

Acts 1:15-26  
May 24, '09

"MAKING IT UP"

(Before scripture)

OUR SCRIPTURE READING THIS MORNING IS NEAR THE BEGINNING OF LUKE'S SECOND OF HIS TWO-VOLUME WORK THAT CAN BE TITLED LUKE-ACTS.

HE WROTE HIS GOSPEL TO TELL OF THE LIFE & MINISTRY OF JESUS.

HIS SECOND VOLUME THAT HAS BEEN TITLED "THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES," IS, IN REALITY, THE ACTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

IN THE OPENING VERSES OF THE FIRST CHAPTER, LUKE TELLS OF THE ASCENSION OF JESUS & THEN HE TELLS US THE REMAINING 11 DISCIPLES – LISTING EACH ONE BY NAME – WENT BACK TO JERUSALEM TO AWAIT THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

THEY WEREN'T REALLY SURE WHAT IT WAS THEY WERE AWAITING – THEY JUST KNEW THAT THEIR INSTRUCTIONS FROM JESUS WERE TO DO SO.

OUR SCRIPTURE READING IS ACTS 1:15-26.

(After scripture)

THIS WAS A FRIGHTENING TIME FOR THE DISCIPLES.

IT WAS A CONFUSING TIME.

IT WAS A TIME WHEN THEY DIDN'T REALLY KNOW WHAT WAS COMING NEXT.

PETER – AS WAS SO OFTEN THE CASE – WASN'T WILLING TO JUST SIT AROUND & WAIT.

HE SUGGESTED THEY DETERMINE A SUCCESSOR TO JUDAS.

NOW THIS WOULD HAVE BEEN DIFFICULT FOR THEM.

WITH HIS ASCENSION, THEY HAD LOST JESUS FOR A SECOND TIME.

THE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS HAD SENT THEM ON A ROLLER COASTER OF EMOTIONS.

THERE WAS THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM BUT THEN THE ARREST, TRIAL & CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS.

THERE WAS THE BETRAYAL OF JUDAS, THE DENIALS OF PETER & THE DISAPPEARANCE OF MOST OF THE REST OF THE DISCIPLES.

THERE WAS THE STARTLING NEWS OF THE EMPTY TOMB.

THERE WERE THE STRANGE, YET VERY REAL APPEARANCES OF JESUS.

AND NOW, HE WAS GONE FROM THEM AGAIN.

THEY'RE TRYING TO MAKE SENSE OUT OF THINGS & TRYING DESPERATELY TO FIGURE OUT WHAT THEY'RE SUPPOSED TO DO.

THEY'VE GONE FROM ONE CRISIS TO ANOTHER & THEY'RE JUST TRYING TO DO THE RIGHT THING, EVEN THOUGH THEY'RE NOT ENTIRELY SURE WHAT THAT IS!

SOUND FAMILIAR TO YOU?

DOES IT SOUND LIKE YOUR OWN LIFE?

DO YOU FIND THAT YOU SOMETIMES MOVE FROM ONE CRISIS TO ANOTHER & YOU JUST TRY TO DO THE RIGHT THING, EVEN THOUGH YOU'RE NOT ALWAYS SURE WHAT THAT IS?

IN THINKING OF THIS PASSAGE, I WAS REMINDED OF A SCENE FROM A MOVIE THAT I WOULD INCLUDE AS ONE OF MY TOP TEN MOVIE SCENES OF ALL TIME.

I FIND THAT I THINK OF THIS SCENE QUITE OFTEN, WHICH PROBABLY SAYS A GREAT DEAL ABOUT ME.

IT'S FROM "RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK."

IF YOU REMEMBER THE MOVIE, IT'S NON-STOP ACTION FROM BEGINNING TO END.

HARRISON FORD, AS INDIANA JONES, GOES FROM ONE CRISIS TO ANOTHER.

EACH DILEMMA HE FACES SEEMS MORE IMPOSSIBLE TO SOLVE THAN THE ONE BEFORE.

HE GETS HIMSELF INTO MORE LIFE-OR-DEATH JAMS THAN ARE HUMANLY POSSIBLE.

