

Acts 1:12-14, Jerry Arnold, March 11, 2006

Father in Heaven. We are asking for You to bless us. We are praying for wisdom from You. We are asking for understanding, for discernment, for knowledge. We are praying for truth to be deeply imbedded within our experience. We are asking for miracles, Lord. We pray that You'll be on hand to bring healing that You would change lives, and that we will be in Your very presence. That's our prayer, in Jesus name, Amen.

Our three children, and Karen's sister's four children, four girls and our two sons and daughter were going to make up a children's choir for campmeeting. Karen nor I can remember how it came about. Somebody asked us or somebody thought it would be a great idea. So anyway, these little kids, beautiful, beautiful children, they practiced, and practiced, and practiced, and practiced and practiced, until they can't stand practicing any more.

I was playing the guitar, Karen was directing and Aunt Gail was the one keeping everybody in order. And I, like the children, was growing weary of this practicing. Just on and on and on. "As the deer pants for the water...", on and on and on, key of C, okay just keep practicing, keep practicing. The children were whining, I was whining. It wasn't quite right yet so we kept practicing.

Finally campmeeting came. We all went to campmeeting. That Saturday afternoon, the VonTrap family singers we were not, but it was our day in the sun. I can remember I was quite intimidated. I don't mind being up front preaching. But anything with music if I'm up front, I don't like it at all. I'm not skilled in those areas, and it just makes me nervous.

So I can remember we all lined up. I was on the far left. These beautiful children were all lined up there. My wife was there ready to get them going. I strummed the first chord C and started to play. Actually, I couldn't strum. Karen told me I had to finger pick because it made it sound like I was a better player. So, okay, I'm finger picking the chords. The kids began to sing. It didn't take long for me to realize this isn't what we had practiced. Something is not happening here. I couldn't figure it out.

I was standing there in front of a group about as big as this. Boy I was beginning to sweat. I was thinking, something's not right but I know I'm hitting the right chords. Everything is fine. I was looking at my wife and she had this look on her face. She's doing this with the kids and keeping them singing. They are all kind of looking at each other. Eventually she looked at me and she went like this. (Motioning) So I had to stop. I stood there doing nothing while these rotten kids sang away. They had started on the wrong key. I was doing my part right, but they started on the wrong key. But I was the one being punished. I had to stand there like an idiot, and I felt like one.

Well, later Karen and I were asked to do music at the little church I pastored. Actually it happened earlier than that. Karen has always dreamed that she could have a husband she could sing with. We all have to make sacrifices. We were still fairly early in marriage

and she was still under the impression that I was trainable. So we worked on this song, over and over and over again. Again, I was playing the guitar and I would sing. I didn't know much about music for a long time. I still don't. In fact, when I took my voice lessons, the final exam is you had to go sing for the teacher, and he said "don't bother."

I didn't understand keys, that people could sing in different keys. I always wondered why all the songs I liked to sing were way too high. I didn't realize you can key it down a little bit. Well, Karen has this beautiful melodic voice, but she can sing lower than me which I found offensive. I thought it's always the man that sings low. But no, she could sing lower than me. And so, we always had to key things down so that she could sing the harmony and I was supposed to sing the melody. Anyway, standing up there we start to sing and I start on the wrong note. Consequently, she's unable to do what she's supposed to do. I never could do what I was supposed to do, anyways. So it didn't work out.

Some of you are musicians. You know how you've got to practice and you practice and you practice. You start together and you play together and you end together. How thrilling it is when the harmonies are working and everybody's on the same note and in the same rhythm. To be of one purpose is a magnificent thing. But it's not easy to do.

Two people seldom agree all the time. In marriage, people like Dr. Dobson, these experts, they say if after a while two people that are married have not been in an argument, one of them simply isn't thinking. Because, you know, how do you get into unity? How do you get of one frame of mind? People are different. They have different tastes. They have different desires? How do you do that with two people? How would you do it with an organization? How would you do it with a church? How would you get everybody pulling in the same direction where everybody says, "Yeah, I love that color." How do you do that?

I would like to study a miracle with you today. Then we're going to ask some questions and by God's grace all of us are going to walk out of here a little closer to Jesus than we were when we came.

