

Hope and Anger

Acts 13:35–52, 14:1–7

Each day, it's important to take your bearings. Where are you today? In the Easter season, in the scriptures, in your daily life, in your very self? Spend a few minutes getting your bearings for the day.

Let's briefly examine where we are in the Book of Acts and then begin our day with a prayer for deliverance—for ourselves, our fraternity brothers, and all Exodus Men.

You are setting out on mission. We have been watching the growth of the early community. Now a pivotal moment has come of being sent out to the Gentiles to witness to Christ the Lord.

Pray that the Lord grants deliverance to you, your family, and your fraternity.

Pray for freedom for all men in Exodus, just as they are praying for you.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created. And you shall renew the face of the earth. O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy his consolations. Through the same Christ Our Lord. Amen.

A Reading from the Book of Acts

"Therefore he says also in another psalm, 'You will not let your Holy One see corruption.' For David, after he had served the counsel of God in his own generation, fell asleep, and was laid with his fathers, and saw corruption; but he whom God raised up saw no corruption. Let it be known to you therefore, brethren, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him every one that believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses. Beware, therefore, lest there come upon you what is said in the prophets: 'Behold, you scoffers, and wonder, and perish; for I do a deed in your days, a deed you will never believe, if one declares it to you.'"

As they went out, the people begged that these things might be told them the next sabbath. And when the meeting of the synagogue broke up, many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who spoke to them and urged them to continue in the grace of God. The next sabbath almost the whole city gathered together to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with jealousy, and contradicted what was spoken by Paul, and reviled him. And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, 'I have set you to be a light for the

Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the uttermost parts of the earth.'” And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of God; and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord spread throughout all the region. But the Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, and stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district. But they shook off the dust from their feet against them, and went to Iconium. And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

Now at Iconium they entered together into the Jewish synagogue, and so spoke that a great company believed, both of Jews and of Greeks. But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brethren. So they remained for a long time, speaking boldly for the Lord, who bore witness to the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands. But the people of the city were divided; some sided with the Jews, and some with the apostles. When an attempt was made by both Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to molest them and to stone them, they learned of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding country; and there they preached the gospel.

Reflection

It is amazing to see how the same group can react in such different ways to the message of Paul and Barnabas. Some saw their message as the fulfillment of their hopes, offering them a righteousness that surpassed the Law of Moses through the forgiveness of sins. This group—comprised mostly of God-fearing Gentiles and also some Jews—begged to hear more and followed the two apostles. The other group, which seemed to be the majority of the Jews in the synagogue, saw the message as a threat to their traditional interpretation of the Law. Rather than seeing Jesus as its fulfillment of the law, they saw the Gospel as a challenge that needed to be opposed.

We should expect the same. There will always be some, probably a minority, who see in Jesus the fulfillment of their hopes. In their brokenness, they see the hope of life through healing and forgiveness in him. They knew there must be more, that God would not abandon them, and they see Jesus as “God with us,” the one who bridges the gap between God and us. Jesus changes everything. Reality is different now that God is among us in Jesus; he has taken on our suffering and burdens, and he conquered sin and death. This gives meaning to all things and hope in any difficulty.

We should also expect that there will be the majority who are complacent and see the message of Jesus as a threat or inconvenience. This group does not see any need for change and wants to continue thinking and acting as they always had. If threatened enough by the message of Jesus, members of this group will even persecute the messenger, ridiculing him or accusing him of some kind of intolerance or hate.

Like Paul and Barnabas, we need to kick the dust from our heels when we experience this reaction. We cannot allow derision to get in the way of our mission of sharing Jesus with others because we know he truly is the answer

everyone needs.

In this Easter season, others should see that we have something worth celebrating. It is not too late to continue to feast, and you can invite others to see our joy expressed in this celebration.

Week 4 Action Items

Meditate on the Resurrection.

Get outside.

Continue to focus on Confession.