AT ONE POINT, HE'S LOOKING DOWN FROM A HILL WHERE HE'S HIDING.

A TRUCK, HOLDING THE ARK OF THE COVENANT, IS SURROUNDED BY HUNDREDS OF NAZIS & IS ABOUT TO BE TRANSPORTED TO ITS ULTIMATE DESTINATION.

INDY HAS NO WEAPONS, NO TRANSPORTATION & NO ARMY BEHIND HIM TO HELP.

HE LOOKS AT HIS COMRADE, SALLAH, AND SAYS, "MEET ME AT OMAR'S. BE READY FOR ME. I'M GOING AFTER THAT TRUCK."

SALLAH, WITH DISBELIEF ON HIS FACE, SAYS, "HOW!?"

INDY'S RESPONSE IS A MUMBLING, "I DON'T KNOW. I'M MAKING THIS UP AS I GO."

I THINK WHAT MAKES THAT LINE SO MEMORABLE IS THAT IT APPEARS TO BE ADDRESSED TO THE AUDIENCE AS MUCH AS TO SALLAH.

IT'S LIKE STEVEN SPIELBERG WAS JUST TAKING INDY FROM ONE CRISIS TO ANOTHER & MAKING IT UP AS HE WENT.

FOR HIS PART, INDY'S JUST TRYING TO FIGURE IT ALL OUT.

HE'S TRYING TO DO THE RIGHT THING, BUT HE DOESN'T REALLY HAVE A CLUE AS TO HOW TO DO IT.

CAN YOU RELATE TO INDY?

I THINK I CAN & I THINK THAT'S WHY THIS SCENE MAKES ITS WAY INTO MY TOP TEN MOVIE SCENES OF ALL TIME.

LIFE BECOMES A SERIES OF CHALLENGES TO MEET, OBSTACLES TO OVERCOME & STORMS TO WEATHER, AND YOU HAVE TO DO IT ALL WITHOUT AN INSTRUCTION BOOK TO GUIDE YOU.

YOU FEEL LIKE YOU'RE "JUST MAKING IT UP AS YOU GO."

THAT'S WHAT LUKE HAS GIVEN US HERE IN HIS OPENING CHAPTER OF ACTS.

THE DISCIPLES ARE FACED WITH YET ANOTHER CRISIS & THEY'RE JUST TRYING TO FIGURE IT OUT – THEY'RE MAKING IT UP AS THEY GO.

NOTE THE PLACES THEY TURN FOR GUIDANCE.

THIS PASSAGE IS RIDDLED WITH SCRIPTURE.

THERE ARE A VARIETY OF REFERENCES TO OLD TESTAMENT PASSAGES THE DISCIPLES TURNED TO FOR HELP IN DECIDING WHICH WAY TO GO WHEN FACED WITH THIS PARTICULAR CRISIS.

N. T. WRIGHT HAS AN INTRIGUING WAY OF LOOKING AT THE MANNER IN WHICH THE DISCIPLES TURNED TO THE WORD OF GOD FOR GUIDANCE.

HE SAYS, *“HERE THEY FOUND, NOT INDEED A ROAD MAP FOR EXACTLY WHERE THEY WERE – SCRIPTURE SELDOM SUPPLIES EXACTLY THAT – BUT THE HINTS & CLUES TO ENABLE THEM TO SEE HOW TO FEEL THEIR WAY FORWARD IN THIS NEW & UNPRECEDENTED DILEMMA.”*

ISN'T THAT SOLID ADVICE FOR US AS WELL?

WE MAY NOT FIND A ROAD MAP IN THE BIBLE THAT TELLS US EXACTLY HOW TO DEAL WITH A SPECIFIC CRISIS OR DILEMMA.

WHAT WE *WILL* FIND ARE HINTS & CLUES THAT WILL ENABLE US TO FEEL OUR WAY FORWARD TO EMERGE FROM THE ISSUE THAT FACES US.

THE OTHER PLACE THE DISCIPLES TURNED FOR GUIDANCE WAS PRAYER.

