news of Jesus to a crowd of thousands. Remember, this was the same guy who just weeks earlier denied even knowing Jesus.

In Acts 3, the Spirit breaks through with signs and wonders as a lame man is healed. Something only God could do!

In Acts 4, we get a more detailed picture of this praying church. We see that they were praying for the same two things we see in the previous chapters:

A bold faith (“...enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness…”)

Something only God can do (“Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders”)

As they prayed, “the place where they were meeting was shaken” as they were filled with the Holy Spirit (4:31).

As we begin this series and this Breakthrough Initiative, are we willing to pray for these two things: A bold faith and for God to do something only God can do?

We’ll want to challenge people to take practical next steps this week by:

**Challenge #1 - Prayer Meetings**

Participate in a prayer meeting this week. Every Small Group will use the provided curriculum to have a prayer meeting this week. Every location will also offer one or more prayer meetings for those not in a Small Group.

**Challenge #2 - Turn the Page Acts**

Join us as we study the book of Acts together Monday-Friday over the next month (email or podcast). Each day will also include a brief prayer we are asking everyone to pray so that we can join together as a praying people.

This first message will lean toward “big picture”... breakthrough for us as a church community. In week 2, we’ll focus more on individual breakthrough.

**Message Specific Docent Requests:**

A paragraph summary of each of the historical revival movements mentioned with an emphasis on the role prayer played in the movement.

A paragraph summary of Heidi Baker’s ministry. Stories of how she has demonstrated bold faith and experienced signs and wonders.

**Week 2 | October 27, 2019 | Breakthrough in People**

**Join a Team Sign Up – Child dedication Sunday**

**Scripture**

Acts 8:26-10:23 (5 Stories of Individual People), Acts 10:24-48 (Group Gathering in Cornelius’s House), Acts 1:15, Acts 2:41, Acts 4:4, Acts 5:14 (Community)

**Message Big Idea**

The Spirit brings breakthrough in people… in individual lives, in groups, and in whole communities.

* 15 During this time, when about 120 believers were together in one place, Peter stood up and addressed them. -Acts 1:15
* 41 Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church that day—about 3,000 in all. -Acts 2:41
* 4 But many of the people who heard their message believed it, so the number of men who believed now totaled about 5,000. -Acts 4:4
* 14 Yet more and more people believed and were brought to the Lord—crowds of both men and women. -Acts 5:14

**Message Description:**

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you…” -Acts 1:8a

Most of us know what it feels like to need a breakthrough.

In the early church, the Spirit brought breakthrough in people. In chapters 8-10 of Acts, we read about a series of breakthroughs in individual lives. (The idea is to do a short paragraph synopsis of each of these stories.)

* A Breakthrough for the Curious - The Ethiopian
* A Breakthrough for the Resistant - Saul/Paul
* A Breakthrough for the Afflicted - Aeneas
* A Breakthrough for the Dead - Dorcas
* A Breakthrough for the Comfortable - Peter

What kind of breakthrough do you need in your life?

* Maybe like the Ethiopian, you are curious about following Jesus, but you’ve never taken the step to say “yes” to him. Today could be your breakthrough.
* Maybe like Paul, you have been resistant to how God wants to work in your life. Today could be your breakthrough.
* Maybe like Aeneas, you are suffering from some kind of physical, emotional, or mental affliction. Today could be your breakthrough.
* Maybe like Dorcas, you don’t feel anything. You’re numb. It doesn’t feel like there is any life flowing through you. Today could be your breakthrough.
* Maybe like Peter, you’ve grown comfortable. You think you know what you need to know. You are unaware that God wants to open up a whole new world to you. Today could be your breakthrough.

When we are open to the Spirit bringing breakthrough to our own lives, it can lead to a breakthrough for others. That’s what we see happen in the last of our five stories. As Peter is challenged to move outside of the life he’s always known, his breakthrough leads to a large gathering of people in Cornelius’s house finding their way back to God (Acts 10:24-48).

As part of the Breakthrough Initiative, we want to ask God to not only bring breakthrough in our own lives, but also to use us as a church community to help bring breakthrough to several groups of people.

* Emerging Leaders and Leadership Residents
* Artists and Songwriters
* Students

Ultimately, the kind of breakthrough we are asking for is the rapid reproduction of his mission. We want to see thousands upon thousands find their way back to God. This is what we see happen in the early church as their community explodes from 120 to 3000 to over 5000 to more and more people finding their way back to God everyday.

Next week we’re going to talk about how God wants to do just that in this very place, and how we can join him in making it happen.

