

Title: When the Gospel is Preached

Speaker: Scott Urbanek

Good morning!

I hope you are well. We will be continuing in our Acts series entitled "You are sent". This is Volume two of the series. The big idea of this series is that Christian people are a "Sent" people. By sent, what we mean is that we take the gospel everywhere. Our homes, workplaces, high schools, and colleges (at least before Covid). It also means we take the gospel where Jesus is not worshipped especially to the hard places in our world. This kind of what the book of Acts is. It's a missions book! It's the true story of how the gospel started to change the world through ordinary but sent out people. As we read this book, the big idea of the series would be that we wouldn't just read these stories and say, Wow, that must have been awesome. No, we are the continuation of this story. We are the result of this early church living as a people who have been sent out by God to reach the world with the gospel. We are in God's sovereign plan to reach the for world for Christ. But before we jump in let's pray.

Pray

Main idea for today is that **The gospel repels the proud but draws the needy.**

Last week, we heard from our newest staff member, Joseph Anderson. Joseph taught us through Paul's sermon to a synagogue in Antioch (modern day Turkey). And the big idea of Paul's sermon was that in God's sovereignty, he loved and chose Israel to be his people. And that He sovereignly moved through them to bring about the promised one, Jesus Christ. Paul showed us in great detail how God planned and executed the sending and the killing of his own son for the sins of the world. For these Jews, this is the first time they are hearing the gospel preached to them.

So, today, we are picking up right where Paul's sermon ended. So, Paul preaches God's word to them. It was a beautiful sermon that was perfectly crafted for a Jewish crowd. Yet, what we see is that they didn't respond how you might think. What we see is that their responses to God's word preached is often similar to how we respond.

42 As they went out, the people begged that these things might be told them the next Sabbath. **43** And after the meeting of the synagogue broke up, many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who, as they spoke with them, urged them to continue in the grace of God. **44** The next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. ⁴⁵ But when the Jews^[a] saw the crowds, they were

filled with jealousy and began to contradict what was spoken by Paul, reviling him.

1) Gospel preaching will be opposed.

Whenever the gospel is preached, you will often see a mixed reaction. This is certainly true for this story. What we see in this story is that the gospel is often opposed by those who hear it. It can be divisive. Jesus told us this would happen in Matthew 10:34-36, ³⁴ “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵ For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. ³⁶ And a person's enemies will be those of his own household.

When Jesus said he has come to “set” a man against his father... and so on. What he means is that when we surrender our lives to Jesus it will often lead to our alienation with others; even our family. This this alienation is hard but it’s also purposeful. It’s this alienation from others is often what compels the us to share with our family, friends, and neighbors. The gospel is alienating because it has an exclusive claim. Salvation can only be found in Christ. He’s the only hope of the world. And we get this, right? It makes sense that a

message like that would be divisive. It can be hard to hear that what we’ve believed and have put our faith in our whole lives is wrong. 3 out of my 4 best friends growing up are Jewish. Much like the hearers in this passage today, the exclusivity of Christ was repugnant. One of them said to me, “So, you’re saying that my grandparents who survived the holocaust after being persecuted for their faith will be separated from God?”. Y’all listen, these conversations are hard! But, they are very real and necessary. So often, I hear Christians talk about how difficult these conversations are. Just this week I heard of members of our church sharing with friends they’ve had since childhood and they are worried about how the conversation will go. That makes sense. But, God works in those hard places. As we will see in this passage.

So, what we are seeing in verses 42-44 is that the people begged that these things would be told to them again on the next sabbath. So, certain Jews and devout converts were begging them to come back, but what we will see is that by the time the next week comes around the gentiles were the ones who were actually serious, not the Jews. It looks like Paul and Barnabas saw this coming and warned them in verse **43** And after the meeting of the synagogue broke up, many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who, as they spoke with them, urged them to continue in the grace of God. So, they were warning them by saying. Ok, your

profession of faith is awesome and I love that. But, continue walking in the grace of God. They weren't interested in professions of faith, they were interested in making disciples whose fruit would last. You see, Paul and Barnabas knew the words of Jesus. They knew that Jesus said we will be able to know who his disciples were by their fruit. And what we start to see after just a week is that for the Jews, their fruit did not remain. But for the gentiles, the fruit multiplied! So much so that an entire city of gentiles showed up for the next sabbath.