I THINK THIS IS WHAT LUKE IS TRYING TO TELL US BY OPENING HIS SECOND VOLUME THIS WAY. HE'S TRYING TO TELL US THAT THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE ORDEAL OF THE FORMATION OF THE CHURCH, THERE WERE TWO PLACES THE DISCIPLES TURNED FOR DIRECTION.

THEY TURNED TO SCRIPTURE & THEY TURNED TO PRAYER.

AND WHAT AN ORDEAL IT WAS!

STEVEN SPIELBERG HAS NOTHING ON LUKE WHEN IT COMES TO NON-STOP ACTION.

FROM THE VERY BEGINNING – HERE IN THE FIRST CHAPTER – TO THE CLOSING WORDS OF ACTS THAT LEAVE US WITH PAUL PREACHING THE GOSPEL IN ROME.

THE PROCLAMATION OF CHRIST, THEREFORE, HAS GONE FROM ITS BEGINNINGS IN JERUSALEM, ALL THE WAY TO THE CAPITAL OF THE EMPIRE.

ALONG THE WAY, THE DISCIPLES WERE SIMPLY MAKING IT UP – RELYING ON GUIDANCE FROM SCRIPTURE & GUIDANCE THROUGH PRAYER.

WHAT AN EXAMPLE FOR OUR OWN DAILY LIVING.

WE FIND OURSELVES CONSTANTLY FACED WITH A DILEMMA, A CRISIS, A DECISION – ONE AFTER ANOTHER & IT'S GOOD TO KNOW WE AREN'T ALONE IN THAT REGARD.

IT'S GOOD TO KNOW THAT EVEN THE FIRST FOLLOWERS OF JESUS WERE PUT IN A POSITION OF JUST “MAKING IT UP” & DOING IT WITH RELIANCE ON GOD'S WORD & PRAYER.

SO OFTEN WE FACE SITUATIONS IN LIFE THAT JUST LEAVE US BAFFLED – TRYING TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO DO THE RIGHT THING.

WE CAN FIND DIRECTION FROM GOD’S WORD – NOT AS A ROAD MAP BUT A GUIDE.

WE CAN FIND STRENGTH & ASSURANCE & GUIDANCE THROUGH PRAYER.

WE CAN TURN TO ONE ANOTHER – AS THE DISCIPLES SO OFTEN DID.

WHEN WE’VE DONE THOSE THINGS – WHEN WE’VE TURNED TO THE PROPER SOURCES FOR HELP – WE CAN THEN SAY, LIKE INDIANA JONES – “I DON’T KNOW. I’M JUST MAKING IT UP AS I GO” & WE CAN DO SO WITH CONFIDENCE.

SOMETIMES THE DILEMMAS WE FACE ARE HUGE.

THEY ARE SOMETIMES OF MONUMENTAL PROPORTIONS.

AT OTHER TIMES, THEY’RE JUST PART OF OUR DAILY LIFE – DILEMMAS THAT FORCE US INTO THE ROLE OF SIMPLY “MAKING IT UP” AS WE GO.

WHEN OUR BOYS WERE YOUNG, WE LIVED 500 MILES FROM GRANDPARENTS & DEREK, DREW & DAVID HAD SURROGATE GRANDPARENTS – HOWARD & VERA MAIN.

THEY LOVED HOWARD & VERA AND THEY WERE PROVIDED WITH ALL THE TYPICAL GRANDPARENT EXPERIENCES.

THE MAINS HAD A BIG, SPRAWLING APPLE TREE IN THEIR YARD & THE BOYS LOVED PICKING THE APPLES OF THAT TREE.

ONE SUMMER, THEY WATCHED THE APPLES GROW & WAITED & WAITED UNTIL THEY WERE RIPE ENOUGH TO PICK.

WHENEVER WE WERE VISITING, THE BOYS WOULD ASK, “IS IT TIME, VERA?”

SHE’D TELL THEM THEY WEREN’T QUITE READY FOR PICKING, BUT WHEN THEY WERE, SHE’D CALL TO LET US SO THE BOYS COULD PICK THE APPLES OFF THAT TREE.

FINALLY, ONE MORNING THE CALL CAME.

