



# BelPres Church

## What Happened?

Speaker: Annie Duncan

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Good morning. My name is Annie Duncan. I'm the executive pastor here and it is wonderful to be with you all in worship this morning. Some of you know this, but from mid January to mid March I was on an 8 week sabbatical. This is something that some on our staff get every couple of years and it is an incredible gift.

And during that time, I spent time resting, reading, praying, learning from other churches. And on the Wednesdays that I was in town, I visited my brother, sister-in-law and nephew and nieces and brought them dinner.

My nephew's seven and my nieces are twins and they're five and they bring a lot of joy and a lot of energy. And so that first Wednesday that I brought them dinner, I walked into a very energetic trio and some pretty tired parents.

So quick problem solving. I was like, OK, Auntie Annie's here, I've got a little bit of energy. We're going to have a three song dance party. So I said to my nieces and nephew, pick out your favorite song and we're just going to dance it out. So we did. I taught them some pretty sweet moves. You can find me in the lobby and learn what those moves are. And they taught me who the K pop demon hunters are. But mostly we just jumped around a little bit off beat and got ourselves nice and tired before we sat down for dinner.

So the next Wednesday that I showed up with dinner, same thing before we before we ate dinner, we did a three song dance party. And then the next Wednesday I opened the door to their home and my nieces and nephew were right there and they were yelling at me. This is the song that I want to do for my

dance party. And, and now every time they see Auntie Annie, they just think we're going to dance it out, which I'm actually OK with.

Yeah, I started something. I started a dance party movement. And movement is, is something that we are looking at right now as we are in this new sermon series called Holy Spirit Unleashed, looking at movements not of dance, but of movements of the Spirit throughout history.

And we're asking the question, what happens when we allow the Holy Spirit to be unleashed in our lives? What happens when whole churches and communities start doing that? When we look at movements like this in history, we call them a revival. Large amounts of people turning to Jesus.

And then in turning to Jesus, things start happening. We see relationships get restored, people being healed, signs and wonders. The miraculous happen, and the transformation that revival brings is from the power of the Holy Spirit, the power and work of the Holy Spirit.

Last week, Pastor Scott kicked off this series by looking at holy discontent, when God's people look around at the state of things and are filled with a holy discontent because what they see doesn't match what they feel like should be happening in terms of what we read in scripture.

They then cry out to God and ask for God to come down and for God to help. And so this week we pick up where we left off, looking at corporate prayer, when God's people cry out to God. And one of the most impactful world changing moves of the Spirit happens in the book of Acts.

In the book of Acts, we read about the very start of the church, once there was no church and then the church started and that happens in the book of Acts when the Holy Spirit's poured out. And like Pastor Scott said last week, that kick started a revival where the Jesus movement grew 40% per decade for 300 years.

So what happened? Ask say that with me. What happened? We are going to ask that question a lot as we unpack bits and pieces of the first two chapters of Acts. Because what happened to kick start a movement that founded the church in Jerusalem to the worldwide church that we know then today?

And if prayer is such a critical part of it, what did prayer look like before the Holy Spirit came? And what did prayer look like after the Holy Spirit was poured out? And if you have your Bible, you're going to want to open it up with me

because there's a lot of places that we're going to be bouncing around in the first two chapters of Acts.

So as you navigate your way to the the very first chapter of Acts, I'll set the scene a little bit. And Acts is found after the Gospels in the second-half of your Bible. If you see someone struggling to find it, just just help a friend out there.

So setting the scene a little bit, before Jesus was crucified, when he was with the disciples, he alluded to something that was about to happen, something that was coming, and that something is the Holy Spirit. And he said that the disciples would do even greater things than they'd seen Jesus do. Hold up. That's a really powerful statement that I just said.

Jesus said that the disciples would do even greater things than they'd seen Jesus do because he was going to the Father and in his place sending the Holy Spirit. And so then after Jesus was resurrected and before he ascended into heaven, he told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem for this thing that was about to happen.

So we're going to pick it up in Acts 14. And I, unlike Scott Dudley, I need readers in order to read my Bible because I have bad eyes. So here we go, Acts 14. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be Nope, that's 18l mean OK, Jesus says do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my father has promised, which you have heard me speak about. In a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.

So Jesus says this and then ascends to heaven and the disciples do what they heard Jesus tell them to do.

