



Week 9 | November 11 Sermon

Community:

At church on Sunday, we got the opportunity to place ourselves along a diagram of the faith journey. Each person was invited to pray and honestly assess his or her own placement along the journey visualized below. If a few of you are willing, would you share a bit about that experience? Here are some possible questions to get you started:

- Are there any who received Christ for the first time? CELEBRATE together!!!!!!
- Have you ever done something like this in corporate worship before?
- How did it feel to reflect on your own journey and intentionally recognize your current place?
- Were you surprised at all by your assessment and placement?
- Would you like to be at a different place in your journey?
- How have you experienced the Lord's loving pursuit along the journey?
- Are you being invited by Him to take the next step? What will that look like for you?
- How can your GROUP support you in your personal journey?



Sermon Title: Preaching on the Other Side of the Tracks, Part 2 | Text: Acts 7

Sanctuary Discussion Questions::

Stephen's sermon of Acts 7 is the longest recorded sermon in the book of Acts, and it seems to have aroused the most intense anger (vs 54-58). In your mind, what are some of the reasons why?

Although it reads like a lengthy history lesson, what seems to be the climax that Stephen was building toward? (vs 48-50)

In reading verses 54-60, especially verse 60, what similarities do you see between Stephen's execution and Christ's crucifixion?

What significant difference can you see between the two? (Compare vs 55-56 with Matthew 27:46)

What impact do you think this event may have had on Saul?

Think of someone in your life who has made a similar Christ-like impression on you, then consider this personal question: "Am I willing to pour out my life for the sake of Christ and others?"

Auditorium Discussion Questions::

What things lifted for you regarding Stephen's powerful testimony as he was being judged by the Jewish Sanhedrin?

If you have been a part of the institutional church for a long time, how does our tradition get in the way of your participating in the heart of the Gospel message of Jesus?

(Remember: The Jewish leaders were stuck on the authority of the priests, the law and the temple itself as the main way to encounter God. They couldn't fathom God working outside of their mental boxes.)

The core theme of Acts 7 lands in verses 51 – 52 where Stephen makes the emphatic observation about the Jewish leadership in Jerusalem, "You always resist the Holy Spirit!" How/where do you see resistance to Holy Spirit's work in our church and generally speaking in the lives of people around you?

In a very direct way Stephen's message reaffirmed Jesus' warning to us from Luke 12:10, "I tell you, who ever acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man will also acknowledge him before the angels of God. But he who disowns me before men will be disowned before the angels of God. And every one who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven."

Commentary: "The unpardonable sin is the deliberate refusal to acknowledge God's power in Christ. It indicates a deliberate and irreversible hardness of heart. Whoever rejects the promptings of the Holy Spirit removes him or herself from the only force that can lead him or her to repentance and renewal in relationship with God in this age or the age to come. This is deliberate and on-going rejection of the Holy Spirit's work and therefore of God himself." - John Piper

Wrestle with Jesus' words to you as a group. What questions, promptings, issues and themes lift?

The Apostle Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 5:20, "Do not put out Holy Spirit's fire." How do you keep the fiery work of Holy Spirit stoked in the furnace of your spirit? In what ways are you being called to move away from quenching the work of Holy Spirit in your life so you can lean into greater levels of spiritual maturity and leadership?