Look at Acts chapter 1. Jesus has ascended back to heaven. We pick up the story in verse 12. We'll read 12, 13 and 14 today. In verse 12 it says, "Then they returned to Jerusalem from the Mount called Olivet which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey. And when they had entered, they went up into the upper room where they were staying, Peter, James, John, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas; Bartholomew, and Matthew; James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot; and Judas the son of James." These eleven men were with Jesus when He went up to heaven. They were with Him on the Mount of Olivet. In verse 14 it says, "These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers."

So they started out on the Mount of Olives, Olivet it's called in some versions of the Bible. Jesus went up to heaven, and then these eleven men went back to Jerusalem.

What a trip that must have been back to Jerusalem. It was less than seven weeks before this that they had been on the mountain with Jesus on that Sunday when He came riding the donkey and overlooked the city.

It was just a couple days later on Tuesday of that week when they had been in Jerusalem in the temple area, and Jesus had been preaching all day and as they are leaving the disciples point out to Jesus the magnificence of the temple. Jesus says, “I want to tell you something fellows. These stones aren’t even going to remain here, one left upon another.” This so shook the disciples that they gathered around Jesus on the Mount of Olives that evening and they said, “Lord, when is the world going to end?” To them, that was the end of the world. And Jesus began to teach them what it would be like prophetically down the road when He would return.

It was there on the Mount of Olives on that Thursday night where Jesus was in the Garden called Gethsemane where He had prayed and asked God to remove the cup from Him that He wouldn’t have to drink it. But now it’s a different, story, different men, different experience. They come bounding off that mountain knowing their Savior is Jesus. He is the real deal. He had died for them, rose from the dead in evidence of His divinity and in evidence that God has accepted the sacrifice. He goes back to heaven and He has promised to return to them.

So they entered Jerusalem—eleven men. They go to this upper room, probably the same one they had been in before. In verse 14 it says, “These all continued with one accord in prayer. Now it’s fascinating that they were in one accord in prayer. Well, I’ve prayed with people. I’ve prayed with people who after we were done praying we still disagreed with each other. We weren’t in one accord. I’ve seen people praying at each other.

Is it just prayer that does it? It can’t be just that. In fact, the amazing thing about this is when Jesus told them to go and be together, He didn’t even tell them to pray. Look at Acts 1:4. It says, “And being assembled together with them, Jesus commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father,” that being the Holy Spirit. So Jesus didn’t even tell them, I want you to go, I want you to gather around, I want you to pray. Jesus says “No, I want you to go and I want you to wait. Wait upon God. God is going to do something. God is going to be phenomenal here, and I want you to wait and see what God is going to do.”

Now, these men took it upon themselves to equate waiting with praying. So they are in this upper room and they are praying while they are waiting on God. They are waiting for God to do a supernatural work. And in the process of waiting on the Lord to do something, the Bible says this experience brings them to one mind, to one purpose, to one goal, to one desire. They were, as it says here, of one accord.

This is mentioned five more times in the book of Acts. Acts 2:1: “Now when the day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord ...” Acts 2:46: “So continuing daily with one accord in the temple ...” Acts 4:24: “So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord ...” Acts 5:12: “And through the hands of the

apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch." Acts 15:25: "It seemed good to us being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul."

How can people experience being of one accord? How did it happen? And I guess another question would be, will it ever happen again? Please turn to Acts 1:8. Jesus says, "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit is come upon you and you shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth." Jesus is telling them that they would have a supernatural presence from God that would be associated with the gospel being taken to the entire world. In verse 14 it says, they are of one accord in prayer. They are praying about this.

They are not praying for the Holy Spirit. Let me make that clear. They are not praying for the Holy Spirit. Why are they not praying for the Holy Spirit? Jesus has already told them the Holy Spirit is coming. They don't need to pray that prayer. What they are praying for is that they will be prepared when God acts. They are in a preparation prayer for what God will do. They want to prepare themselves to be used by God anyway He wants to use them.

We have a clue as to what that prayer was like in Acts 4:24. This is the beginning of that prayer experience as they are preparing themselves for what God was going to do. It says, "So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said, 'Lord, You are God.'" Now I tell you, Brothers and Sisters that is the foundation of all that is true. "Lord, You are God."

The story of Daniel way back in Daniel chapter 2 when Nebuchadnezzar has the dream and Daniel comes out to speak to him after God has revealed the dream to him, one of the things Daniel says is he says, "There is a God in heaven" and basically here's what he's saying, he's pointing to Nebuchadnezzar and he's saying, "And you ain't him."

