



Sermon Notes, 13 December 2020

Term Autumn 2020

Series Acts: manual for a scattered church

Gatherings 11.00

Title Acts Recap: The Major and Minor Keys of Life and Scripture

Preacher Paul Langham

Reading – Acts 8:1-8

The book of Acts, the whole of Scripture, and Life itself, although all multi-layered and complex, effectively play out in two main keys: major and minor (happy songs, sad songs):

- Scripture's major key is the story of redemption, deliverance, salvation: but the minor key of human sin and rebellion is wrapped within it
- The Christmas narratives are summed up in the carol 'Joy the World' but minor keys are sounded in the threat to Jesus and the flight into Egypt
- The Gospels' major key is Resurrection, yet Gethsemane is wrapped within it
- The bible ends with the Lamb victorious: but the Lamb looks like it had been slain (Revelation 5:6)

Acts begins with a tiny sect within a provincial religion: some 30 years later, it is on the brink of conquering the Roman Empire. Its major key is sounded in healings, miracles and the explosive growth of the church. But throughout a minor key can be heard in stoning, persecution, flogging, imprisonment, rejection and shipwreck.

Evangelicals fall into broadly 2 camps

- Conservatives ... who need a theology of miracles
- Charismatics ... who need a theology of suffering

Acts shows us that God's kingdom grows as much in times of hardship and suffering as in times of miracles and large crowds.

We love to sing 'O Happy Day' and rightly so. But we also need songs of lament. Our world has neither the need nor indeed the time for a church which is not real and authentic. We need to acknowledge both major and minor keys in our own experience as well as in scripture. St Paul is searingly honest:

- 2 Corinthians 12:7-10
- 2 Corinthians 4:7-12
- 2 Corinthians 11:23-29
- Romans 7:21-24

Questions

How honest do you feel you can be about both major and minor keys in your life: with your fellow believers and with God himself?

What testimony do you have of God's faithfulness in times of suffering?

Over the Christmas season, what one thing can you do to

- Increase your reliance on the Holy Spirit?
- Own your discipleship?
- Grow in your confidence in Jesus?

Use this new song from the Christ Church Songwriting Collective for reflection and prayer this week:

<https://youtu.be/fAkrhhwllls>

