

Title: Same As Ever

Text: Acts 5:12-16

Series: Unstoppable—A Study of the Book of Acts

Written by Kevin Thompson

Morgan Housel is the author of *The Psychology of Money*, which has sold 2.2 million copies since its release in 2020. While not Christian, it's a brilliant book.

The premise is this-- while humanity spends billions of dollars on predicting the future, we are horrible at the exercise. In most years, the most significant stories of the year that impact economics, markets, and life are stories no one saw coming. A war, a natural disaster, a novel virus, etc. Housel believes instead of spending so much time and energy trying to predict the unpredictable, we should look at those things that never change

So, while we always wonder what will change this year, in the next decade, or in our lifetimes, we should ask, "What will not change?"

Housel is giving that advice regarding finances, but it's wise advice for us as followers of Jesus. What will happen to the church this year, in the next decade, in our lifetimes? There is a lot we can't predict. But some things never change. Acts 5 shows us a few of those unstoppable things.

Good morning. I'm Scott Mathews. I'm one of the pastors at Adventure. Welcome to our series Unstoppable--A Study in the Book of Acts. Today's text is on a summary statement about things that never change. Today's message was originally written by my friend, Kevin Thompson.

Summary Statements

Throughout the book of Acts, Luke includes statements that summarize what has happened to help transition the action in the story. Sometimes those statements are single verses.

Acts 9:31 (NIV)

³¹ Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace and was strengthened. Living in the fear of the Lord and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers.

Acts 16:5 (NIV)

⁵ So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers.

Acts 19:20 (NIV)

²⁰ In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power.

But other times, these summaries aren't single verses but sections.

The book opens with a section summarizing the gospel of Luke as the writer reminds his reader that the Book of Acts is a sequel to his previous work.

The famous passage at the end of Acts 2 summarizes the book's first two chapters.

And so, Acts 5:12-16 (today's text) can be viewed as a summary that concludes one section and sets the stage for the next move in the story. In light of what has happened in chapters 3, 4, and the beginning of 5, here is what the church was like.

Before we get there, remember what has happened in the last couple of chapters.

Chapter 3-- Peter and John heal the lame man, this creates a stir, and Peter preaches a sermon to the onlookers telling them to repent and turn to Jesus. Many do.

Chapter 4-- This irritates the leaders of the temple, so they arrest Peter and John, which gives Peter a chance to preach a sermon to the Sanhedrin (the ruling senate) Because everyone knew the man was healed, the Sanhedrin couldn't deny it, nor could they punish Peter and John, so they threatened them to stop preaching the name of Jesus. Both disciples refused to obey, saying they couldn't help but tell the story. Upon release, the disciples returned to the other believers and reported what happened to them. This causes a prayer meeting to break out where they pray for even more boldness and ask that God would do more signs and wonders. **How you doin'?**

Chapter 5-- God answers their prayers. How does he do so? By killing Ananias and Sapphira. We don't know if that was a direct answer, but it's definitely a sign that would make people wonder. Chapter 4 ended with all the church in one heart and mind, freely giving their possessions to bless others, but Ananias and Sapphira did not have a reverence for Jesus and tried to appear generous without actually being generous--

they lied (the Devil's language). And they didn't have to give a shekel! And for their hypocrisy, God kills them. Bottom line-- be real, don't lie.

5:12-16 summarizes the life of the church in light of all that has happened in chapters 3-5. Here's the summary:

The Apostles Heal Many

Acts 5:12-16 (NIV)

¹²The apostles performed many signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon's Colonnade. ¹³No one else dared join them, even though they were highly regarded by the people. ¹⁴Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number. ¹⁵As a result, people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. ¹⁶Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by impure spirits, and all of them were healed.

Here's what we see happening in this summary--

God is at work

Some believers were faithful; some weren't

Some of the masses were on board; some were opposed; And some were opportunistic

Through it all, God continued to bless.

