

((VIDEO)) You saw this already....the spread of the Gospel..it all started in ACTS

God has been faithful and full of grace in this....the church could have stayed in Jerusalem.... BUT THEY DIDN'T right?

Well really they kind of were....**LOOK AT ACTS 6:7** (disciples multiplied in JERUSALEM)

That's good...but God wanted the Gospel taken to the NATIONS....not just one city.

This is what He was doing, promising to Abraham in GEN. 12 (The Bible is one big story)

So what happened? **Persecution**

The Church began to go out...not by choice...but through persecution.

We saw the start of this last week right...with the stoning of Stephen...

This would mark the beginning of the church taking the gospel to the nations.

it wasn't that they received ACTS 1:8 and went gladly...but it came through persecution. They were scattered.

LOOK AT ACTS 8:1 – (almost ironic that Acts 8:1 comes because ACTS 1:8 wasn't obeyed)

What does that mean? I think it means that God is always working in His creation for His glory.

The Gospel would be taken to the nations – the question was how? In Acts it was through scattering.

Rather than thinking the persecution and suffering would stop God's plan...it just fell in line with what God was doing.

This scattering isn't a new thing in Scripture: God is always moving people through situations or circumstances

It happened in the **garden**.... with **Abraham**...in the **Exodus**... in **the exile** ...it happened here in **Acts**.

We see a pattern through Scripture of God scattering his people {for the purpose of} gathering for His glory.

In Acts we see this scattering played out....it wasn't gumdrops and lollipops...it was darkness..

But in the darkness we see the faithfulness of God and the willingness of a people to follow Him.

God working in His creation for His glory....ultimately through Christ.

I pray you've seen that this year...as we've walked through the Bible....that God is working in His creation for His glory
Is He always working the way we would work or the way we would want? **NO!**

But He is working....for his glory....and ultimately He accomplishes this work through Christ.

And we are still here really....God is still working in His creation through Christ....through the church...through the Spirit

What we see tonight is God continuing His work that began with Abraham ...blessing the nations.

It didn't look too good here in Acts....Jesus is gone....the church is sent out....but what greets them right away?

TROUBLE – PAIN – PERSECUTION – DEATH.

But in this we see that God is faithful...nothing would stop Him working and doing what He desired.

IN THIS – us looking back at Acts – we can't think it's all finished...that God is finished working.

Still today there are people, nations who have never heard the name of Jesus. **I don't think we get that.**

We can get **coke** to the nations but we can't get the Gospel there? really....**Colgate?**

There are only 2 countries in the world where you can't get coke (NORTH KOREA & CUBA)

The 10/40 window –this window represent those who have never heard of Jesus.

nearly 5 billion people and over 8,000 people groups...69 countries.

THIS NEED to GO is still just as much alive as it's ever been. IT WILL BE UNTIL JESUS RETURNS.

There are people working this very moment to do this....we can do our part. **We can give, we can pray, we can go.**

BUT...sadly there are people here that do not know Jesus...people in AMERICA.

There's people in this room, at your school, who have rejected Jesus...they don't know Him.

The Gospel has come but either they haven't heard or their heart is hardened.

the task of reaching the nations and sharing the Gospel is not finished.

So at this point in this story of the Bible we see the Gospel, the Church in Jerusalem (ACTS 6)

in Acts 8:1 we see the church begin to flee and as it goes it takes the Gospel it. **LOOK AT ACTS 11:19**

It was here in Antioch that the disciples (followers) were first called CHRISTIANS (CHRIST ONES). v.26

From here we see the Gospel taken to Cyprus, Tarsus (Jonah) to Ephesus, to Philippi, to Macedonia...to Rome....

The Gospel was moving....in the midst of this there was great persecutionleaving Jerusalem didn't mean the trouble stopped, it only got worse. The result is the gospel going to the nations and a number of churches started in ACTS – We see the rest of the NT being letters written back to people we see here in ACTS

These letters they would write, that we have in our hands, had the same message we need.