They wait. And just a side note here, because language matters, in the gospels the followers of Jesus are called the disciples, but in Acts they are called the apostles. Same group of people, different name. And it actually is significant and it matters because when the disciples were with Jesus, they were called the disciples. Because a disciple it means you follow and you learn from a teacher. So they were with Jesus following and learning from him.

The word apostle means sent out. So after Jesus ascends to heaven, he has sent the apostles out. So disciples, apostles, same group of people but different meaning of the name. And it matters. So, apostles, so now that Jesus has ascended into heaven, he's given his disciples. Oh, I just said that. Let's keep reading though.

In Acts One, picking it up at verse 12. Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the hill called Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day walk from the city. When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alpheus, Simon the Zealot, Judas son of James. They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary, the Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

So what happened in that upper room? Constant prayer. This is the first critical action that happens to kick start the revival that started the church. Constant prayer in the upper room. Jesus tells the apostles to wait in Jerusalem, so they huddle up in the upper room and they do the only thing that seemed appropriate. They just start praying together and waiting.

The last time that the apostles and followers of Jesus were huddled up like this, they were grieving Jesus death. Jesus had just died. They were confused. They didn't know what was happening. They were huddled together, but I don't think they were praying. I think they were just crying and mourning. Devastated, right?

But here in this upper room, the atmosphere is completely different. The apostles saw Jesus die, then they saw him in his resurrected body. They got to interact with him, and then they've just most recently seen Jesus ascend into heaven. And so in this upper room moment, they're filled with joy because bit by bit they're starting to piece together the things that Jesus had told them when he was with them. And things are starting to click into place. And so they're in this upper room and they wait and they pray.

And this is a really interesting part of this passage. But like, this is the first time that we really see the apostles in constant prayer like this. When back in the Gospels, when the apostles were with Jesus, they saw Jesus pray, they tried to pray, but never quite like this. And at one point Jesus even asked them to pray, but they kept on falling asleep.

So I don't really have words to describe how radical this upper room, constant prayer of the apostles is, but I'm trusting that the Holy Spirit highlights it for you like the Holy Spirit did for me. Because this is something we have never seen the apostles do before like this. But prayer from here on out is going to be something that we see the apostles do over and over again.

So think about what that upper room must have like, looked like, and felt like. Those gathered there, they're expectant, they're excited, there's maybe even

some nervous energy in the room because they're waiting for something that they don't really know what it is. The Holy Spirit, we're waiting for this thing to come. They don't know what it is, what it looks like, what it will feel like. And Jesus said to wait for a few days, but they actually end up waiting for 10 days, 10. That's a long time.

I'm sure some of them, maybe Thomas was like, well, I doubt anything's going to happen, but let's unpack this like what the room must have felt like. Let's unpack it in another way. The Seahawks won the Super Bowl championship this year. And what a game, right? Go Hawks. But could you any Hawks fans in here? OK, OK. It's it was kind of a it's not a little game, it's a big game. It's a big game.

But could you imagine if coach Mike McDonald and all the other coaches said to the team 10 days before the Super Bowl, hey, guys, we're out of here, we're going to Cancun. But you've got this, you've put in the work. We've learned a lot of things this year. Good luck and go Hawks. And then all the coaches just left, left leaving the players there 10 days before the game, but without their coaches.

What kind of outcome would there have been if that happened, right? I mean, we still would have won the game, maybe would have helped the Patriots out a little bit. But I imagine if the all the coaches left the players 10 days before the game, things might have been a little chaotic. Like, who's in charge now? Who's going to call the shots? Should we draft a new player and named Matthias and like, you know, put him on our team? That's a Bible trivia joke that I think only Scott Mann got. But read Acts one and two and you'll understand it.

But this starts to unpack just the plethora of emotions that must have been in that upper room. Yes, joy, yes, excitement, nervous energy. But also like, wait, who's in charge now? Like, maybe there was some tension, right? Because they're waiting and they're praying because that's what their coach, their leader, Jesus, told them to do. But they've also just spent the past three years following Jesus, watching Jesus, listening to Jesus. So what happens now?

In January of 2025, we called our entire congregation to pray and fast for the 1st 25 days of 2025. And that culminated in all of us gathering here in the Community Center on the 25th of January to, you know, unpack what did the Holy Spirit say during this time? And it was a really powerful corporate prayer that we invited, I mean, many of you who participated in that. And one of the outcomes of that month is happening right here and now. It's it's Unleashed. This whole theme of Unleashed that we're walking through the fall and, and now here in the winter and spring is because of the prayer that we did in January of

2025. There is something powerful that happens when God's people come together and cry out to God and pray.

So let's jump ahead to Acts 24 because after 10 days of constant prayer and waiting, something finally happens. And in Acts 2, it says all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit. And I encourage you to read through this whole chapter because there is a lot that happens here in Acts 2. We're just going to talk about the Holy Spirit and then talk about the prayer that happens after this.