Big Story of Acts

1. God is at work.

¹²The apostles performed many signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon's Colonnade.

Don't forget, when we read about the miracles being performed by the apostles, that is the work of God, not the work of the apostles. Remember Peter's sermon,

¹²When Peter saw this, he said to them: "Fellow Israelites, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?" Acts 3:12 (NIV)

One of the great things about the Bible is that God is active. Genesis opens with the first two chapters **showing the activity of God** in Creation. If ever God had a right to step back from his activity on earth, it's in Genesis 3. But instead of stepping back, God promised **to step in** after the failure of our first parents. Through the Old Testament, we see God at work among his people and oftentimes despite his people. But it all leads up to the coming of Jesus. **What's more active** than God leaving heaven and coming to earth?

Consider the activity of Jesus as the Apostle's Creed describes it (2nd C., 140 A.D.)—

"I believe in... Jesus Christ, His only Son our Lord, conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, crucified, dead, and buried. He ascended into heaven. But on the third day, he rose again and ascended in heaven where he sits at the right hand of the Father from whence he will come to judge both the living and the dead."

In that brief statement about Jesus, hear the **words of action**-- conceived, born, suffered, crucified, buried, descended, rose, ascended, judged. When the early church wanted to describe Jesus, **they picked action words**.

The early church was keenly aware that God was at work.

In Henry Blackaby's book, *Experiencing God*, he asserts-- "Find where God is at work and join him there." It's not about us coming up with things to do. It's not about inventing things for God. It's us seeing where God is already at work and simply joining him in that process.

APPLICATION-- Personally, find out where God is at work and join Him.

- God's at work to reach children in Natomas through Breakaway-- Invite your neighbor kids to Breakaway next week.
- God's at work in the hospitality of Adventure. Sign-up for the coffee ministry

In the Hebrew world, the day doesn't start at sunrise, but at sunset. It's evening and then morning. Why? We believe that the day starts with the sunset because we sleep as God begins his work. As the sun rises, we awaken to join God in the work he's already been doing. The early church knew God was at work.

2. Some believers were faithful; some were hesitant.

And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon's Colonnade. ¹³ No one else dared join them, even though they were highly regarded by the people.

In the summary in Acts 2, the early church was devoted to meeting together. That habit remained. The text says all believers met in Solomon's Colonnade. That's the spot where the lame man was healed in chapter 3. Notice, that this is a public meeting. While it's true that as the church expanded, many met in homes as their primary meeting spot. At this point, they were also meeting in a public place at the Temple.



It may seem minor, but we noticed the meeting place had a name. What strikes me about is simply how known it would be. It was a public place.

Notice-- it's a uniquely modern/Western thought that you can be a faithful follower of Jesus and not actively involved in a local church. The idea that faith is just personal does not match Biblical Christianity. Can someone be a Christian and not be involved in church? Yes, of course-- someone can be a disobedient Christian. But we can't argue that we can faithfully follow Jesus without being a part of his church. And the early church knew that.

Yet, maybe not all of them did. One difficult part of this passage is understanding exactly what is meant by "no one else dared join them."

Who is the “no one else?” It's hard to tell, but many believe that some people who were following Jesus were afraid to associate with Solomon's Colonnade because of the opposition by the religious leaders and the possibility of persecution. If that's the case, it's not surprising. Just because someone is a follower of Jesus doesn't mean they are always going to obey and doesn't mean that they are going to be fully mature to understand the importance of their obedience.

APPLICATION-- Put church on the family calendar.

3. Some of the masses were on board, some were opposed, and some were opportunistic.

When it came to those outside of the church, there were three major responses.

- Some were on board.

¹⁴ Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number.

Some were moving from not believing in Jesus to believing in Jesus because of all that was going on.

