

The Christian Life in Three Dimensions
Acts #17 | Acts 14:1-28
January 17, 2020

Pre-Sermon Remarks

- Today is Mackenzie's sweet 16 - happy birthday!
- Pastor Jason's two full chapters - a big corner turned | Paul & Barnabas

PRAYER

Introduction

- As the mission moves outside of Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria, there are new challenges, new things that require attention. **What should we focus on?**
- FOCUS – Fred Meyer car story
- Our society demands attention. As followers of Jesus, where do we focus?

Big idea: Followers of Jesus must focus in three directions: upward, outward, and inward.

- Drivers have to learn to balance their focus: the road, rearview mirror, sides.

Empowered By the Spirit

^{13:52} And the disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit.

- Our chapter/verse divisions are arbitrary | Is this a summary, transition, or introduction?

^{14:1} In Iconium they entered the Jewish synagogue, as usual, and spoke in such a way that a great number of both Jews and Greeks believed.

- God used the diaspora of generations past to have Jewish communities all over

² But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers. ³

So they stayed there a long time and spoke boldly for the Lord, who testified to the message of his grace by enabling them to do signs and wonders.

- Always remember: the signs and wonders point to the message of his grace

Exercising Wisdom

⁴ But the people of the city were divided, some siding with the Jews and others with the apostles. ⁵ When an attempt was made by both the Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to mistreat and stone them, ⁶ they found out about it and fled to the Lycaonian towns of Lystra and Derbe and to the surrounding countryside. ⁷ There they continued preaching the gospel.

- So much anti-Semitism from misreading the NT | Jewish **and** Gentile opposition
- They're not stupid! They use practical wisdom as well.
- Not going to let death threats stop them from preaching, just a different town

Focus #1: The Holy Spirit

1. The Holy Spirit is God | professor who only said "Holy Spirit," no "the"
2. The Holy Spirit is priority | Pastor Kyle's reminder this past week
3. The Holy Spirit points to Jesus | vs. ³ *who testified to the message of his grace*

a. GOSPEL

4. The Holy Spirit empowers believers | signs and wonders, things that are “beyond” us

Men or gods?

⁸ In Lystra a man was sitting who was without strength in his feet, had never walked, and had been lame from birth. ⁹ He listened as Paul spoke. After looking directly at him and seeing that he had faith to be healed, ¹⁰ Paul said in a loud voice, “Stand up on your feet!” And he jumped up and began to walk around. ¹¹ When the crowds saw what Paul had done, they shouted, saying in the Lycaonian language, “The gods have come down to us in human form!”

- Greco-Roman deities are different from how we think of “gods”
 - Nature itself is eternal - sun, moon, and stars
 - The gods are immortal, not necessarily eternal
 - Every now and then, they would make appearances in the world of men

¹² Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. ¹³ The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the town, brought bulls and wreaths to the gates because he intended, with the crowds, to offer sacrifice.

- Lycaonian language, delayed response from Barnabas and Paul
- Exact opposite reaction from Herod in the last chapter

¹⁴ The apostles Barnabas and Paul tore their robes when they heard this and rushed into the crowd, shouting, ¹⁵ “People! Why are you doing these things? We are people also, just like you, and we are proclaiming good news to you, that you turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and everything in them.

- “Our nature” is just like you, **BUT** the one true God is actually the creator of all things!

¹⁶ In past generations he allowed all the nations to go their own way, ¹⁷ although he did not leave himself without a witness, since he did what is good by giving you rain from heaven and fruitful seasons and filling you with food and your hearts with joy.”

- Nations = Babel = Deuteronomy 32 | false gods who have ruled over the nations
- This one true God has been pointing you to himself through everything enjoyable

¹⁸ Even though they said these things, they barely stopped the crowds from sacrificing to them.

Focus #2: Cultural Engagement

1. The gospel is about Jesus, not us |
2. The gospel is beyond adaptable | the most widespread religious movement
 - a. Last week’s note in 13:1 on ethnic diversity
3. Engagement requires fresh eyes | their gospel presentation is somewhat different
 - a. **Excursus: The Apotheosis of George Washington | PICTURES**
 - i. **We have deified our presidents. They’re superheroes or demons**
 - b. Do we look at our culture with fresh eyes? With Kingdom eyes?

Left for Dead

¹⁹ Some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and when they won over the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, thinking he was dead. ²⁰ After the disciples gathered around him, he got up and went into the town. The next day he left with Barnabas for Derbe.

- Can you even imagine what this was like?

Disciples and Elders

²¹ After they had preached the gospel in that town and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, to Iconium, and to Antioch, ²² strengthening the disciples by encouraging them to continue in the faith and by telling them, "It is necessary to go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God." ²³ When they had appointed elders for them in every church and prayed with fasting, they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

A Good Report

²⁴ They passed through Pisidia and came to Pamphylia. ²⁵ After they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia. ²⁶ From there they sailed back to Antioch where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work they had now completed. ²⁷ After they arrived and gathered the church together, they reported everything God had done with them and that he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. ²⁸ And they spent a considerable time with the disciples.

Focus #3: Church Discipleship

1. The church is universal and local | churches in each different town
 - a. Local church, but also be connected to other churches
2. The church is cared for by elders | men who bear a specific leadership responsibility
3. The church is made up of disciples | different terms for Jesus' followers, 4 times in ch. 14
 - a. **STUDENT EVENT YESTERDAY**
 - b. Preaching the gospel
 - c. Strengthening the disciples
 - d. Encouraging them in hardship
4. Discipleship means time | they spent a considerable time with the disciples

Gospel

Doesn't this picture of the early church remind you of Jesus?

1. Empowered by the Spirit | Birth was miraculous from the Holy Spirit, and his life and mission was continually empowered by the Spirit
2. Focused on mission | Didn't get distracted
3. Engaged with his culture | Jewish culture, but also Samaritans, SyroPhoenician, Pilate
4. Making disciples | All he did was make disciples!
5. Like Paul, left for dead, but raised on the 3rd day
6. Put shepherds in place in his church
7. Instructed us to go out and multiply!

Application

1. Know your strengths and weaknesses
 - a. Some disciples will be more oriented toward one of these areas
 - b. Bring that strength to the rest of us!
 - c. Work to shore up your weaknesses
2. Cultivate awareness of Holy Spirit

3. Engage culture like an outsider | evangelism as exiles
4. Disciple, and be disciplined |

Benediction

Romans 15 ¹³ May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.