

Acts 28:16-31

In the End is the Beginning

Sometimes it is good for a story to come to an end.

And some stories end better than others.

Some TV Shows have memorable endings, like The Sopranos or Lost.

You might hate them or love them.

But the best stories are the ones you don't want to end.

Have you ever read a book or watched a movie or show in which you sat there

And knew you wanted more?

The scope of the story is just so sweeping, the characters so well developed
and complex you want to know what happens next.

Stories at their worst merely entertains us, allows us to escape a boring reality.

But stories at their best allow us to transcend our present reality

To hold up a mirror to our lives from which we can learn.

I have read fiction widely and I will say this – no work of fiction can ever

Outstrip the real stories of real people.

The depth of tragedy, the heights of triumph, the interplay of good and evil,

The scope of characters is unmatched in fiction to real life.

The greatest authors and poets are those who provide the closest
verisimilitude to reality.

They are good observers of history, humanity and reality.

The Acts of the Apostles is no fiction, but a true story.

In fact, much of the beauty of Scripture comes how true stories are told.

Whether told slant through poetry or figurative tales through no-hold
barred accounts of lives lived, no other work of literature can hold a candle
to the breadth of the Bible because it is in the deepest sense, true.

The Acts of the Apostles is that it is the very last full historical narrative we get
in the Bible.

The rest are a collection of letters.

Another note is that it is written by a person who is actually present.

The final passages of Acts are written in first person by Luke.

And even more intriguing is that the story doesn't have a real ending.

The Apostle Paul finally arrives in Rome under armed guard.

He was almost killed in Jerusalem for preaching about the Kingdom

When he appealed to his Roman citizenship.

This meant he could call upon the emperor to hear his case.

And so begins an arduous journey to Rome.

There we are told that he waits for two years for his hearing.

But then there is nothing more!

There is no telling of his trial!

What happens?

What is up with the missing ending?

What are we supposed to learn?

First of all it is an invitation to learn about your personal history.

Yes, your history.

In a day and age in which people know little about themselves we need to

Know because it does matter.

You and I are gentiles, the very people Paul was called to.

How did we become Christians?

Why are we Christians?

Every single one of us can trace our direct spiritual lineage to the Acts.

Much of this history is recovered by the manuscripts left to us.

But how do we know we are being true to what Jesus taught?

The story of Christian Faith is a story that tragic and beautiful all at once.

It is an epic tale.

The Bible begins the story but history tells the rest.

Paul is released but eventually he is put to death by the sword.

All the apostles save John are martyred for their faith in proclaiming

The kingdom of Jesus.

But others spring up to take their place.

Filled with the Holy Spirit, they continue.

There is corruption, rise, fall, betrayal, valour, compassion, redemption.
Even in our day, to this very day.
Every theme is alive today.
But the dominant theme is that of the redemption.
Your redemption and mine by Jesus and his Kingdom.

Second, take your place in history.

Here and now, take hold of your inheritance of faith.
The gospels are not an academic study.
Paul, even under house arrest continued to connect with people.
In the circumstance he found himself in under house arrest, he still shared
the Kingdom!
It was known that even the soldiers who guarded him became believers!
What circumstances are you in?
Will you enter into the history of faith and live the Life of Christ to the full?
It is never too late.
Thank God that the stories of the saints are not of heroes.
The faithful are stumbling, bumbling, confused at times, wrong at many.
And yet the Spirit is in them.
The way you relate to everyone around you, even in your bad moments,
The moments you are ashamed of, your regrets, your sins, your joys,
Your suffering, your memories, all are part of this epic.
Accept your place with Christ, within the kingdom.

Finally, set your direction for the future.

Will you be counted among those who are of the Kingdom?
Or will we be pretenders?
This is measured not by the clarity of the path before us but of the
direction we set ourselves in.
“Your will be done, not mine.”
That is all.

The Book of Acts is at an end.
But in its end is our beginning.
Every sunset is a sunrise.