

The Gospel for the Irreligious - Acts 14:1-18

Notes, Family Worship, Bible Reading

Notes from the Sermon

At the end of Acts 13, we see Paul and Barnabas receiving opposition from a group of unbelieving Jews, driving them to subsequently announce their intention to turn to the Gentiles as they shake the dust off their feet in Antioch and move toward Iconium and eventually Lystra in Acts 14. Amid sharing the gospel message in Lystra, a man crippled from birth overhears Paul, and The Holy Spirit enables him to believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ. In a scene very similar to Peter's first healing in Acts 3:6-8, Paul looks intently at the man, tells him to stand upright on his feet, and through the power of The Holy Spirit, the man is miraculously healed through his faith in Christ. It is at that point that the wheels fall off the evangelistic bus.

The people of Lystra have deep roots in polytheism, worshiping many different gods for a variety of reasons and facets of life. Upon seeing Paul and Barnabas heal this crippled man, they mistakenly hearken back to a local legend from Ovid's writings in *Metamorphoses*, where the gods Zeus and Hermes supposedly once visited their region incognito, searching for hospitality. The story goes that there was only one elderly couple (Philemon and his wife Baucis) who welcomed them, and in return, the gods directed the couple to climb a mountain in view of a coming flood that destroys all the other inhospitable people. Subsequently, this poor couple's small cottage was changed into a temple with a golden roof and marble columns while the houses of those who refused the gods were destroyed. The Lystrans may have been thinking of this legend when they welcomed Barnabas and Paul, mistaking them for those gods, revisiting the region incognito, reacting with "well we don't want THAT happening again, so - call the priest of Zeus!" The local priest of Zeus then materializes with a gigantic procession ready to sacrifice animals to Zeus and Hermes - or rather, Barnabas and Paul. The apostles react in horror, tearing their clothing at the prospect of potentially stealing glory from the God they had come to preach about.

The question then becomes: how do Paul & Barnabas move on to address this crowd, who just tried to sacrifice animals to them as Greek gods? It certainly seems that these people are not connecting the dots back to the one true God of the Bible, so how do they approach this situation?

Paul's approach is to first establish common ground with the Lystrans, while both emphasizing the humanity of himself and Barnabas and refuting their own deity. Then, Paul begins to lay the groundwork for moving his audience from their deep seated polytheistic beliefs in a myriad of man-made gods toward the monotheistic, Living God of The Bible, who created "the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all that is in them" (Acts 14:15). It is the Living God who has cared for them continually, not only in how He has shown mercy and patience by withholding judgment while they walk in their own ways, but also in how He has shown His goodness in bestowing on them "rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying [their] hearts with food and gladness" (Acts 14:17).

Paul presents these statements in an attempt to strike a chord with the Lystrans by dismantling Zeus and the pantheon of Greek and Roman gods as the source of their joy in creation, and instead naming the one true Living God as the correct source of that joy and blessing. Even when they had ignored Him, God showed His goodness to them.

What we don't get to explicitly see, however, is Paul link the goodness of God back to their ultimate goal in coming to Lystra: to share the hope of the gospel of Jesus

Christ. Ultimately, the sacrifice of Christ on the cross and the hope we have in Him is the culmination of the perfect mercy, grace, patience, and goodness of God shown to all humanity. We do, however, learn from Paul's approach that our evangelism will look different for those with varying backgrounds. Sometimes, our best foot forward is to simply share how the Living God is good, starting with whatever common ground we can find. That may succinctly be creation itself, which points to the beauty and imagination of a God who loves us. But without fail, our final goal should always be to share the beauty of Christ, as that is the call of us as believers: to sow seeds of the gospel such that The Holy Spirit may bring forth belief, glorifying God.

Bible Reading for the Week

Daily Bible Readings

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
2 Kings 19	2 Kings 20	2 Kings 21	2 Kings 22	2 Kings 23	2 Kings 24	2 Kings 25

Reading from this past week: Acts 14:1-18

Reading in preparation for this coming Sunday: Acts 14:19-28

Family Worship

Song - *Psalms 90 (Satisfy us with Your Love)*

<https://youtu.be/HrF6m9TLAHs>

Gospel Project

Unit: King Solomon

Story: Solomon Built the Temple

Big Picture Question: What is mercy?

Answer: Mercy is when God does not give us the punishment that we deserve.

Scripture: 1 Kings 6-9

New City Catechism

Question #33: Should those who have faith in Christ seek their salvation through their own works, or anywhere else?

Answer: No, everything necessary to salvation is found in Christ.

Verse: Galatians 2:16

Scripture

Acts 14:1-18

- What are the main religious beliefs of people who are not Christians in our culture?
- Why is it important for us to understand the spiritual beliefs of others as we try to share the love of Jesus with them?
- Why do we need to maintain love for all people while also believing firmly that the only hope for salvation is in Jesus?

Prayer

*Pray that we would be able to share Jesus with people in our community who do not know anything about Jesus.

*Pray for the Rockwood Parc neighborhood

*Pray for our teachers as they return to school this week.