But after that 10 day prayer retreat in the upper room, right? The Holy Spirit fills all of the believers that are gathered there. And this is the second critical thing that happens to kick start the revival that started the church is Jesus went from being with the apostles to being within the apostles. This is the part in the 2nd chapter of Acts where the Holy Spirit is unleashed. When Jesus was with the disciples, they have the authority to do what Jesus did because Jesus gave them authority. He sent them out, they obeyed him, they followed his lead. But in Acts 2, when the Holy Spirit comes, Jesus is now within the apostles through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The same Spirit that filled Jesus now fills the apostles. And so the apostles start doing the things that they saw Jesus do and like. This is radical because the apostles, we know the disciples, they were flawed, they missed it, they misunderstood Jesus. But here we start seeing them supercharged with the power of the Holy Spirit. And, and in this section, which you'll, I trust that you'll read through all of Acts 2 later. But a crowd forms because sometimes when the Holy Spirit falls, it can be a little disruptive. And a crowd forms. And so Peter addresses the crowd and Peter starts preaching about who Jesus is.

Has Peter ever preached like this before? No, no, maybe he was like before he was filled with the Holy Spirit. Maybe he was even afraid of public speaking. We don't know. But he's never preached like this before. But now he is filled, supercharged with an authority to preach. And so he starts preaching. This is the same Peter that just 50 days prior had ran away and denied Jesus because he was afraid. And now he's preaching the holy fire of the Holy Spirit got a hold of Peter. And the Jesus that was with Peter is now within Peter.

Sometimes when I read through the Gospels, I really resonate with the disciples because I mean, they were literally with Jesus and they got it wrong so much of the time, right? They're reactive and inconsistent in their prayer. They misunderstand what Jesus mission is all about. They request positions of power when Jesus takes over, they're filled with fear after Jesus is taken to be crucified, and some even deny knowing you Jesus is. But here in the book of

Acts, the apostles are a completely different crew. They still muck things up a bit, but they're radically transformed because of the fall and power of the Holy Spirit.

And this is where things really get going because at the end of that first day, the Holy Spirit has been unleashed and Peter has preached to the crowd. Scripture says in Acts 2:41 that those who accepted Peter's message got to read it. Because I'm expecting you to read your Bibles too, so I'm going to read it from here. Those who accepted Peter's message were baptized, and about 3000 were added to their number that day, 3000. That's like Bell Press on an Easter plus some like that's a lot of people, right? Boom, right here. This is the start of the church. This is when the church begins prayer that morning that started in an upper room can no longer be contained to an upper room.

The power of the Holy Spirit, people getting baptized and the start of the first church is the outcome of those 10 days of prayer and waiting because before revival is lived out, it is prayed down. So let's keep reading. We're going to pick it back up in Acts 2:42. So they devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and to fellowship and to the breaking of bread. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles.

OK, hold on. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed. The apostles, yeah, they're filled with awe because they're like, these are the same guys that were running away from Jesus, that were filled with fear. And now, now look at them again. They're supercharged. They're, they're supernaturally filled with the Holy Spirit. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who was in need

Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily who were being saved. That is the start of the church right there in Acts 2.

Have you ever been like out in nature or spent a day hiking in the mountains only to finally get to your destination? And there's like a viewpoint? And so you you stop and you look around and you're like, wow, look at, look at all the beauty that's up here. That has to be what this part in Acts must have felt like.

It was a chance for the disciples to kind of look around at the end of that first day to see all those people, to catch their breath and to look at each other and be like, Holy Spirit. Some people just woke up. They're, what is she going to say,

Holy Spirit? What has been unleashed, right? Wow. Because this is at the end of that third day, 1/3 critical thing happens. There's widespread prayer among thousands of believers.

This is how it was at the very start of the church, and it only increased and spread from there because of the power of the Holy Spirit that was within the apostles that were just doing the work that they'd seen Jesus do. To underscore how quickly the church grew that day, it would be like if a handful of us were in the prayer room, which is just off the lobby.