So, what we start to see is the true fruit of the Jews and the true fruit of the gentiles. We start to see this developing theme that the gospel repels the proud, but draws in the needy. The eventual fruit of the Jews was jealousy, the eventual fruit of the gentiles was the multiplication of disciples. Let's look at how this gospel message was being opposed.

⁴⁵ But when the Jews^[a] saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began to contradict what was spoken by Paul, reviling him.

Upon seeing the response of the gentiles, this Jewish people showed what was really in their hearts. They were jealous that these gentiles were responding the way that they were. But why? Why be jealous? Why oppose the Word of the Lord? I mean Paul's message to this synagogue was beautiful! It doesn't make sense, right? Paul showed God's love in his choosing of them, but also is power in executing his purposes throughout history of

Israel. So, why are they opposing this message? They opposed it because they hated the idea that these dirty and unclean gentiles that they had grown to hate over generations would now have equal standing with them in God's kingdom. They hated seeing this huge response and seeing all these people showing up for the sabbath when most likely, they have never been able to draw a crowd like that. Their pride kept them from accepting the message.

You know who these Jews sound like? They sound like us. Just like the Jews in this story, we can easily miss out on Jesus because of our own pride. I think this story serves as a warning to those of us who have grown up in church our whole lives and know a lot about God. Church people can be so familiar with things about God that they end up not really knowing God at all. Knowing about God but not being truly surrendered to God is a form of spiritual pride. Spiritual pride is dangerous! Pride is dangerous because it gives people a false sense of security. The spiritually proud think they know Jesus because they know about who he was, what he did, why he came, but completely opposed to Christ without fully realizing it. Like these Jews, they knew so much about the things of God that they became spiritually blind. And they missed on God because of it.

Here are a few ways spiritual blindness can lead people to oppose God. **1) We make god into our own image.** This

means that we start to make God look however we want him to look. Basically, what the Jews did in this story is the same thing we do. You've heard it said this way before... It's statements like, "My God wouldn't _____. My truth tells me that God isn't _____. These Jewish people didn't like that these gentiles would be on equal footing before God so they rejected the message. We do the same. We can find something that we don't like and then reject God because of it. Maybe it's the idea of hell. Maybe it's the sexual ethic found in scripture. I don't know what it is for you, but I want you to listen in. There are plenty of things in scripture that I wish weren't true. But, If God is who he says he is. And I believe in that, then I can trust him. Despite how I feel. **2) We listen to our feelings more than God's word.** Spiritual pride can often listen to our feelings more than God. I'm a huge offender in this way. There are times when my feelings will dictate my actions more than what God says. And every time I do this, it only leads to more confusion and pain. Listening to our feelings is spiritual pride because our feelings then become the arbiter for truth. And we all know that we can't really trust our feelings. I mean look at how you felt about your high school boyfriend or girlfriend. Big mistake. My feelings certainly led me astray there! These Jewish people in essence did the same thing we do. I don't feel like my God would allow these gentiles equal standing. **3) We compare ourselves to others.** Instead of basing our standing with God by what God says, we judge others and base our righteousness by comparing

ourselves. This can be both ways. Oh, I'm better than them or Oh, they are better than me because of... whatever. **4) We attribute things to God that he would never say or do.** This might be one of the most dangerous. Because we make God look how we want him to look, or because we feel something, we can then say things that God would never say. If you look back in verse 45 it says that they began to contradict what was spoken by Paul. This is called blasphemy. It's when we speak things that God would never say or do and then say that we're doing it in Jesus' name. We don't have to look very far in world history to find examples of this, right? The Jewish people in this story knew better! They know the scriptures. Paul just showed it to them, yet they rejected God anyways. They wanted God to look how they wanted him to look. They wanted a warrior deliverer, yet they got a suffering servant!

Ultimately, we oppose Jesus for the same reason the Jews did. We want God to look how we want him to look. When it comes to the gospel, Jesus doesn't give us that option. When it comes to your life, He is either Lord of all or he isn't Lord at all.

2) There is a great opportunity for gospel preaching.