The human heart thinks itself so important we are consumed with how we feel, how we think, what's going on within us. Their one accord experience begins with the simple theological premise, Lord you are God, you are God, and it goes on to say, "...who made heaven and earth and the sea and all that is in them." The foundational experience of the birth of the church of Jesus Christ is founded on the concept that the Lord is God and He is the creator of the heavens and of the earth.

We see that in the Bible. Look at Genesis 1:1. At the beginning of the world, at the beginning of the Bible as God introduces Himself to the world, it simply says this, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." It's the foundation. It's the foundation of what is true and what is right.

I want to show you a passage that I find fascinating. Matthew 11:25. Jesus is praying and He uses a formula that the disciples would have listened to, they would have been intrigued with. In fact, it relates to the Acts 4 passage. But Jesus says it just a little differently. In Matthew 11:25 you can also find the identical text in Luke 10:21. But

here we'll read Matthew's account. At that time Jesus answered and said "I thank you Father, Lord of heaven and earth because You have hidden these things...." Now why does Jesus pray to his father and say "Lord of heaven and earth.?" Why doesn't He say the Creator of the heavens and the earth? You do a little study. Jesus was the creator. Isn't that interesting? He was the creator. Well, the first church catches that formula about God being the Lord of heaven and earth and the Lord being God.

Now I want to ask you a question. If you are not going to church anywhere and 11:30 Saturday morning comes around, where does God want you? We'll say here, for sake of argument. He wants you in church, okay? Where's the last place the devil wants you? In church, that's right. So the devil will do everything he can to keep us away and we've all experienced that. All right?

Now suppose you join the church. Where will the devil want you to be at 11:30 on Saturday morning? He'll want you to be in church. That's right, he can't fight that. So he'll want you to be there. But here's what he'll want. He'll want you in church receiving a reward of some kind, maybe a plaque of recognition, maybe a position. Maybe a whole story told about you. That's what the devil will want. He would love that.

Let me give you a practical illustration. Suppose today, that seated right here was an individual that had been crippled from birth. One of you walks in, sees them, walks over to them, places your hands on that person and says, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." Suppose this person that's been crippled from birth stands up, jumps around, leaps, praising God.

Now would that story be told anywhere? Would it? Yes. Not only would the story be told, it would be written about, it would be in all our magazines, every Union paper would claim something to do with it, so keep your tithes and offerings coming. What would happen to the poor individual who offered that prayer? Why, they would have a whole new life because they would be paraded from place to place. "Tell us how you did it, how did it feel?" and on and on and on. So how can God take people in church, use them to bless other people, but still not allow them to be filled with such spiritual pride that basically they are lost and useless?

The Bible addresses that. We find it in Acts chapter 14. We'll start with verse 9. "This man heard Paul speaking. Paul observing him intently and seeing that he had faith to be healed said with a loud voice, 'Stand up straight on your feet.' And he leaped and walked. Now when the people saw what Paul had done, they raised their voices saying in the Iconium language, 'The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men.' And Barnabas they called Zeus and Paul Hermas, because he was the chief speaker. Then the priest of Zeus whose temple was in front of their city brought oxen and garlands to the gates intending to sacrifice with the multitudes. But when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard this they tore their clothes and ran in among the multitude crying out saying, Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you and preach to you that you should turn from these vain things to the living God who made the

heaven, the earth, the sea, and all the things that are in them.’” What is Paul saying? The Lord, He is God, He is the Creator, He did this. He is the one who should get credit.

Now let’s think about this. Jesus meets with a numbered group of followers on a mountain. Wherever He goes, they want to go. They become unified in one purpose, His glory. They are told that there would be a supernatural presence associated with a gospel message that would go to the whole world. And, they get together and they worship God as God, and specifically they worship Him as the Creator of the heavens and the earth.

Let’s go to Revelation 14. We’re looking at typology here, symbols if you will. Beginning with verse 1 it says, “Then I looked and behold a lamb standing on a mountain.” It’s Jesus standing on Mount Zion and with Him a numbered group of followers, 144,000. It says in verse 2, “I heard a voice from heaven like the voice of many waters, like the voice of loud thunder and I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps and they sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures and the elders and no one could learn that song except the 144,000 who were redeemed from the earth. These are the ones who were not defiled with women for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men being first fruits to God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile, for they are without fault before the throne of God.”