- Some were opposed. That's the story of the previous two chapters. It's hard to imagine but when the lame man was healed, not everyone was excited. Some would rather others suffer so that they can remain in power than see others freed from what shackles them. And the opposition was not faint. The pattern of Acts is that God moves, lives are changed, the powerful are threatened, they persecute the believers, and the persecution causes more to come to faith. The early church fully expected some to oppose them, but remember their response. They didn't pray for the persecution to stop; they prayed that they would be even more bold. (4:29)

- Some were opportunistic.

¹⁵ As a result, people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by.

Notice the text doesn't necessarily mention these people believed. All they knew was that their loved ones were in need and the early church had a way of helping.

It's not uncommon for many of those who attend Breakaway or are ministered to by our Compassion 365 Ministry, not to attend Adventure or anywhere. One could even argue that's a main point of this text-- we aren't we surprised when someone wants the ministry but doesn't understand the message.

We can never make loving people a means to an end of accomplishing some church goal. We want to feed people and hope they come to Jesus. But even if they don't, we still should feed them. We want to serve our friends at Breakaway, Hume Lake Camp, and Safe Harbor with the hope that they will come to a lifelong relationship with Jesus. But when some of them don't, we still want to serve them.

Some didn't necessarily respond to the gospel, but they responded to the opportunity of having their needs met.

Last Thursday night at youth group, I met a new high school student named. He told me that he was at Adventure's Easter Egg Hunt. While his dad was in an Adventure Group on campus, he was at student ministry. Some are on board!

4. Through it all, the Kingdom continued to advance.

Amid all the good and bad, there is one common theme in the Book of Acts-- no matter what happens, God's Kingdom continues to advance.

¹⁶ Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by impure spirits, and all of them were healed.

Word was spreading from Jerusalem to the surrounding towns. This is the first sign of the coming fulfillment of the words of Jesus when he told his disciples, you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (1:8).

This truth helped the early church endure what was soon to come knowing that the Kingdom was advancing and empowered them through heartache, disappointment, confusion, and persecution.

Consider what's coming in acts:

In the next section, the apostles will be persecuted

In chapters 6-7, Stephen will be arrested and stoned.

In chapters 8-9, the church is persecuted and scattered. The persecutor is Saul

In chapter 12, James is beheaded

Throughout the second half of the book, Paul and his companions are continuously beaten and imprisoned, and attempts are made on their lives.

But none of this slowed down the advancement of the Gospel. God's Kingdom continued to advance in spite of what was happening.

The summary of this section shows this pattern:

God is at work.

Some believers were faithful; some were hesitant.

The masses were split among some who were on board, others who opposed, and others who were opportunistic.

In the midst of it all, God continued to advance His Kingdom.

That was the pattern then, and that is the pattern now. This is what we know about the month, year, decade, and lifetime to come.

Until Jesus returns, this will be the pattern of God, his church, and the world--

God will be at work.

Some of his followers will obey; some will hesitate.

The world will respond with some getting on board, some standing in opposition, and some just being opportunistic.

Yet whatever happens,

God will use it, and us, to advance his Kingdom.

Knowing this pattern should assist us in navigating whatever might come our way.

It's an election year. No one knows for certain who will win. But we can all guarantee that after it's over, we will look back and say, "Of course, that was the outcome. It's so obvious." But right now, we have no idea. But what do we know?

Some people are going to act stupid. Of course, they will. But that shouldn't change how we act, love, or respond.

Some Christians and some churches will lose sight of the Gospel and preach their politics. Of course, they will. But we don't have to. We can stay focused on God's Kingdom.

Many outside the church are going to misrepresent what it means to be a Christian, belittle our faith, and highlight Christians who aren't acting in Christlike ways

as though they were the example of all Christians, but we don't have to allow that to deter us from bringing Jesus' hope to an imperfect world.

What's going to happen in the next decade? We have no idea. Who would have predicted the last decade? My guess is that the most powerful, transformative, and shocking stories of the next decade are the things we could never predict today.