What does the Gospel mean for me and how do I live in light of it? in suffering, darkness, with opposition.

These new believers needed wisdom and understanding...but don't we need this same thing?

The big picture of the scattering of the church is that God is faithful to the promise of GEN. 12

to bless the nations....to take the Gospel to the nations... but we also see TWO BIG THINGS:

There are definitely things we take away from God doing this...

1. **God is always working** – somehow we've been convinced that GOD WORKING = SUNSHINE AND RAINBOWS. We forget that the rainbow is produced by combining sunlight and rain (good and bad) When things get rough we feel that God hates us....when things go south God must be distant. But even in the midst of judgment...isn't God working? Even in pain isn't God working? Even in the midst of scattering isn't God working?
Without the scattering the Gospel stays in Jerusalem....but God wanted the nations to hear, God is never surprised and never out of the picture...**he KNOWS (EXODUS)** He is near us. HE is working in the midst of these things and in light of these things. We can't think that darkness means God is asleep or doesn't care. God is always working in His creation
2. **God is always working because God is faithful to His cause** – not ours. We get that confused sometimes don't we? We think God is a God who is out to please us. But the thing is this...all God has ever done is for His glory. That itself is all that should ever be pleasing to us. But we must stop thinking of God as a sugar daddy.
are we blessed in light of this? YES....but we aren't the primary reason for all He does.

God is working because God is faithful to the only cause that truly matters....HIMSELF.

So even in Scattering, or trouble, we must trust God to work out HIS PLAN....we submit to and follow HIM

For this same reason **nothing will ever stop Him from accomplishing His Word (Isaiah 43:13 – I Work)**

The disciples and early followers struggled with how God was working....**(remember they were thinking KINGDOM)**

When Jesus was killed they were pretty down right? Confused...worried, scrambling.

But the story didn't end on GOOD FRIDAY – eventually it continued with ACTS 1:8 – be my witnesses.

In this they would begin to understand the truth....this world was not the actual kingdom....but while they were here they would live for the King. May this be our plea. This is not our home...but while here...I'll live for the King.

Take the Gospel near and take the Gospel far - Partnering with others but willing to go alone.

The thing is for us....we'd like to think the battle is over...that God has finished His work

and really....we see the result of that. Our lives are easy, comfortable...and so we remain here...in comfort.

Maybe it's the other way around...maybe we look at everything that's going on and think it's a losing battle.

Rather than standing firm in the Gospel we just give up and join the party...

We look at the condition of our country, laws, maybe just our own home or school and we just give up.

That's not the hope....the hope is that we trust that God is working in His creation for His glory.

and rather than giving up and getting sad we stand firm and understand **the darker the world the brighter the light.**

OUR SONG is so much louder and so needed in the dark times...**(TURN LIGHTS OFF?)** Light is needed in darkness

the prayer is this...that we trust that God is working....for His glory and that He is always working – even in the storms.

We've been asked to go...be his witnesses....thankfully people were faithful to God...thankfully God was faithful to continue His work...to bless the nations...**(HADNOUT – HISTORY OF GOSPEL GOING OUT)**

the task is the same...may join Him in taking the gospel to the nations...

Practically what does this look like for us?

.our lives should look different because of the Gospel – our conversations should sound different.

our instagram & twitter should show this – our pursuits should have a deeper purpose and end.

We should be salt and light...We live, we work, we breathe for the glory of God....

Walk worthy in the glorious gospel – may this be the highest pursuit all the days of your life.

Ultimately tonight shows us that nothing will ever stop Gods plan to bless the nations. Nothing will stop the Gospel from getting to the Nations....we can join in this work and trust Him or we can quit...give up, get depressed and go a different way.

I want to finish by reading some words of Paul who later in life would write back to one of these places the gospel went to in the scattering. **READ COL. 1:3-14** (Walk in a manner worthy of the Lord)