So, we've seen that gospel preaching can be divisive and that it will face opposition. Now we see that despite opposition, for Paul and Barnabas, there is great

opportunity for gospel preaching. The same is true for us as well.

46 And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. **47** For so the Lord has commanded us, saying,

"I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth."

48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed. **49** And the word of the Lord was spreading throughout the whole region.

We saw in verse 45 that the Jews started to oppose Paul and Barnabas. To the point of reviling them and trying to contradict what Paul was saying. So Paul and Barney simply told them that they needed to start with them, but since you are rejecting it, we're moving on to those that will respond in faith. But, because Paul and Barnabas knew the scriptures, they weren't deterred their lack of faith. I love this! They weren't deterred because they know God's word. They moved on to the gentiles, just as God promised. They understood their place in God's sovereign plan to reach the world. We see this in verse

47: "For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, "I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.'" Paul and Barnabas knew about the suffering servant passages in Isaiah 49 which says that the Jews were supposed to be the ones through which the gentiles came to faith. And as Jews who have now placed their own faith in Christ, they knew God called them to take the gospel to them. Paul and Barney are a great model for us in this. They trusted and believed God's word so they obeyed. They knew they were walking in this Isaiah 49 promise. Quick question: Do you know your place in God's plan to reach the world? Don't let this wash over you, we are in the same place Paul and Barnabas were in. They knew God wanted to reach the whole world through them so they lived sent out lives. The same Isaiah 49, Matthew 28, and Acts 1:8 passages apply to us as well! Right now, all around the world there are great opportunities for gospel preaching and advancement. In South Asia, there our missionary partners are seeing great things happen. You know what their biggest obstacle is though? It's not how hard it is to live there, or language barriers, or cultural differences. They tell us that when they go out to make disciples, people respond in faith. The problem is that there aren't enough people laboring. If people would just come, we could see a lot more people coming to faith! So, are we going to go? We have a number of Mercy members considering this as we speak. If you're interested, let me

know. I'd love to talk with you about what that could look like.

I think that for many of us, it's not hatred for other people that keeps us from taking the gospel to other places. No, I think for most people it's that they don't believe that God could use them. If that's you, listen. Don't believe that lie! Look back at Paul's sermon and what Paul is saying in this passage. You are not a Christian by accident! God came after you. Jesus left heaven, despising the shame and went to the cross to save you! He knew you before the foundations of the world. Not only did he know you, he saved you! He drew you to himself when you hated him and he now calls you his precious child. You're not a slave or an indentured servant. You are a child. You knowing Jesus isn't an accident. It was his plan to reach you from the very beginning of time. And in the same way that he planned to save you, he plans to use you! A foundational passage for all of us has to be 2 Corinthians 5. My college student joke that I quote it every sermon. So why not again. It says that upon salvation, you have been entrusted with the message of the gospel. And that message is your ministry. You are an ambassador for Christ. God makes his appeal to the world through us. So, Christian, you can and will be used by God. Trust him! We can have the same confidence that Paul and Barnabas had.

And look next with me... Look at the Gentiles response to verse 47. **48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord,** That God had woven in the gentiles into his plan of salvation, they erupted with joy! Only a needy people respond like this. Their celebration shows that they understand what they have been saved from! The Jews knew a lot of things, yet their pride repelled them from the gospel. These gentiles knew little yet they saw their need and began rejoicing. If you don't know Jesus today, let this be an encouragement to you today. You don't need to know a lot of things. You just need to know one thing. that there is a savior that loves you. He loved you so much that he came to earth to die for your sins. God sent his son to earth to die a sinners death in your place. Like the gentiles in this story, you can trust in him too. Today... right now can be the day of salvation for you so please don't wait. Give your life to Jesus. If that's you. Please let us know. If you want to talk with someone about what that means, email me! My email is on the website.

Then we get to the second half of verse 48, **48 And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed.**

Here is a very clear example of God's sovereignty in salvation. This is a super helpful passage for us because its coming off of a sermon about God's sovereign plan

through Israel to reach the world for Christ... and then we start to see it happening immediately after the sermon with the multiplication of disciples through these gentiles. So, what we're seeing is God's foreknowledge and calling of those who would put their faith in Christ.