**Week 3 | November 3, 2019 | Breakthrough in Places**

**Time Change Weekend**

**Scripture**: Acts 17:16-34

**Message Big Idea**

 The Spirit brings breakthrough in specific places in specific ways.

16 While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. 17 So he reasoned in the synagogue with both Jews and God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there. 18 A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to debate with him. Some of them asked, “What is this babbler trying to say?” Others remarked, “He seems to be advocating foreign gods.” They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection. 19 Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus, where they said to him, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? 20 You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we would like to know what they mean.”21 (All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.)

22 Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: “People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. 23 For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: to an unknown god. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you. 24 “The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. 25 And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. 26 From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. 27 God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. 28 ‘For in him we live and move and have our being.’ As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’ 29 “Therefore since we are God’s offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by human design and skill.30 In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. 31 For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.” 32 When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, “We want to hear you again on this subject.” 33 At that, Paul left the Council. 34 Some of the people became followers of Paul and believed. Among them was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, also a woman named Damaris, and a number of others. -Acts 17:16-34

**Message Description**

“...and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” -Acts 1:8

The first Christ-followers were Spirit-led in moving the mission forward in particular places in specific ways.

As we move forward in the book of Acts, the good news of Jesus begins to spread as Christ-followers go out from Jerusalem to the towns, villages, and cities of the Roman Empire. This is what Jesus said they would do (Acts 1:8). Churches are established in each of these places.

We want to tie what we see here in Acts to our story here at COMMUNITY.

We are a multisite church because we believe God has called us to spread the good news of Jesus across the Chicagoland area.

Would be great to include a history of COMMUNITY to remind people of all the places where we are living out the mission (the average attender likely does not know our multisite story).

The second half of the book of Acts is primarily centered on Paul and the places he travels to establish churches. In Acts 17, Paul finds himself in Athens…a particular place with a unique culture. He does what is needed to reach that place.

Paul observes the culture of the place. (“All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.”)

Paul recognizes the problems in the place. (“...he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols.”)

Paul engages in ways that could hpftwbtG. In this culture where people “spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas,” Paul engaged in rational apologetics to try to help the Athenians ftwbtG. (“So he reasoned in the synagogue with both Jews and God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there.”)

In this message, we want to help people see that we (our COMMUNITY location) are in this particular place (our city/neighborhood) for a particular purpose (hpftwbtG). We are asking God for a breakthrough in this place.

As a way to talk about the culture of each location, we’d love to have each location do some demographic research on their city. The writers of this message can provide a template for what we’d want to share at each location. (Can Pat N help with this as well with data from GLOO? https://church-planting.net/free-demographic-report/)

Though the demographics will differ, we can likely talk about the same “problems” in each of our cities and neighborhoods: loneliness, depression, addiction, etc.

So many people in our city are looking for “the unknown god.” Who they need is Jesus.

We are asking God for breakthrough in this place. We’ll challenge people to partner with the Spirit in two specific ways to help bring about breakthrough in this place:

To engage in “relational apologetics” in our community. Those struggling with loneliness, depression, addiction, etc. need someone to come alongside them to love them and point them to Jesus. Will we let the Spirit use us to bring breakthrough?

For our location to take a step forward in our strategy to hpftwbtG. That is what the “Places” projects in the Breakthrough Initiative are all about. The dollars we commit to the Breakthrough Initiative will help move the mission forward in all 10 COMMUNITY locations.

**Docent Request:**

Other resources for how to exegete a community/neighborhood.

**Week 4 | November 10, 2019 | Breakthrough in Plants**

**Breakthrough - Children’s presentation – announcement of early gifts**

**Scripture**: Acts 11:19-30, Acts 13:1-5, Acts 13-14 Paul’s First Missionary Journey, Acts 14:21-28

**Message Big Idea**

The Spirit brings breakthrough by planting new churches.

19 Now those who had been scattered by the persecution that broke out when Stephen was killed traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, spreading the word only among Jews. 20 Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. 21 The Lord’s hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. 22 News of this reached the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. 23 When he arrived and saw what the grace of God had done, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. 24 He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and a great number of people were brought to the Lord. 25 Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, 26 and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.

27 During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. 28 One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.) 29 The disciples, as each one was able, decided to provide help for the brothers and sisters living in Judea. 30 This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul. -Acts 11:19-30

1 Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. 2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” 3 So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

4 The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus. 5 When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. John was with them as their helper. -Acts 13:1-5

21 They preached the gospel in that city and won a large number of disciples. Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, 22 strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God,” they said. 23 Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust. 24 After going through Pisidia, they came into Pamphylia, 25 and when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia. 26 From Attalia they sailed back to Antioch, where they had been committed to the grace of God for the work they had now completed. 27 On arriving there, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. 28 And they stayed there a long time with the disciples. -Acts 14:21-28

**Message Description:**

“...you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” -Acts 1:8

When Jesus commissioned his followers and said they would be his witnesses first in Jerusalem, then spreading out to Judea and Samaria, and eventually reaching the ends of the earth, God had a plan for how he would accomplish this.