Here you have Jesus, a mountain, a numbered group of followers and they follow Him wherever He goes. Now let me show you something. Look at verses 6 and 7 same chapter. “I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, (Notice the supernatural presence.) having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth, to every nation, tribe, tongue and people.”

Here you have a numbered group on a mountain with Jesus. You have a supernatural presence, and you have a message that’s to go to the entire world. Now I want to ask you a question. Whose responsibility is it to get that message to the entire world? In most situations when you ask that question among our fellow believers, the response will be loud and clear. “We are.”

That’s part of our problem. We can’t do that. This is a supernatural work. We’re to be in a preparation mode for what God is going to do. He may use us, but he doesn’t need us. In fact, if every person who was a member of our denomination, if they turned in their Bibles, if every Christian in the world turned in their Bible this weekend and said that’s it, I’m done, forget it, the work would still be finished. It’s God’s responsibility. He doesn’t need us, but He wants to use us. And ours needs to be a preparation mode for what God is going to do.

And how do we prepare? Look at what it says in verse 7. This is what the angel is saying. “Fear God, give glory to Him for the hour of His judgment has come. Worship Him who made heaven and earth the sea and the springs of waters.” Now, let me ask you, is that new news to you? No it’s not. But I’m telling you what we’ve done with it. We’ve turned it into a doctrine instead of an experience. Unless it becomes an

experience, we'll be lost. Because, what the Lord is doing is raising up a people who will begin to worship Him as Creator. What we have done is raised up a people who have identified a day, who have identified a way, and we will spend time fighting among ourselves what to do on that day. And we consider that keeping this text. No, it's not to be a doctrine. It's to be an experience of worshipping God as God with Him being the Creator.

God created the world. At the beginning of the Bible, God is there. At the end of the world, God is there. God creates a church, Acts chapter 1. It begins with a Creator. In Revelation chapter 14 the church ends with the Creator. Now, the world created by God, turned away from God and became a place of debate and strife, became a place of seeking after selfish desires of bickering and fighting over beliefs and practices. And the Bible says that world will be destroyed. The church created by God turned away from Him, became a place of debate and strife and the seeking after selfish desires and became a place of bickering and fighting over beliefs and practices. That church will be destroyed. What stays? The people who are saying "The Lord is God," and they worship him as the Creator of the heavens and the earth.

Let me ask you something. The last time you got in a discussion about religion with somebody, whether we should or should not do something or eat or not eat something, or whatever, I want you to line that argument up in the light of eternity and tell me if it was worth having the discussion. And I want you to line that argument up in the light of the idea of God being God and see if maybe we've lost our focus.

Could it be that God is raising up a people in the last days who will be like the people back in those first days where they were constantly saying the "Lord is God, and you know what, if the Lord is God, it's not about me it's not about my opinion, it's not about what I think is right. It's not about forcing my beliefs and practices and ideas on other people. In fact, it's more about humbling myself before God and preparing my heart for what He's going to do.

God is doing a new thing. He is moving on people's hearts to worship Him as the Creator. They are becoming of one accord in their prayer. And that prayer is one of preparing their hearts for what God is about to do. They are beginning to realize that it's all about Him and not about us. I have good news for you today, Brothers and Sisters, that that God who could create a world, and that God who could create a church, that same God can create a new heart within us.

I don't know where you're at in your experience. Church, religion, doctrine, strife, all this stuff, the stuff we fuss over. I don't know where you're at. Only you know. I don't know if the idea of worshipping God as Creator is a doctrine or experience. Until it becomes an experience, it doesn't matter what your doctrines are. You're still lost.

The Lord wants a change. He wants us to change, to let Him become God in our lives. That's how those people were of one accord. How can you improve on that? If the Lord is God, everything else is of lesser importance. Everything. It's the foundation for all

that is right and good. Maybe He is Lord in your life, parts of your life, but not all. Maybe He's not Lord at all. I don't know where you're at. Only you and the Holy Spirit know and He's speaking to you right now. I have a couple questions for you. Would you like Him to be God in your life? And would you like to worship Him as the Creator. If you would, I'm going to ask you to stand.

Father in Heaven, Our prayer is that You would truly become God to us, and that we would experience worshiping You as the Creator and that we would prepare our hearts for what You are going to do rather than being consumed with what we are going to do. We ask and pray this in Jesus name, Amen.