

THE BIG IDEA: The MOVEMENT is greater than the MOMENT.

The Take-Off

If you're with us for the first time, you've picked a great day to join us on a little journey we're calling "re|ACTS" that has us looking at the history and actions of the early church and asking the question, "What could happen today if we simply followed the lead of Someone far greater than us?"

Now, we've learned a ton about the early church and, not surprisingly, about ourselves, too, and if I had to sum up the journey of the early church through the first 5 chapters of Acts, I'd describe it with 3 words: "up and down, up and down"

We can relate, can't we? All of us - even if you're not a follower of Jesus - can relate to life being full of ups and downs. Moments when it doesn't seem like life can get any better, and moments when it feels like it can't get any worse, either.

Often, those 2 moments can come right on the heels of each other. The phrase "out of the blue" comes to mind because sometimes it seems like lightning strikes from a clear, blue sky.

Apparently Charles Dickens got it right with the first line of A Tale of Two Cities: "It was the best of times. It was the worst of times."

Today - at what could not be a more timely moment for many in our church family - we will read about a crazy two day period in the life of the leaders in the early church and hopefully, by the end of seeing how they responded when their lives were turned upside down, we'll get a perspective that will help us when our lives do the same.

Go ahead and open your Bibles to Acts 5. We'll be starting in verse 17. Also, go ahead and put your thumb or a bookmark in Psalm 91 because we'll be there some, too.

1. Upside-down moments happen to everyone.

Lots of things can make us feel like our worlds have turned upside-down.

- ▶ In this economy, a lot of people feel upside down about their houses (house pic)
- ▶ Sometimes we're upside down out of desperation (squirrel pic)
- ▶ Often we're upside down because of other people (mope the floor pic)
- ▶ Possibly the most common reason we feel upside down is because life happens (surfer pics)

Now, there is a teaching that goes around from time to time in the church that basically says that upside-down moments happen to everyone except people who love and follow Jesus.

I want to say that this is 100% false teaching, and here are a few verses that prove it, because I don't want you to refute false teaching just based on what I say:

- ▶ Romans 5:3-5 / we rejoice in suffering - it produces endurance, character, and hope
- ▶ James 1:2-4 / again, we count it joy when we meet trials - it produces steadfastness and completes us
- ▶ 1 Peter 4:12-13 / we're not to be surprised when we encounter trials - they prepare us for seeing Jesus
- ▶ James 1:12 / we're blessed when we stand firm in trials - leads to a crown of life
- ▶ John 16:33 / Jesus promised these moments

Put your finger on your neck. Feel a pulse? Then you can expect life-altering, breath-taking "my world just turned upside-down" moments.

Stop trying to avoid what Jesus said to expect. It is never the absence of trials that proves your faith, but your steadfastness in the trials that does.

This begs the question: "How can we be steadfast when everything around us is falling apart?"

The key is in understanding this next truth...

2. Upside-down moments are part of a movement.

If we're honest, moments tend to freeze us.

In the good moments, we don't want to move. Peter experienced that in Matthew 17:4.

We've all experienced good times like that, haven't we? The marriage day (and night), the birth of a child, the accomplishment of a child, that perfect golf shot. We just want to stay in that moment and bask in it.

But upside-down moments freeze us, too, because in the bad times it isn't that we don't want to move, but that we don't feel like we can move.

The death of a loved one, the loss of a job, the realization that what we'd hoped for isn't going to happen. It's not that any of us want to stay in those moments; it's just that we feel stuck there.

When we read some of the verses I read earlier we wonder if possibly the writers of the Bible were crazy. This is when we need to understand that the moments that freeze us are part of a movement that frees us. I learned this last week at a funeral for a man who's family is in the middle of an upside-down moment. This man was healthy, 51 y/o and after getting an infection was being remembered at his funeral within 2 weeks. At the funeral, Psalm 91 was read and I found myself asking God why what was being read didn't make sense.

- ▶ v. 1 says it all hinges on dwelling with God - this man did
- ▶ v. 2 says it's about trusting God - this man did
- ▶ vv. 3-8 have awesome promises about being protected, covered and seemingly safe
- ▶ vv. 9-10 promise that if we make the Lord our dwelling - which this man did - then "no harm will befall us"
- ▶ But this is being read at his funeral because, apparently, harm befell him

This is when we need to understand the temporary nature of the moments that freeze us
They will not - and cannot - last forever unless we choose to stop moving

Think about this: our journey with Jesus is like a conveyor belt and once we're on it, we may find ourselves from time to time in places that we don't like and would never choose, but the belt keeps moving. We are destined to end up somewhere better than where we are now.

That perspective makes all the difference, and that's how we are able to stand firm when everything around us seems to be upside-down.

Why? Because we realize the third, and possibly, most important truth of all...

3. The movement is greater than the moment.

This simple statement is today's **Big Idea**. It's the one thought that I want you to take home with you, the one truth that I want to echo in your mind on The Other Six days this week.

I want you to see the greatness that God is achieving for you and himself - even in the moments that we don't fully understand.

Let's wrap up Acts 5 and Psalm 91 and see how this truth - that the movement is greater than the moment - can help us walk with our heads up and our eyes focused on something more than just good and bad days.

Last week we saw that things had gone well for the church once they had the whole "kill a hypocrite" day
People want to be prayed for, or at least have Peter's shadow touch them (Acts 5:15-16)

But then, it all goes upside-down

- ▶ They are arrested and put in prison (v. 18)
- ▶ During the night they experience the season premiere of "Prison Break" (v. 19)
- ▶ The next day they're back at it, preaching in the temple courts (v. 21)
- ▶ The leaders can't find them and are embarrassed (vv. 21-24) until someone points out the window at them preaching (v. 25)
- ▶ Apostles are arrested again (v. 27) and told to shut up about Jesus (v. 28)
- ▶ Apostles say no (although we're quick to back down and just say "God" aren't we?) (vv. 29-32)
- ▶ A debate ensues and a smart man wins (vv. 33-39)
- ▶ Instead of killing them, they simply flog the apostles and tell them not to say "Jesus" anymore (v. 40)

And now, for the verse that shocks us all: v. 41 says that while bleeding from the flogging, the apostles rejoiced
Say huh?

And back in Psalm 91 the end is just as shocking and yet full of promise, too

God says in vv. 14-16 that He will rescue us, protect us, answer us, be with us, deliver us, honor us and satisfy us
The prerequisite for all of that? According to v. 15, it's trouble.

What? God uses these upside-down moments to work something greater for us and for his glory?

Gen. 50:20-21 says so. So does Romans 8:28. Need more proof? Look at 2 Corinthians 4:17.

The Bible never tells us to request trouble, but it is full of evidence that God can redeem trouble.

The movement is greater than the moment. Always.

The Landing

Here's what this looks like in real life:

My professor who had arthritis so bad he had to sit in a whirlpool once a week with 4 other men suffering the same way

He wanted to be healed, but he was happy to have arthritis if it meant sitting in that tub with 4 men needing Jesus

My family praying for my mother to be healed

It would have been a great moment if she had been, and it was a tragic moment when she wasn't
But a year later when I found out that our family's stand in the moment had encouraged others over an entire year I
realized that my bad, hard, tragic, painful, "cry tears even when there aren't any" moment was not - and never
could be - greater than the movement of the Kingdom of God
And when we realize that, then just like the apostles, we will find that even while we suffer hard moments, we will
rejoice that we were counted worthy of playing a part in the movement of God's kingdom.
Today, on the Sunday before Thanksgiving, I challenge you to choose to be thankful.
No matter what.
[Video]
[Close in prayer]