What is God’s plan? Church planting.

The second half of the book of Acts tells the story of the spread of the good news of Jesus across the known world. At the end of Acts 11, a key church is established in the city of Antioch.

Antioch was an important city in the Roman Empire, so important that the historian Josephus referred to it as the “third” city of the empire after Rome and Alexandria. Antioch’s population was large, wealthy, and comprised a diverse mix of cultures and peoples. The response to the good news of Jesus in mid first-century Antioch is a significant development in the story of Christianity.

Followers of Jesus were first called “Christians” here in Antioch (11:26). A great number of people in this city found their way back to God (11:21) and Paul and Barnabus spent a year teaching them the ways of Jesus (11:26).

In his book on the Holy Spirit called Inspired, theologian Jack Levison points out four “inward” qualities of a church shaped by the Holy Spirit that prepared this church in Antioch to be fruitful in their mission “outward.” (from The Story of God Commentary by Dean Pinter).

The church at Antioch was a listening and learning community (11:26)

The church at Antioch was generous (11:27-30).

The church at Antioch was a multicultural community (13:1).

The church at Antioch was engaged in the spiritual disciplines of prayer and fasting (13:2-3).

What happened as a result of this inward work of the Holy Spirit? The church at Antioch became a “sending church.” They set apart Paul and Barnabus and sent them out to plant more churches (Acts 13:1-5).

As the next couple chapters of Acts unfold, Paul and Barnabus travel throughout the area today known as Turkey planting churches in… (Acts 13-14)

Perga

Pisidian Antioch

Iconium

Lystra

Derbe

...before returning to Antioch to report all they had seen God do. The church at Antioch continues to be involved in the mission as a sending church (Acts 14:21-28).

We believe God has called us to be a sending church. That is what the “Plants” part of the Breakthrough Initiative is all about! What do we believe God is calling us to do over these next three years? Support church planters in Chicago, primarily those planting on the south and west sides.

Our idea for this message is to include a 4-5 minute on-location segment where Jon will join church planters such as Ricky Brown and/or David Washington to cast vision for church planting in Chicago.

If you are a follower of Jesus, a church planter has directly impacted your walk with Jesus. In the first century, a church was established at Antioch. People left for Turkey and Africa where churches were formed. From Turkey and Africa they went to Europe. From Europe they came to the American colonies where churches were planted. On April 26, 1879, a group of people started First Christian Church in Vandalia, Missouri. Years later, some members of that church invited a 10-year-old boy to attend. He found his way back to God and grew up and became a pastor who planted Deer Creek Christian Church in Crete, Illinois. That man had two sons who also went on to plant a church. It’s a church called Community Christian Church started in Naperville, Illinois and going on to plant 9 other locations...the church you are attending right now!

**Docent Request:**

Any tidbits regarding the list of ancient cities above that could help us briefly describe them in the message.

**Week 5 | November 17, 2019 | Breakthrough in Faith**

**Commitment Sunday & Celebration Generosity**

**Commitment Card Envelopes Handed out to all attenders.**

**Scripture:** Acts 21:10-36, Philippians 3:1-11, Philippians 1:21

**Message Big Idea**

The Spirit brings breakthrough when we courageously step forward in faith.

10 After we had been there a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. 11 Coming over to us, he took Paul’s belt, tied his own hands and feet with it and said, “The Holy Spirit says, ‘In this way the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.’” 12 When we heard this, we and the people there pleaded with Paul not to go up to Jerusalem. 13 Then Paul answered, “Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.” 14 When he would not be dissuaded, we gave up and said, “The Lord’s will be done.” 15 After this, we started on our way up to Jerusalem. 16 Some of the disciples from Caesarea accompanied us and brought us to the home of Mnason, where we were to stay. He was a man from Cyprus and one of the early disciples. 17 When we arrived at Jerusalem, the brothers and sisters received us warmly.18 The next day Paul and the rest of us went to see James, and all the elders were present. 19 Paul greeted them and reported in detail what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. 20 When they heard this, they praised God. Then they said to Paul: “You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews have believed, and all of them are zealous for the law. 21 They have been informed that you teach all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to turn away from Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or live according to our customs. 22 What shall we do? They will certainly hear that you have come, 23 so do what we tell you. There are four men with us who have made a vow. 24 Take these men, join in their purification rites and pay their expenses, so that they can have their heads shaved. Then everyone will know there is no truth in these reports about you, but that you yourself are living in obedience to the law. 25 As for the Gentile believers, we have written to them our decision that they should abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality.”

