

April 24, 2016

Why don't you listen?

Read Acts 1: 1-11

"Why don't you listen to me?"

This is a question I often ask of my 3-year old. She often replies with the classic, "I don't know." I will be showing her something, maybe it's how to put one of her toys away, maybe it's how to help me after she's begged and begged to help me do whatever it is that I'm doing. Then, two seconds after I show her what to do she does something completely different. Okay, Okay. She's three, what should I expect from her. But, as I watch her do those kinds of things and I chuckle to myself, I am often drawn in memory back to my own teenage years when I would listen to my father or mother and then go off and do whatever I wanted anyway. For my daughter, I am not yet at the point where I get frustrated with her for not doing some of the things I ask her to do. After all she's still learning. But, as her actions evoke memories of myself I am left thinking how frustrating I must have for my parents after I had learned better than a 3-year old.

This brings me to Acts. The disciples had witnessed the resurrection in a more personal way than anyone would get to after them, until the last day when all of the faithful are raised. The women going to finish the burial process had been gently reminded of Jesus own words, when they found the tomb empty. "Why do you seek the living among the dead," the angels queried. These women were instructed to remember that he had told them that he would rise. When they told the Disciples this, they didn't receive it too well. Then as Jesus appeared to them and they finally got it, he prepared them for the ascension. Jesus told them to go out into the world and be witnesses of all they had seen and heard to its very ends, then he was gone.

Roots

Even after learning their lesson at the resurrection, the Disciples stood staring into the heavens after their ascended Lord as dumbfounded sheep stand and drown in the rain. Why didn't they listen? Why did they need their own reminder of what he said from the angels? "Why are you standing around staring into heaven," the messengers asked. They had to be reminded that he was coming again. How frustrating that must have been! Or was it?

Certainly, it is not God's idea for any of his followers to huddle together in awe, just waiting for Christ to return in full glory. But, perhaps this repetition is written for our benefit, that is the church's benefit. Perhaps God wanted us to realize that his story in history was to be repeated again and again, even in those most awing moments or in the most terrifying days. Maybe this reminder is not just God's way of shoving the first disciples out of the nest. Maybe the inclusion of these two "Why" questions in Luke's two-parter is part of St. Luke's way of showing us that being Jesus follower isn't about standing piously at the foot of the altar or sitting neatly in the church pew on Sundays. Maybe these "Why aren't you listening" questions are the Holy Spirit's way of reminding us that if the Disciples who witnessed Jesus' power needed to hear and tell the story again and again, then just maybe we need to hear and tell the story of salvation over and over again. So, don't stand their staring, go tell the Jesus' story of salvation to someone who's never heard it before, show God you have been listening to him. Oh and maybe, just maybe be awestruck when you get to hear it again and realize that you are part of His story in history.

Pastor Carl O. Johnson

