

# 5th Sunday

## Family Service

March 31, 2019

Pastor Jared Stoner, Lead Pastor

We've already had a very full service, so I'm going to keep it relatively short this morning. However, I do want to share a few thoughts with you on this season of change we're in as a church and I want to do that using a passage of Scripture in Acts 13. Of course, it's always great to have the kids with us.

So, in Acts 13, we read that God Paul and Barnabas to go out and tell people in other nations about Jesus. Kids, do you remember Paul and Barnabas—how they were thrown into the fiery furnace and after three days were spit out on to dry ground and then killed Goliath? No, the book of Acts says that Paul hated Christians. In fact, Acts 8:3 says, "Paul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison."

But even though Paul tried to destroy the church, God had a plan for his life. So while Paul was "breathing out murderous threats against the disciples (Acts 9:1)," and getting permission to arrest more Christians, God appeared to Paul. Acts 9:3-6 says, "3As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. 4He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' 5'Who are you, Lord?' Saul asked. 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,' he replied. 6'Now get up and go into the city, and you

will be told what you must do."

Saul got up to go do what God told him to do, but when he opened his eyes he realized he was blind. So the people with him led him by the hand to a house where he waited for God to show him what to do. While all of that was happening, God called one of his disciples named Ananias to go pray for Paul. Ananias didn't want to go because he was a Christian and he knew that Paul hated Christians and that he had come to arrest them and throw them in jail. But God can be pretty convincing, so Ananias went and prayed for Paul.

Acts 9:17-19 says, "17Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, 'Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.' 18Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, 19and after taking some food, he regained his strength."

So Paul started doing what God wanted him to do. He started telling everyone he could that God had sent Jesus to forgive save them from their sins. One of Paul's friends was a man named Barnabas. Barnabas introduced Christians to Paul and convinced them that Paul wasn't going to arrest them. He invited Paul into the church and helped him tell others about Jesus. Eventually Paul went to a city named Tarsus, where he grew up. A little bit later, Barnabas went to Tarsus and got Paul and took him to a city named Antioch. Paul and Barnabas were kind of like Pastors in the church in Antioch. They taught people and lived there and did fifth Sunday breakfast with everyone. And Barnabas played a guitar

on the worship team. And stuff like that.

### Acts 13:1-3: Paul and Barnabas

Acts 13:1-3 describes what happened next. It says, "1In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. 2While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' 3So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off."

The church in Antioch had a number of prophets and teachers. The prophets were people who listened to what God said and spoke that to the people. So, for example, Acts 11:28 says there was a prophet named Agabus who said that the entire Roman empire would experience a famine and that actually happened. The teachers were people who helped the congregation understand the Bible and how they should live. So, for example, later in Paul's life Acts 18:11 says, "So Paul stayed for a year and a half, teaching...the word of God—the Bible." In addition to Paul and Barnabas, there were several other prophets and teachers as well: Simeon, Lucius, and Manaen, who had grown up with Herod.

So one time, when the church in Antioch was worshiping God—just like we do—and they were really asking him what he wanted them to do, God spoke through one of the prophets and said to them, "Set apart Barnabas and Paul for me and for the work I have called them to do." In other words, just like God had brought Paul and Barnabas to Antioch to help their church, now he was moving taking them

away from Antioch so that he could use them in others places to help grow other churches.

So what did the church do? It says that they fasted and prayed and sent Paul and Barnabas off. Kids, do you know what fasting means? In the Bible, fasting almost always refers to going without food as a way of focusing our attention on God. It's like telling God that he is more important even than food and that we need him more than we need food. You're probably more familiar with praying. It's when we talk to God and listen to him. And we thank him for how good he is to us and ask him to help us or to help others. The church in Antioch prayed for Paul and Barnabas so earnestly that they fasted as well. And then they sent them off with a blessing in order for them to be able to do what God had called them to do. And so from Antioch, Paul and Barnabas went to a whole bunch of different places and began telling people about Jesus.

So you might be wondering why God takes people from one place and puts them in another place and then moves them again to another place? Why move people around like that? The answer is that God has a plan for letting the whole world know the wonderful news that Jesus has come to set us free from our sin and to adopt us into his family. All the way back in Genesis 12, God told Abraham, "2I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. 3I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." So God moves people around in order to use them in his plan to bless the world by telling the world about Jesus.

## God's Mission: Personal Response

And that plan involves everyone who is a Christian. You are not where you are by accident. You live where you live and go to school where you go to school and work where you work by God's providence—because of God's really big plan. Kids, some of your parents were not born here. They moved here because God had a plan for them here. And because he has a plan for you here. And some of those who were born here move other places because God has a plan somewhere else for them. Acts 17:26 says, "From one man [Adam] he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live."

What does that mean? Well that means that all of us should be asking ourselves, "How does God want to use me in his plan right now, right where I am—what does he want me to do?" How does God want to use me to tell those around me about Jesus? What tools has he given me to let others know about who God is and how he wants to bless them? Who are the people in my life that God might want to use me to reach? You know why you're here and why you love God? Because someone told you about him, or told your parents or grandparents or great grandparents. It might have been a missionary or it might have been a janitor or teacher or businessman. But someone did what God wanted them to do. God doesn't just use people like Paul and Barnabas—he uses all of us in his mission.

## God's Mission: Church Response

But it also means that as a church, we have to receive the people God wants to send to us and bless the people God wants send somewhere

else. It means that as a spiritual family, we have to pray and ask God what he wants us to do. It means that at times we even fast to show how much we really need God and want to do what he wants us to do. It means that we welcome new people when God sends them to us and we bless people when God wants them to leave our family and go somewhere else. It means that this church belongs to God and so he gets to decide what happens and when and we support that.

About nine months ago, Pastor Andrew and Morgan left this church to go serve another church because God had called them to do so. Just last week we announced that Jacob and Kaeli Shaffer would be coming to serve as the Pastor of our High School and Young Adult Ministry. This week Gamal and Amal have shared with us how God called them from Egypt to the United States and how he then called them from northern Missouri to St. Louis to plant a church among Arabic-speaking people. Today, Pastor Jason announced that he and Sheila and Grace will be leaving here to go as missionaries to a place the church is incredibly small and weak. And so while we're sad, we're also excited that we can be a part of God's calling in their lives. And we can support them and bless them as they go.

## Call To Missions

One last thing and I'm done. Adults and children, listen to me: God still calls people to be missionaries—to go to other places in the world and tell people about Jesus—and if he's calling you, listen to what he says and obey. God knows you far better than you know yourself. If he calls you to do something, that is the best thing you can do and will lead to your highest fulfillment as his creation. Jesus

is worth everything we do for him—every act of obedience, every sacrifice, every change.

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