Which I'm sure leads us to a lot of question. What does appointed mean? What does that have to do with salvation? And how does that affect evangelism and missions? I'm not going to be able to spend the full amount of time needed to answer this big question but here is what we can say with certainty because the scripture is clear:

1. **God is sovereign in salvation. (Genesis 18:19; Romans 8:29; 1 Peter 1:2)** God sovereignly foreknows and calls people to himself for salvation.
2. **Humans are responsible in their response. (Genesis 2 & 3; Ephesians 2:1-10)** Humans have been endowed with free will, moral responsibility, and the ability to choose. Here's the rub with this though. Because of our sin nature, we would never choose God. We would choose our sin. You don't have to teach a child to be selfish. Humans are sinful by nature and choice and cannot be saved without God taking initiative in grace. Ephesians 2 says that we were dead in our trespasses and sin. Dead people can't do anything. We didn't find

God, he found us. Because we were spiritually dead, the Holy Spirit had to awaken us in order for us to respond. God is the actor here! It's by grace that we have been saved. God sovereignly foreknows, predestines, and calls people to salvation without compromising a person's responsibility to repent and believe the gospel.

3. **We are called to go. (Matthew 28:18-20; Romans 10:14-15)** God has chosen the church to take the gospel to the whole world. Think about the confidence we can have. Paul just preached a sermon about God's love and choosing of Israel to be the vehicle through which the gentiles come to faith. And now, the church is the vehicle. We can have confidence in evangelism and missions because of God's desire to reach the world with the gospel. That's what Paul and Barnabas' confidence was placed in. They preached about God's desire to reach the world and then they started to see him do it. God accomplishes this work, but he doesn't do it without human agents.

And I have heard some say, "Well, it says that they are appointed, so if they are appointed by God, then I don't have to evangelize or be involved with world missions. No, what we see in Revelation 5 & 7 is that there are people from every tribe, tongue, and nation worshipping Jesus. But, how did that happen. Romans 10 says this, **14**How then will they call on him in whom they have not

believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? **15** And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" Any theology that lessens our passion for personal evangelism and world missions is unbiblical. Rather, God would want us to marvel at the fact that God has chosen us! You and me? Can you believe it? I can't. My resume is full of sin and shame, yet God still appointed me to take the gospel to the world! Amazing!

50 But the Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district. **51** But they shook off the dust from their feet against them and went to Iconium. **52** And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

3) The Joy in Gospel preaching.

I love verse 52. They were filled with Joy and with the Holy Spirit. While the response of these gentiles was amazing they were still persecuted. It said that women and men of power in this city stirred up the people to persecute Paul and Barnabas. Yet, they still have joy! The pressure of their circumstances didn't discourage them, it gave them joy! Church, this is what obedience does. It gives you joy. Even when it's hard. Even when you're

opposed. Even when people start to not like you. Even when you're reviled. Obedience leads to joy!

I also love the last part of 52, that they were filled with the Holy Spirit. God is with us when we share the gospel with people.

Maybe you're joining us online for the first time and you may not know Jesus. I want you to know it's not an accident that you're watching right now. God loves you and he wants you. I'm sure you have a lot of questions and all of those can be answered, but right now, there is only one question that matters. Have you surrendered your life to Jesus? There's probably a few of you that are watching. Maybe you've been in church your whole life, but now you realize you've been walking in spiritual pride. You've known about God. But you don't really have a relationship with him. Or maybe you don't know anything. That's ok! The people in this story didn't either yet they gave their lives to Jesus. Both of you can do that today. If that's you, I'd like to help you respond right now. Not later, respond now. And you can do that through praying a prayer. It can go something like this. Dear God, I know I'm a sinner. I know that my pride and my sin has separated me from you. Today, I'd like to turn from my sin and follow you. Jesus, I believe that you died on the cross for me and that you raised from the dead. And you did it for me. I receive your offer of salvation today.

times. Often, when people say this they are communicating how important it is for you to not be one of the few that didn't get on board with whatever the controversy is at the time. It's like "C'mon, you don't want to be known as someone who was pushing a. Now, there isn't anything inherently wrong with this statement, but there can be a real pressure to bend toward what seems like the right side of history will be.

Outline –

The result of gospel preaching – vs. 42-44

The opposition to gospel preaching – vs. 45

The opportunity for gospel preaching – vs. 46-49

The joy in gospel preaching – vs. 50-52.

