

Text: Acts 20.1-12
St Stephen's

March 30, 2008
Baptisms/Sun

What Happened in Church...

End of Paul's third Mission Journey...



He traveled through that area, speaking many words of encouragement to the people, and finally arrived in Greece, where he stayed three months. Because the Jews made a plot against him just as he was about to sail for Syria, he decided to go back through Macedonia.

Acts 20:2-3 (NIV)

As he travelled, he

- Encouraged the churches
- Delivered the offering to Jerusalem
- Wrote to the Romans...

He **arrives at Troas**. But he is eager to get back to Jerusalem, so he only stays for a week. We have only one story from that week, a church service. Let's look at what happened in church that week...

*On the **first day of the week** we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight. Acts 20:7*

The 'First Day' of the week was the day of Jesus' resurrection. The **day**

became special.

That was the day of most of **Jesus' resurrection appearances**. They noted this and thought about it... The day became special.

In the last book of the bible, 'The Revelation', John tells us where and when he saw the revelations...

"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day" Rev 1.10

By his time, the first day, the resurrection day had become known as 'The Lord's Day'. The day had become special...

*On the **first day of the week** we came together to break bread...*

That became **their habit**. After work, they came together in someone's home for worship and Communion. Their families, friends, gathered – and when they got together, they knew that the Lord Jesus would be with them. They gathered for fellowship and worship and communion and preaching of scripture...

There are important benefits in 'church going'... and in **raising kids in church**. You come discouraged or weighed down, and you go home lifted up! Sometimes you don't even know why; it has to do with the resurrection...

- When we gather, He comes.
- When we pray, He listens.
- When we break bread, He is present.
- When we listen, He speaks...

Churches are **resurrection places**. Sundays are **resurrection days**...

Setting: Paul gives us a few phrases that describe the evening. Remember that Sunday was a workday...

because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight.

Paul preached for five hours!!!

There were many lamps in the upstairs room where we were meeting.

Acts 20:8 (NIV)

Oil lamps and candles warmed the room, that was already full of people. After dinner on a workday, warm room, long sermon...

Seated in a window was a young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep as Paul talked on and on. When he was sound asleep, he fell to the ground from the third story...

Acts 20:9-12

Eutychus was about **12-14 years old**. A young teen. I would guess that he climbed into that window to stay awake! And he **fell asleep**, and **fell out!!!**

Don't miss **Luke's humor** here. He is **telling a story on his friend Paul** – *'as Paul talked on and on.'* And on and on... It is a good thing to tell stories on ourselves. Grace gives us the chance to take ourselves more lightly, to laugh at ourselves, to not take ourselves so seriously.

By the way, let me tell you the top ten things that never get said at St Stephens. Bill and I did a survey...

Five hour sermon!!! We have a **time limit**... I can tell when I've hit it. **Clues:** the public glance at the watch. Reading the announcements in the service leaflets. My Daughter: Texting friends. A few special people, sleeping...

Eutychus **falls asleep**, and **falls out!!!**

But then **it gets serious**...

he was picked up dead. Paul went down, threw himself on the young man and put his arms around him. "Don't be alarmed," he said. "He's alive!" Then he went upstairs again and broke bread and ate. After talking until daylight, he left.

Acts 20:9-11

Remember that Luke, who is writing this, is a **doctor**. Eutychus was dead after the fall. Imagine the reaction when Paul said, 'He's alive'!!!

Why did Luke record this story? He saw something special in it. The miracle was worth including on its own, but I think it pointed to something more.

Miracles happen for their own sake, but God gives them for another reason also; they are **'signs.'** You know what a sign is. **A sign is something that points beyond itself** to something else, something greater. **The miracles** are like that; they wonderful **acts of kindness** and mercy and grace – **and they are signs** of something larger, something important, something ahead.

What this miracle pointed to was something about the church. **This wasn't the first time** those words, 'He's alive!', were said. These were **resurrection words...**

They began to understand that churches **are 'back from the dead' places!** 'He's alive' places! I'll bet Paul thought about this and talked about this - Maybe that is why he talked until daylight! Another 5 hour sermon – after his first 5 hour sermon!!!

It is **a good word to parents...** sometimes it seems like a son or a daughter has fallen asleep, has fallen out, like one of your kids has gotten lost – like one of your kids has died. Raising kids can have heartbreaking seasons. Sometimes what it takes is for one of God's followers to **wrap their arms around that lost kid and bring him back.**

Our God can bring people back from the dead. That is **the business** the church of Jesus Christ is in. That is the business above every other business... churches **are 'back from the dead' places!** 'He's alive' places!

The people took the young man home alive and were greatly comforted.

Acts 20:12

The word 'comforted' literally means "**called alongside.**" it is the same word Jesus uses for the Holy Spirit. 'The comforter', 'the encourager'.

Churches are places where God 'comes alongside' people and encourages them.

Look at the opening verses from this chapter...

Paul sent for the disciples and, after encouraging them, said good-bye and set out for Macedonia. He traveled through that area, speaking many words of encouragement to the people, and finally arrived in Greece...

Acts 20:1-2

The ministry of **encouragement happens** when a believer **comes alongside** you during a hard time and brings God's compassion and truth to you. It is so important. **People need encouragement.** Life can be so hard. It makes all the difference if you take time to love someone and encourage them and remind them of how great the Lord is...

Paul wanted the churches he planted to be '**come alongside**' places... Where people **always went home encouraged.**

Wouldn't it be wonderful if you came to church every weekend and **prayed before you came**, 'Lord, show me someone to encourage today with your love and your truth...'

Families can be 'come alongside' places... it is wonderful when children grown up in homes where Moms and Dads are always encouraging them with God's encouragement...

Resurrection Day Place...

New Life Place...

Come alongside Place...