

Reach Sunday

For the Worship of God – 08.16.26

Acts 5:12-16, 20; 1 Pet. 2:9

INTRODUCTION: Reach Sunday is a time for us to focus as a body on the outward call for us as a church and as individual Christians, that is, the call of the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20). As a church, we believe in the importance of that call and the responsibility of believers to engage it as Jesus commanded. That means that we look for opportunities to share the gospel in the everyday places that we go and to join in gospel-advancing work to the ends of the earth. We join in that “ends of the earth” work by praying for, financially supporting, and going to serve alongside global partners for short periods of time. We also join God in his Great Commission Calling on our lives when we love the sojourner in our own neighborhoods and communities.

In Acts 5, the Church is still in its infancy. Pentecost has just happened (back in chapter 2), and the movement is still largely in Jerusalem. Soon, it will begin to spread out, and towards the ends of the earth, but for now, the disciples are still proclaiming the gospel in the Temple to the many people of the nations that were still present from the Passover feasts and celebrations. Something new was going on, Peter and the Apostles were healing sick people in such large numbers that folks just hoped to get hit by Peter’s shadow to be healed! We can read this passage and get distracted by the healings and miracles; they are important, but not in and of themselves. Instead, they are important because of the one they testify to, Jesus and his resurrection power. Here is how one theologian explains it.

“Thus the fact of so many people coming to Jerusalem and being cured was not simply a matter of a sudden burst of healing energy. It was about (and everyone there knew it was about) the establishment of a new reality in a dangerous place: **the power of the living God becoming concrete, definite, undeniable**, not simply a matter of a few people telling a very strange story and behaving from time to time as if they were drunk. It is when the church, through prayer and wisdom and often in the teeth of opposition, acts with decisive power in the real world—to build and run a successful school, or medical clinic; to free slaves or remit debts; to establish a housing project for those who can’t afford local rents, or a credit union for those ashamed to go into a bank; to enable drug users and pushers to kick the habit and the lifestyle; to see hardened and violent criminals transformed by God’s love—that people will take the message of Jesus seriously. Of course there will then be opposition, because we shall be invading territory that is currently under alternative occupation. **But God’s power will be at work, and people will know it.**”¹

Over the past few weeks, we have heard about our ethical commitments to love and care for our neighbors through the opportunities to serve our city through Local Matters, and that we have a commitment to the spiritual needs of those around us by declaring the gospel in word. These commitments are local and global. Because there are neighborhoods near and far where people are walking in darkness, we are compelled to bring the good news of Jesus. The good news that God loves them and is powerful enough to redeem and reconcile them. His power is at work and made evident through the lives of normal believers, and it is God’s greatest desire that we would know him and worship him. So, he sends us to declare the greatest news ever, the gospel!

¹ Tom Wright, *Acts for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1-12* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2008), 85–86. – emphasis added.

GETTING STARTED – As you get started in your group time, share how you came to the Lord. Who were the influential people in your journey? When and how did you realize your need of salvation? What has changed in your life since coming to Jesus?

IN THE WORD – Let's dig back into the passage. It is important to strengthen our muscles in reading God's Word. On Sunday, we walked through the passage in the sermon. Hopefully, that helped you to see the landmarks of the passage with fresh eyes. Now, with your group, go back through it and see what God is saying to you specifically.

First, before you read the passage, take a moment to ask God's Spirit to quiet your mind and heart and to illuminate the text to you. Second, read the passage aloud to the group. Then, follow the simple method below. (O.P.A)

Observe: Make 8-10 observations from the passage. Pay close attention to observe and note repeated words and phrases, names, places, and themes.

Principles: From your list of observations, what patterns or big ideas do you see emerging? Can you distill it down into 2-4 big idea truths?

Apply: Moving from your list of principles, it is time to apply God's Word. Remember, we believe that God's Word is living and active and that it can change the way we live Monday- Friday. What is one tangible way to apply a truth from your list above?

Some questions to help with your discussion:

1. What is something that stood out to you from the service on Sunday morning?
2. When you think of your daily life, do you think of yourself as a missionary (a sent one) or just as someone trying to get through the day?
3. In Acts 5, there are miracles happening that demonstrate God's power. What do you think demonstrates God's power in our context (Ames, IA) today? How does God want to demonstrate his power through you?
4. When you read Jesus' command in Matt. 28:18-20, what stands out to you about his words?
5. Part of "going" in Matt. 28:19 is the going of our everyday lives. Do you see your regular encounters throughout the week as gospel opportunities? Why or why not?
 - a. What is one intentional step you could take to see gospel encounters this week?