VERA TOLD EMMA SUE THE APPLES WERE READY TO BE PICKED & SHE COULD BRING THE BOYS OVER.

DEREK, DREW & DAVID WENT RUNNING AROUND THE HOUSE, GETTING THEIR APPLE-PICKING GARB ON.

I’M NOT SURE WHAT THAT WAS, OTHER THAN PERHAPS THEIR TOM SAWYER-HUCK FINN STRAW HATS.

AT THE MAIN’S HOUSE, THOUGH, AS VERA HUNG UP THE PHONE, HOWARD WALKED INTO THE HOUSE & SAID, “VERA, I’VE GOT A SURPRISE FOR YOU” AS HE DROPPED A HUGE BUSHEL BASKET ON THE DINING ROOM TABLE – A BASKET FILLED WITH APPLES.

WELL, VERA WAS SURPRISED ALL RIGHT – BUT NOT PLEASANTLY AS HOWARD HAD ANTICIPATED SHE WOULD BE!

*“HOWARD, THE DAVENPORT BOYS ARE ON THEIR OVER TO PICK APPLES. I DON’T CARE HOW YOU DO IT, BUT THOSE BOYS BETTER HAVE APPLES TO PICK OFF THAT TREE!”*

AS EMMA SUE PULLED IN THE DRIVEWAY AT HOWARD & VERA’S, THE BOYS JUMPED OUT THE CAR WITH THEIR LITTLE BUCKETS & WENT RUNNING TO THE TREE – A TREE FILLED WITH APPLES, READY TO BE PICKED & ALL OF THEM ODDLY WITHIN THEIR REACH.

THEY EACH FILLED THEIR OWN BUCKET.

IT WAS ONLY AS EMMA SUE WANDERED OVER TO THE TREE THAT SHE REALIZED SOMETHING WAS ODD ABOUT THOSE APPLES THAT WERE ALL SO POSITIONED ON THE TREE.

SHE WENT TO PICK ONE & SAW THAT IT WAS HANGING BY A THREAD – LITERALLY – AS WAS EVERY OTHER APPLE ON THAT TREE!

HOWARD HAD TAKEN THREAD, TIED IT TO THE STEM OF EACH APPLE & THEN TIED IT TO A LIMB ON THE TREE.

THE BOYS NEVER HAD A CLUE.

THEY WERE JUST PICKING APPLES, AS THEY’D WAITED ALL SUMMER TO DO.

HOWARD WAS FACED WITH A DILEMMA & HE WAS JUST MAKING IT UP.

NOW I’M NOT SURE HE TURNED TO ANY PARTICULAR PASSAGE OF SCRIPTURE FOR GUIDANCE, BUT KNOWING HOWARD, I WOULDN’T DOUBT IT.

HE’D BEEN TEACHING SUNDAY SCHOOL FOR NEARLY HALF A CENTURY AND IT SEEMED AS THOUGH HE HAD A BIBLE PASSAGE TO FIT VIRTUALLY ANY SITUATION.

I HAVE ABSOLUTELY NO DOUBT, THOUGH, THAT HE TURNED TO PRAYER.

*“LORD, WHAT HAVE I DONE?! HELP ME GET OUT OF THIS MESS I’VE CREATED FOR MYSELF. GIVE ME SOME GUIDANCE SO THE BOYS WILL HAVE APPLES TO PICK & I’LL BE SPARED VERA’S WRATH!”*

SOMETIMES THE DILEMMAS WE FACE IN LIFE ARE BIG ONES & SOMETIMES THEY’RE JUST A PART OF EVERYDAY LIFE.

WHEN THOSE DILEMMAS COME, SOMETIMES ALL YOU CAN DO IS JUST *“MAKE IT UP AS YOU GO,”* KNOWING THERE ARE PLACES TO TURN FOR GUIDANCE –

TURN TO GOD’S WORD,

TURN TO PRAYER.

AND TURN TO THOSE WHOSE OPINION YOU VALUE.

WHEN THOSE CRISES HIT, BE ASSURED THAT YOU AREN’T ALONE.

THEY’RE SIMPLY A PART OF LIFE & THEY’RE A PART OF