

Title: **What Are You Looking at?! (Part 2)**
Text: **Acts 7:1-60**
Date: **April 21, 2024**

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Big Idea

As we said last week, one way we can know we've truly been walking with Jesus is we'll start to look more and more like him. We'll look like the one we've been looking at. Stephen here looks like Jesus, not just in the way he *serves and suffers*, but also in the way he *speaks*. His words are wise, courageous, and gracious. As we look to Jesus, ours will be too!

Emphasis #1: The Lord's Unfolding Plan of Redemption

In this speech, Stephen is seemingly summing up the entirety of the OT. He covers serious ground. But what is he doing? He's actually trying to respond to those charges made against him (cf. Acts 6:11-14) by showing how his commitment to Jesus and the gospel doesn't put him at odds with Moses and the law nor God and the temple as they claim. No! In fact, Jesus is actually the fulfillment of such things. He's the realization of all this OT stuff was pointing towards. The Lord's plan unfolds through Moses and the temple towards Jesus and the cross.

God has been with his people all along and can work with or without the temple. It was never about the brick and the mortar, the building itself. God used the temple to try to convey things about himself and the way we get access to him, but this was always a mere earthly picture of a more heavenly reality—something which is ultimately realized in Jesus. He's the glory-presence of God come down to dwell with us. He's the high priest living to make intercession for us. He's the spotless sacrifice whose blood atones for our sin. He's the one who tears the curtain from top to bottom (literally when he's on that cross [Matt. 27:51]) giving sinners like us access to a holy God.

Beware of standing in the way of God's plan for you. Let him have his way in your life. Let his plan unfold, whether it seems favorable to you at first or not. I don't know what you've been going through lately. I don't know *where* Jesus is leading you. But I do know *the one* who is

leading you—and he's good, and he can be trusted. Let go. Let him lead you on. He may destroy the temple, so to speak, but he only does so if he's planning to rebuild something even better!

Emphasis #2: The People's Longstanding Pattern of Resistance

What Stephen wants to do here, really, is expose the irony, the hypocrisy in all of this. "You are accusing me of standing against Moses and the temple and God. But I am here saying, it is not I who is standing against such things, but you. You say I'm denying God's ways, when truly I'm defending them. You think you're defending God's ways, when you're truly you're denying them. And such is to be expected, for it has always been this way with you and your fathers. You have a poisoned pedigree. You are sour fruit from a sour stalk. Like father, like son."

Beware of your propensity to self-deception. Sometimes we can think we are walking hand-in-hand with God, when truly we are stiff-arming him.

Emphasis #3: The Gospel's Stubborn Offer of Forgiveness

If God's people have a stiff neck, I suppose you could rightly say, in one sense, that God's neck is stiffer still. If they are stubborn in their resistance and rebellion. He is even more stubborn, it would seem, in his mercy and grace. If God could extend mercy to people like this, to people like Saul (cf. Acts 7:58; 8:1; 9:1ff.), he can extend and is extending mercy to you here today . . . I don't care what you were doing yesterday. Come to him through Jesus and he will receive you!



Reflection Questions

- Would people recognize Jesus' voice in your own? Why or why not? In what ways have you been speaking like your Savior lately (i.e. with *wisdom, courage, and grace*)? In what ways have you been falling short? How might truly looking at Jesus this week begin to help you look more like him in way that you speak?
- Which of the three emphases above seemed most relevant to you this morning and why?

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FAITH: The Way Back to God | We are redeemed to enjoy intimate presses our church *upwards* in love

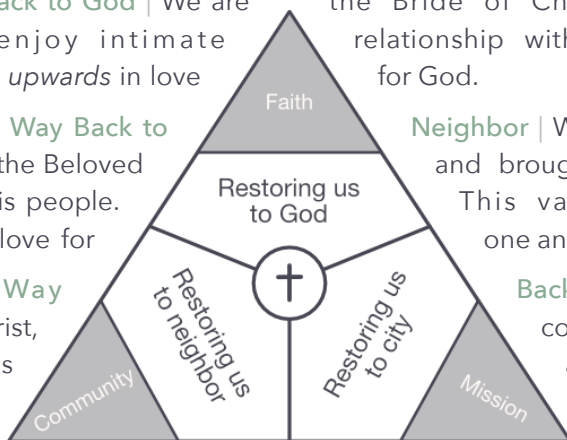
the Bride of Christ, created and relationship with him. This value for God.

COMMUNITY: The Way Back to Christ, adopted in the Beloved relationship with his people. church *inwards* in love for

Neighbor | We are the Family of and brought into covenantal This value presses our one another.

MISSION: The Way the Embassy of Christ, Savior to be his value presses our in love for the

Back to City | We are commissioned by the ambassadors. This church *outwards* unbelieving.



Your Next Steps

When approaching the Christian faith and life, it can be confusing to know where to even begin. Come find us at the Next Steps Table after the service—it would be our joy to help you along in the journey! And if you're a visitor, we have a special gift bag for you. Don't miss it!



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Welcome to Mercy Hill Church.
We are so glad you've joined us today!

Announcement Spotlight

Short-Term Missions Trip to Nicaragua - APPLY TODAY!

As a church, we are passionate about joining God in his work of restoring the world around us. That's why we've partnered with Arms of Love, a Christian ministry in Nicaragua and the Philippines, to support their mission through prayer, financial assistance, and hands-on service.

Are you ready to make a meaningful impact in the lives of orphans and vulnerable children? Arms of Love provides a loving family environment for 74 children aged 6 to 17, along with 15 young adults. During our time in Nicaragua, we will have the opportunity to support the staff and children at the Arms of Love children's home through various activities. From assisting with kids' programs and serving in the community, to providing staff training and engaging in prayer ministry, there's something for everyone to contribute!

If you have any questions or feel led to go, please reach out to Bob and Becky Durstenfeld via email (beckydurstenfeld@gmail.com). They will help you along your way and can even get you an application!

All Church Prayer - Tonight!

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