But what do we know will happen? God will be at work. His church will still have a task to make the Gospel known. We won't always get it right, and a lot of Christians won't get it right. Some will oppose us. Some will use us. Some will become one of us. Yet through it all, God's Kingdom will advance.

What's going to happen in my lifetime? Statistically speaking, I'm probably past the midway point of my life. In my previous 56 years, we've made drastic changes. We can only assume those changes will be small compared to what is to come. Yet whatever happens, God will be at work, and I pray that I'm faithful in joining him in that work. And I know that through it all, **his goodness will be expressed to me and to others.**

Summaries

The Book of Acts isn't the only place we see summaries in life. They're all over the place. All of us will likely one day have a summary written about us; It's called our obituary. In that summary, what would you like it said of you? Who do you want to be? And how do you plan on becoming the person you want to be?

For me, the pathway to everything I desire, everything I hope for, everything I can predict or not predict is found in two simple words, "Follow Him."

When I don't know what to do, all I have to do is Follow Him

When I don't know what's to come, I just Follow Him.

Whether the next step is clear or uncertain, Follow Him

Whether your life is right where you want it to be or totally upside down, Follow Him.

APPLICATION-- Follow Him.

APPLICATION-- Personally, find out where God is at work and join Him.

APPLICATION-- Put church on the family calendar.

Whether you have known Jesus all your life or you've never taken one step of obedience, Follow Him.

If a faithful throng of people surrounds you or "if none go with me," Follow Him.

The long story of God and his people has proven one thing--no one has ever regretted following Jesus. That includes those who have borne a similar Cross as Jesus and been martyred for their faith. No one regrets faithfulness. You and I won't be the first.

Notes:

CONTEXT

So what we're seeing here is great fear taking hold of all the believers who had been gathering on the east side of the temple, called Solomon's Colonnade. Umm, this historic site where the King traditionally carried out justice is the site where the enthroned king, Jesus, who sits at the right hand of God, is carrying out righteousness, justice, and Shalom through his apostles (Psalms 93, 95-99).

It really is like the descendant of David who was promised to inherit his throne forever, has ascended to the heavenly throne, and is ruling over Jerusalem. And it's awesome Because this rule is evidence that the Kingdom of God has come.

Acts 5:12–16 (NIV)

The Apostles Heal Many

¹² The apostles performed many signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon's Colonnade. ¹³ No one else dared join them, even though they were highly regarded by the people. ¹⁴ Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number. ¹⁵ As a result, people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. ¹⁶ Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by impure spirits, and all of them were healed.

1. The first observation that we've got to acknowledge is that the miracles of healing the sick and those who were oppressed by impure spirits were practiced by the apostles.
2. The second observation is that This is a new era of God's people. And when new eras are introduced, who's in charge is dramatically clarified. This is a new era-- After Adam and Eve's fall in the garden, the era of innocence was over after Cain murdered his brother, the era of conscience emerged after the confusion of the tower of Babel, the era of government was introduced, Patriarchal rule was followed by the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the introduction of the

law was followed by calf worship. These are eras or dispensations. The era of the church began. S Quote shocking since the 1st century, Christendom has been moving through the second and third chapters of Revelation. We are now in the era of the church at Laodicea-- the era of apostasy where we have dire need 4 what we see here happening at Solomon's Colonnade—healing, judgment, and favor.

1. The Colonnade or Porch was the place where the king exercised justice-- C John 16: 8
2. Jesus had used the venue for his teaching-- see John 10/23
3. Confirms Jesus' prophecy quote greater than these quotes-- John 14/12-- when Jesus spoke none believed when Peter spoke many believed-- Acts 4/2
4. Symbol of the spiritual temple first Peter 2: 4-5
5. Quote public domain quote-- everyone had access

1. When Jesus guides, He provides.

¹²The apostles performed many signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon's Colonnade.

2. When Jesus guides, he multiplies.

¹⁴Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number.

3. When Jesus guides, he enfranchises.

¹⁶Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by impure spirits, and all of them were healed.

