

Acts 1: 12-26
The Election of Matthias
Breach theme continued (sort of)

Luke, as you know, is the author of this book.

It begins with a gap – an emptiness – a loss.

Jesus has been taken from them. He died, was raised from death, lived among them again for a short time and then

Verses 6-9

So: Luke begins this book with this...absence. Jesus is gone from their sight.

The aroma of him still lingering....

the air still pulsing with his last words...

they turn, and say to themselves....

NOW WHAT??

They go back to Jerusalem, presumably to tell the others “I don't think he's coming back this time – not like before”

or

“what did he really mean by the ends of the earth, and did re REALLY mean *Samaria*???

Ewww!”

Whatever they said to the others into the empty air as it sunk in that we was gone....there was another empty place at their table.

Judas.

What were they to do about Judas?

The circle had been broken

and they decided to mend it.

If you had been there, if it were up to you, how would you choose someone new to replace Judas?

Who would be eligible?

Anyone? Would there be criteria? If so, what?

Presumably a follower of Jesus, with leadership ability, John says Judas had been the treasurer. Would that be the skill set you were after?

Someone trustworthy – how would they decide to trust again?

And then what would be the method of selection? Voting?

Read the verse

Two things about that before I continue:

1) Casting of lots: This method is mentioned 70 times in the Old Testament, the Hebrew Scriptures. And 7 times in the New. The Greek scriptures.

An example is how they divided the land under Joshua (chapters 14-21 if you want to e that out), and then when Jesus was crucified the soldiers cast lots for his garments. The principle seems to be impartiality and...some say it's not gambling because they prayed first!! It's very similar to drawing straws or flipping a coin. I don't know how you feel about that as a way to choose leaders but we too need a treasurer and I have a bag of rocks with all our names on it....and the AGM IS coming up....

2) the second thing is the number 12. They felt it was important to maintain that number. 12

apostles had been chosen by Jesus, and they felt that the circle was incomplete now and they had to replace Judas. The number 12 is quite Biblical as you know: 12 tribes of Israel, 12 prophets, when Jesus fed the 5000 how many basketsful were left over? The little girl Jesus raised from death – guess how old she was? And in John's vision of the Holy city – there are 12 gates to the city...and it goes on.

Later however, they changed their minds. When Peter died, or James, they weren't replaced. I think it's partly because by that time the number of people who fit the criteria was very small, but also perhaps the Holy Spirit taught them more clearly what it really means to make the circle complete.

But for that moment, their friend and Lord Jesus is gone
their brother Judas is gone
and they do their best to make the wound heal
they fill the spot. They replace.
And so Matthias is chosen.

I wonder what happened to Barsabbas, the also-ran?
We never hear of either of them again. Neither Matthias nor Barsabbas, also known as Justus, is every mentioned again. Do you suppose he kept on in the Way? Was he still part of the group?

And I wonder how they explained to the women who had been with them and with Jesus from the beginning that they weren't even in the running for the position and I wonder who made that decision – and what the women said when they heard that?
It appears that the circle is not as complete as they had intended.
But they did their best at the time
and the rest of this book is about them learning how the Holy Spirit leads them to make that circle more truly complete.
In the end it wasn't about making sure they had the right number - it was about realizing that the circle would never be complete
they would never be fulfilled until everyone was included.

They learned to live in community
2:43 f
4:32F

They learned it was God's plan that they include people they would never have dreamed of including

They became bolder and bolder as they told people about Jesus
and so many are drawn to the church at that time because of the conviction and enthusiasm of the apostles...they seem unstoppable.

As a bit of an aside, every time I talk to people about what brought them to church if they've been away for a while....one of the biggest things is that people come when they are invited. Not by me, by you. People think it's my job and expect me to do that but when YOU show enthusiasm about your faith, not in a pushy way saying “you must come to church” but genuinely saying “this is an important thing in my life – want to check it out?” - That's how the gospel is passed on – it was then, and it is now. Followers of Jesus, inviting others in.

And they keep learning.
God keeps giving them questions: Is the circle complete yet? What about the Samaritans? Are they

included? There's an issue about race – we'll get to that in chapter 6. Oh why not, let's read it now.

6: 1-7

Very modern sounding eh?

The circle keeps widening.

In the process they learn that Jesus, whom they thought was gone from among them, is fully present as they live and work and witness.

And it doesn't stop. The circle gets wider and wider and still they feel the gap

still it is incomplete

and will continue to be until we are one.

All of us.

As Jesus prayed before he died.

We are, none of us, free

until we are all free.

12 apostles or 100 or 10000

it doesn't matter

the circle will be complete when everyone is brought into the love of god and the family of God's people.

Madeleine L'Engle has a story that she tells in one of her books

she says: After his death, Judas finds himself at the bottom of a deep and slimy pit.

For thousands of years he wept his repentance

and when his tears were finally spent, he looked up and saw far in the distance a tiny spec of light.

After a time he began to climb towards it....the walls were dark and wet....he kept slipping back but

finally after great effort, he reached the top, dragged himself into a room – and it was the upper room.

With people he knew seated around a table.

And then Jesus said

Judas we've been waiting – we couldn't begin until you arrived.”