All throughout scripture and history we see the importance of preaching. Just a few examples among many: We see this in Moses, Josiah, Nehemiah, Ezra, Peter, Stephen, & Paul and the list goes on until today. Preaching God's word is to God's people absolutely vital to the health of the church and for the multiplication of disciples around the world. Here's the thing, though. Gospel preaching is divisive! The gospel confronts people in their sin and shows them the grace of Christ. One of

Bench

"Be on the right side of history!" How many times have you heard this through the years? For what seems like the last 15 years, I have heard that dozens and dozens of

the hardest things for many is that when the gospel is preached it demands a response from us. It demands a response in the same way it did for the people in this story. So, what we're going to do is study their response to Paul's gospel sermon and see what implications gospel preaching has for our lives as well.

So, right away what we see is that it seems like the hearers received this message well. It says that the people begged them to come back next week. But it's important to note that it wasn't just ethnically Jewish people here. It was Jews and devout converts to Judaism. These devout converts were gentiles that had converted to Judaism. Now both ethnically Jewish and non-Jewish people are begging them to come back next week and following Paul and Barnabas encouraging them to continue in the grace of God.

While at face value it might seem like these responses are favorable, but I think they aren't as favorable as it might appear.

This reminds me of a story I heard when I was in seminary. My seminary's president, Danny Akin, told our student body a story at a chapel service that I'll never forget. He said that a church in town had a lead pastor position open and wondered if he had any recommendations. So, he recommended them a pastor

and right when the pastor started, he noticed that there were a bunch of black and Hispanic kids that played basketball at the church's outside court. So, he started to reach these kids and then their parents and all of the sudden, the demographic of this church started to change. So, this church ended up firing the pastor after just a year. Word gets back to our seminary president and sure enough, this church called our president again for a recommendation because the last pastor "didn't work out." And Danny Akin responded by saying, "Oh, yeah I heard about that. So, how can I help?" They told him they were looking for another pastor and he said... No, you already have a pastor. His name is Satan! You can keep holding on to the way things used to be and follow your true father or you can open your Bible's read about who God actually is and repent for your racism."

1. God is sovereign and we must never deny this truth.
2. God predestines, elects, calls and foreknows the elect. Scripture clearly teaches all of these.
3. Humans have been endowed with free will, moral responsibility, and the ability to choose.
4. Humans are sinful by nature and choice and cannot be saved without God taking initiative in grace. God sovereignly predestines and elects persons to salvation without compromising a person's responsibility to repent and believe the gospel.

5. Any theology that lessens our passion for personal evangelism and world missions is unbiblical (John 1:29)
6. The elect are scattered throughout all the nations (Revelation 5 & 7). God has tasked the church with taking the gospel to them.
7. We can have confidence in evangelism and missions because of God's desire to reach the world with the gospel.

1. God sovereignly foreknows, predestines, and calls people to himself.
2. Humans have been endowed with free will, moral responsibility, and the ability to choose.
3. Humans are sinful by nature and choice and cannot be saved without God taking initiative in grace. God sovereignly foreknows, predestines, and calls people to salvation without compromising a person's responsibility to repent and believe the gospel.
4. God has chosen the church to take the gospel to the whole world.

Ok, your profession of faith is awesome and I love that. But, continue walking in the grace of God. They weren't interested in professions of faith, they were interested in making disciples whose fruit would last.

And some of the most dangerous people are those who know about God but don't actually know him and then they start doing things in Jesus' name when he would do that or think that. I mean the examples throughout world history are endless. When this happens, we're so susceptible to believing things that are counter scriptural. You miss out on the character of God because ultimately you are making God in your own image rather than the other way around. One of the biggest misconceptions about in the OT is that since God set apart Israel to be his people that he didn't want the other nations as well. That's simply not true! That's what the whole book of Jonah is about. A missionary God and a reluctant missionary being sent to a people he didn't like. But this is what we do. Well, my God wouldn't do this. I don't think God would do or think that. Church listen, I know this can be a hard word, but we need to stop believing our feelings. If we feel like something is true, that doesn't make it true. God is who he is despite how we feel. And thank God for that. His ways are above ours. If we made God in our image he would be small, powerless, and unloving!