We were in the prayer room for 10 days praying and, and asking that that God turned people's hearts to him, that we were praying for people to start following Jesus.

And then at the end of that 10 days, we walked out into the parking lot and the parking lot's filled with thousands of people that are there curious about who Jesus is and ready to be baptized. That's how quickly the church grew that first day. And in the days that followed, the faithful prayers in the upper room turned into spirit filled prayers of those willing to continue doing what they've seen Jesus do.

And theologian and teen, right. He comments on this through line of prayer in the book of Acts. And he says the constant references to prayer and Acts are a sign that this is how these very ordinary, frequently muddled, deeply human beings, the apostles and the others with them. Found that their story was being bound up with the story of what Jesus was continuing to do and teach.

And we in our own day not only read Acts, but try and follow Jesus and witness to His Lordship over the world. It is through prayer and worship that we too can know and enjoy and be energized by the life of heaven right here on earth and work out what that will mean.

And I love how Right puts this. We don't just read Acts, but we too try and follow Jesus. And it's through prayer and worship that we do that. Prayer is the key to revival because it connects us to something bigger than ourselves.

It connects us to God's heart, what God's up to, and the Holy Spirit gives us the power and courage to do things that we cannot do alone. And so our action step for this week is the same as it was last week. It is to pray.

Pray for revival. Pastor Scott reminded us that every transformational revival in history didn't start with a strategic plan. It didn't start with a task force.

It started with prayer. So pray. Pray that Jesus unleashes the power of the Holy Spirit in your life and in those around you.

You can pray for this individually. You can receive prayer from our prayer ministers at the end of the service. You can jump into the prayer room throughout the week.

It's a beautiful thing to pray in a room with other followers of Jesus. Even if there's nobody in there, knowing that other people have been in there praying makes that place a very holy place.

And if you have questions about who, who the Holy Spirit is, pray that Holy Spirit. I don't know who you are. Reveal yourself to me.

One of the things that's so transformative in following Jesus is that we have access to Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit and the life that Jesus calls us to. We cannot live alone.

We have to live connected to Jesus and it is through the power of the Holy Spirit that we do that. So power lives in you as a new reality. So power up Bell Press, supernatural power from the Holy Spirit is the only way that we can be unleashed. I'll close with this.

I was in a meeting this week with leadership on staff and during that meeting we were reflecting on where we are as a church today versus where we were a year ago. And as we all kind of reflected, we all were talking about something that is stirring and something that we see happening. We're in a different place today than we were a year ago, which is really encouraging.

You know, you talk about the morning of discernment that happened in January 2025, a year ago, and there are things that we were praying for then that we are seeing happen now.

And that is powerful. Our senior pastor Scott described it like this. It's like wind in our sails, but not by our own doing. If it's not by our own doing, then is it the Holy Spirit that is at work here? Our prayers for the Holy Spirit to be unleashed are being answered.

And this is really, really cool to see happening around here. Is revival finally coming to the Seattle area?

I don't know, but I want to be praying for it to come. So join in praying for the Holy Spirit to be unleashed. Join in praying for the Holy Spirit to come and

radically change the East side. The Holy Spirit unleashed in our lives gives us victory over fear.

Encouragement in the face of anything that life throws at us assures us that we are not in this life of walking with Jesus alone, but we can rely on the Holy Spirit to be our strength. So be praying this week.

They'll press for Holy Spirit to come and bring revival. So God, that that is our prayer that you pour out your spirit that you continue to do what we see you doing. And in answering the prayers that we've been praying, help us to see how you are at work in our lives and point that out as encouragement to those around us. So Holy Spirit, have your way with us. It's in your name that we pray. And everybody said together, Amen.

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**Scripture Reflection Questions:** Read this week's scripture together and discuss the following:

- What do we learn about God (e.g., traits, personality, what matters, priorities) in this passage?
- What do we learn about people, and ourselves in particular, this week?

**Sermon Reflection Questions:** Reflecting on this week's sermon, discuss the following:

- What four key practices are highlighted in verse 42, and why do you think they were foundational for the early believers?
- In verse 47 it says that "the Lord added to their number daily"? What factors might have led to such growth?
- Which aspect of this early church model do you find most inspiring? Most challenging?

**Closing Group Prayer:**

Spend a few minutes together in your group sharing prayer requests and then praying together for each other. Take the challenging parts of your conversation to Jesus. Thank God for the time together, the conversation shared, the other people in the group, and for encouragement for the week ahead.