26 The next day Paul took the men and purified himself along with them. Then he went to the temple to give notice of the date when the days of purification would end and the offering would be made for each of them. 27 When the seven days were nearly over, some Jews from the province of Asia saw Paul at the temple. They stirred up the whole crowd and seized him,28 shouting, “Fellow Israelites, help us! This is the man who teaches everyone everywhere against our people and our law and this place. And besides, he has brought Greeks into the temple and defiled this holy place.” 29 (They had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with Paul and assumed that Paul had brought him into the temple.) 30 The whole city was aroused, and the people came running from all directions. Seizing Paul, they dragged him from the temple, and immediately the gates were shut. 31 While they were trying to kill him, news reached the commander of the Roman troops that the whole city of Jerusalem was in an uproar. 32 He at once took some officers and soldiers and ran down to the crowd. When the rioters saw the commander and his soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. 33 The commander came up and arrested him and ordered him to be bound with two chains. Then he asked who he was and what he had done. 34 Some in the crowd shouted one thing and some another, and since the commander could not get at the truth because of the uproar, he ordered that Paul be taken into the barracks. 35 When Paul reached the steps, the violence of the mob was so great he had to be carried by the soldiers. 36 The crowd that followed kept shouting, “Get rid of him!” -Acts 21:10-36

Further, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you. 2 Watch out for those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh. 3 For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh— 4 though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: 5 circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; 6 as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless. 7 But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. 8 What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. 10 I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead. -Philippians 3:1-11

“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.” -Philippians 1:21

**Message Description:**

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” -Acts 1:8

What are you trading your life for?

Recognition?

Influence?

Affluence?

An address?

Success?

A relationship?

Significance?

Stuff?

We’re all trading our lives for something.

Paul is the main human character in the second half of the book of Acts. Over and over again, his faith is tested; and over and over again, Paul demonstrates a willingness to trade his life for the mission of Jesus.

No one had more to lose than Paul. He was born into a prominent tribe. He was a member of the religious elite. His record was impeccable. But whatever he had gained, he now willingly loss for the sake of Jesus and his mission (Philippians 3:1-11).

The faith Paul demonstrates in Acts 21 is astounding. Through a prophet, the Holy Spirit tells Paul that imprisonment awaits him in Jerusalem. His friends plead with him not to go. But Paul was determined to continue moving the mission of Jesus forward.

Some would see it as reckless.

Some would view it as senseless.

Some would argue it was too much.

But for Paul there was really only one thing that mattered: Jesus.

His whole life was given to Jesus and his mission.

He was empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Fear couldn’t hold him back.

He was ready to step forward in faith.

What are you trading your life for? We’re all trading our lives for something.

Trade your life for the one thing that will last forever.

This will be Commitment Sunday. On this date we will ask people to step forward in faith and make a financial commitment to the Breakthrough Initiative.

Some might see it as reckless.

Some might view it as senseless.

Some might argue it is too much.

But it really is about one thing that matters: Jesus.

As Paul stepped out in faith, hardships did come. The way wasn’t easy. But ultimately, Paul carried the good news of Jesus to Rome, and, as they say, the rest is history.

But that history is still being made. We, together, as the church are writing Acts 29.

What will we trade our lives for?

Will we give our whole selves to Jesus and his mission?

Will we open ourselves to be empowered to the Holy Spirit?

Will we let go of our fear?

Are we ready to step forward in faith?

We’ll challenge one another to take hold of Paul’s words: “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.” -Philippians 1:21

**Week 6 | November 24, 2019 | Breakthrough in Thanksgiving**

**Scripture:** Acts 2:42-47

**Message Big Idea**

When the Spirit brings breakthrough, we respond together with thanksgiving.

42 They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. -Acts 2:42-47

**Message Description:**

This final week of the series will be a celebration of how God is at work in and through our church.

Like the early church described in Acts 2, we too are...

Rejoicing in awe at who God is and how he is at work.

Thankful that he has brought us together as one church to live in community with one another as we carry out his mission.

Grateful for how the Holy Spirit is breaking through in our lives and in the lives of those who will find their way back to God through the Breakthrough Initiative.

The Teaching Team and the Big Idea Factory will plan this service together. With shorter teaching and more time for experience, we will focus this holiday-week Sunday on thanksgiving.