

Devoted to Prayer

May 16, 2021 Scott Gunn

All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers. — Acts 1:14

The opening verses of Acts chronicle a remarkable time in the life of the fledgling church. Jesus has been raised from the dead. He has appeared to the disciples and many others. And then he has ascended into heaven. The Spirit has not yet descended on the disciples and empowered them with the Holy Ghost.

One might imagine that the disciples would be afraid, perhaps even paralyzed by fear. They might struggle to decide who is in charge. Arguments might break out about what to do next. This is how the script would unfold for many of us, I'm sure. But the disciples followed a different roadmap.

They devoted themselves to prayer.

On the one hand, it seems completely obvious. But it also seems to go against every impulse of human nature. That is exactly why prayer was and is always the right answer. When we pray, we remember that it is not about us. When we pray, we can open ourselves to the leading of the Spirit who might call us to places we could not imagine ourselves.

We certainly pray in our churches these days. On Sunday morning we practice corporate prayer and worship. It's common to begin and end meetings in prayer. Many congregations have midweek prayer services of one kind or another. But what if we devoted ourselves to prayer?

In Acts 6, we read what happens when leaders prioritize prayer.

And the twelve called together the whole community of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should neglect the word of God in order to wait on tables. Therefore, friends, select from among yourselves seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this task, while we, for our part, will devote ourselves to prayer and to serving the word." — Acts 6:2-4

The leaders knew that prayer had to be the top priority, even more than feeding people. What if we insisted that our church's leaders prioritize prayer and find other ways to complete the necessary tasks of the church's ministry? We elect bishops and expect them to be CEOs. We call parish priests and expect them to run a small non-profit. We offer prayer as one of many activities in the church. What if we did it differently? What if we made prayer the most important thing?