

MONDAY 30 May 2022 "Impulsive" (Acts 1:15-26)

Good morning my dear "Walking with Jesus" friends,

*Do you know anyone who is **IMPULSIVE**?* There's a difference, in fact a big difference between someone who is innovative or creative or spontaneous and someone who is impulsive, do you agree? While 'impulsive' can be exciting, even invigorating, *it can be a dangerous trait, especially when found in someone who has great influence and other people tend to follow their impulsive ideas!*

Yesterday I left you in a very special place, in the middle of a historic gathering of people in Jerusalem, in the days and hours following Jesus' ascension from earth back to heaven! You'll find this scene in Acts 1, verses 12-14.

Many of the people Jesus considered His friends and family were there, huddled in little groups talking and praying, discussing what they had just experienced as they watched Jesus elevate into the sky from the Mount of Olives. *Suddenly a very influential man, the Apostle Peter, stood to his feet and called for everyone's attention.* Peter was big, bold, brash, and everyone knew he'd had a special relationship with Jesus. When Peter spoke, people listened. In truth, I think people sometimes cringed as they listened, wondering what bold, brash statement might come out of Peter's very impulsive mouth. This time was no different... look at him over there waving his arms, calling for the attention of the people... oh no! What is Peter about to say?

"...the Scriptures had to be fulfilled..." (Acts 1:16) he began... well, at least that was true. Jesus had often said His coming, His rejection, His death and His resurrection were all according to God's Plan and in fulfillment of the Scriptures written many years before. (Isaiah 53; Psalm 22; Matt. 1:22,23; Matt. 26:54; Luke 18:31,32) Peter went on to quote the Old Testament as he loved to do, making his point. But then Peter turned **impulsive**... at least that's what I think, looking into this scene 2000 years later. Peter made this bold statement: **"It is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us... For one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection."** (Acts 1:21,22)

Some people around the room are nodding their heads in agreement, do you see them? Some are saying '*that makes sense, Jesus picked 12 men, Judas left the group, we should replace him.*' But some are asking the deeper question, '*Why? Whose idea is this?*' I am one of the people asking that question. If this had been Jesus' idea, I would have expected that He would have given instructions about it in the upper room the night before He was betrayed and crucified, when Jesus had predicted that Judas would betray Him. I don't see that Jesus mentioned it during any of the many times He appeared to the disciples after His resurrection. I don't see it prophesied anywhere in Scripture. I see no indication here in Acts 1 that while they were praying the Holy Spirit told Peter to say or do this. So that leaves me with one conclusion... *impulsive Peter was once again taking matters into his own hands and doing something impulsive.*

Oh, I'm sure it made sense to Peter, and I don't doubt his good intentions. He made a very good case for this impulsive idea, as it appears there were no objections and all these people gathered together were evidently persuaded to follow Peter's impulsive plan.

The record says: **"So they proposed two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias."** (Acts 1:23) I presume that means the people in that room responded to Peter's bold call to action by 'nominating' these two men. You can see it, can't you? All around the room, people huddled as soon as Peter had made his proposal. Peter had stated the qualifications he thought were good... it must be a man who had been with them from the beginning and therefore was familiar with Jesus and His miracles, His teachings, and had been an eyewitness enough to be able to tell Jesus' story, as the rest of them would. Soon voices could be heard shouting names of men around the room. Finally, they somehow came to agreement on two men Justus and Matthias. This is the first time we see them mentioned so I can't tell you much of anything about either man, nor do I even know if they were there!?

I'm fascinated by what happened next. The record says: **"Then they prayed, 'Lord you know everyone's heart. Show us which of these two YOU have chosen to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs."** Well, my "Walking with Jesus" friends, I salute these people, gathered together, for praying over their decision. Are these words the ONLY words spoken in that prayer and was it only one person or did they have a season of prayer, and these words reflect what was being prayed all through the room... I don't know. *But I believe it was a genuine desire that God would make the selection.*

So, I have a question for all of us: have you and I done the same thing in our lives? Have we had an impulsive idea which seemed good at the time, and have we made an action plan out of that impulsive idea and then as we launch into our impulsive action plan, have we stopped for a moment to ask God to bless our impulsive idea and impulsive action plan? If so, do you remember that it gave you a sense of some spiritual confidence that you were certainly on the right track and of course God would now bless this impulsive idea of yours? I think that's what was happening here. I even see it in the language of the prayer. Do you? They laid out this person's job description and they rationalized why they needed to make this selection, all in a few words in their prayer! Oh my friends, we need to be careful about this, especially if you are an impulsive person who has some influence in the lives of other people.

Do you see what the record says happened next? **"Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so, he was added to the eleven apostles."** (Acts 1:26) This matter of 'casting lots' was used often both in Old Testament times and in the first century. We don't know exactly how they did it here, but it may be similar to what we do sometimes when making a choice by picking short straws or throwing the dice. They were assuming God would have the lot cast in such a way that they could then assume God had made evident His choice. It was evidently NOT an election with everyone voting, nor was it a decision made by Peter who had the idea in the first place.

Whatever the simple, unbiased, process of chance selection it appears everyone agreed Matthias was the one. And I see no record of any ceremony, no prayer thanking God for His guidance. Simply these few words: "**...so he was added to the eleven apostles.**"

Now, why do you suppose I've spent today calling us to consider this little event? Here's why my friends. As I follow the story of the rest of the New Testament, the story of what these apostles did with their experience of several months with Jesus, and their relationship with Jesus... while it is true the story focuses on Peter and John primarily, at least initially, and later Paul and his traveling companions, I find it interesting there is never again any mention of Matthias! Why not? If this idea of replacing Judas with another person who would join the apostles was an idea which was God conceived and God led, and if Dr Luke was Holy Spirit led to include this story into the record of what happened immediately after Jesus ascended back to heaven, then wouldn't you think we'd have at least one story of how this man's addition to the group was significant?

But no... I find nothing. Silence. And for that reason, I have called us to consider today that sometimes impulsive ideas can spawn impulsive plans which can rally others to impulsive actions, and for Christians can even lead us to call for God's involvement in our impulsive action plan. *But if we aren't careful, it can actually be a man conceived, man developed, man led plan that we are asking God to bless.* I think we need to be careful about that, my friends. Careful if you are impulsive, and careful if you find yourself being drawn into an impulsive plan placed before you by an influential impulsive person.

Over the next few days let's follow these close friends of Jesus to see what happened in their lives and how they handled life without Jesus present with them? We'll have many more chances to learn important lessons like this one today about impulsive living. For today, let's each consider how we balance creativity with innovation, with fresh ideas, with impulsive responses, and the direct leading of God in our decisions.

How do you wait for the leading of God? And how do you discern that God is leading you and put it into plans and actions while being careful you are not simply being impulsive? Here's a song that will stir your heart to reflection, my friends...

Today's Scripture is Acts 1:15-26.