

## The Voice of God

Acts 12:11–25, 13:1–12

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

And Peter came to himself, and said, "Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting." When he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose other name was Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying. And when he knocked at the door of the gateway, a maid named Rhoda came to answer. Recognizing Peter's voice, in her joy she did not open the gate but ran in and told that Peter was standing at the gate. They said to her, "You are mad." But she insisted that it was so. They said, "It is his angel!" But Peter continued knocking; and when they opened, they saw him and were amazed. But motioning to them with his hand to be silent, he described to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, "Tell this to James and to the brethren." Then he departed and went to another place. Now when day came, there was no small stir among the soldiers over what had become of Peter. And when Herod had sought for him and could not find him, he examined the sentries and ordered that they should be put to death. Then he went down from Judea to Caesarea, and remained there.

Now Herod was angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon; and they came to him in a body, and having persuaded Blastus, the king's chamberlain, they asked for peace, because their country depended on the king's country for food. On an appointed day Herod put on his royal robes, took his seat upon the

throne, and made an oration to them. And the people shouted, "The voice of a god, and not of man!" Immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give God the glory; and he was eaten by worms and died. But the word of God grew and multiplied. And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their mission, bringing with them John whose other name was Mark.

Now in the Church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Symeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a member of the court of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. While 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." Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia; and from there they sailed to Cyprus. When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. And they had John to assist them. When they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos, they came upon a certain magician, a Jewish false prophet, named bar-Jesus. He was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence, who summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. But Elymas the magician (for that is the meaning of his name) withstood them, seeking to turn away the proconsul from the faith.

But Saul, who is also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him and said, "You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind and unable to see the sun for a time." Immediately mist and darkness fell upon him and he went about seeking people to lead him by the hand. Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had occurred, for he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord.

## Reflection

At the beginning of John's Gospel, we hear that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. Who is the Word? The Son is spoken forth from the Father from all eternity to express who he is; through his Word, he also speaks forth creation. This Word has come into the world to save us.

We see Herod Agrippa, the nephew of Herod Antipas, usurping God's Word by accepting the acclamation of the people. Likewise, we see the false prophet bar-Jesus (the Son of Jesus), who also takes a prerogative that does not belong to him to speak in the name of God.

We can contrast these two men—who falsely claim the Word of God—with the disciples who pray and fast to discern the voice of the Spirit. The Spirit sets apart Paul and Barnabas for himself, and these men are called and chosen. They are not trying to become famous or powerful by using the name of God falsely. Rather, they accept the will of God and speak on his behalf by passing on the message of the Son, the true Word.

We, too, can speak for God when we accept and hand on the Word of God. As Christians, we are called to this mission of pointing others to God—rather than ourselves. It is not about our voice but his, with our own becoming a means of speaking forth his Word in the Spirit.

Pray today that you can become emboldened by the Spirit to speak the Word to others.

#### Week 4 Action Items

Meditate on the Resurrection.

Get outside.

Continue to focus on Confession.