

**THE SENDING CHURCH: Living the Sent Life**  
**Acts 13:1-3**  
**NOTES**

Church today is meant to be comfy. We don't want to feel uneasy at church, for any reason, especially not having sin pointed out to us.

We don't like messy; uncomfortable; we don't like to buck trends; we like to stay with, "well, we've always done it that way."

The problem with this, in church life anyway, is this is not how God designed the church.

For a church to continually live in the comfortable, to never step outside its walls, to never try to reach out in faith, is for a church to wall itself off from the outside world.

In being outside of the influence of the world means we forfeit our gospel mission and mandate.

It's kind of like jumping off a waterfall, or cliff into the river.

You see church is kind of like that. We enjoy being on that tube. That tube is relatively safe. As long as we stay on that tube, we know in just a few short hours that we will end up at our self-prescribed end.

Now, for sure, we may stop along the way and take in the scenery, but we won't do any exploring, any venturing out of the norm.

But often, what God is calling us to do is to pull our tube over, get off, and climb up that cliff.

Sure, the cliff is scary, unpredictable, and takes energy to get to the top, but the view is gorgeous.

Yes, ministry is also unpredictable, takes energy and sacrifice to accomplish, but the reward, the outcome, the lives that are saved and changed; the families that are rescued; and the glory given to God is marvelous.

What has happened to many of those people is they get up on top of that hill, they enjoy and appreciate the view, but for them to actually run, let go, and jump into God's will for their lives is a risk they are not willing to take.

I think we are on top of that cliff. We have done some great things here at FBCD, but God is calling us to take that step of faith and jump.

We want to exalt him like we have never done; to equip believers with intentionality like we have never done and to engage the world with the gospel like we have never done.

We want to jump into ministry we may have never done; to reach out to a hurting community like we have never done; and to make disciples with such a fierce tenacity we set the world on fire for Jesus.

You know what happens when you jump? As soon as you jump you just know you have made a mistake, the fall feels infinitely longer, and you are super scared.

But then, you hit the cold water, you go under, your system is shocked for sure, but you pop right back up, and you realize it wasn't as bad as you thought.

I think this is where we are at. We have done some amazing things to begin to reach out to equip our church and to engage our community.

We are getting ready to set a new discipleship pathway in a few weeks and to launch an intentional ministry model so that if you are member of FBCD you can be sure that you are being equipped to serve, given opportunities to serve, and you are glorifying God in doing so.

I think some of us are here today. You sense God has been prepping you to step up to serve, to share, to go. You see it as good and valuable, but to actually commit to something scares you.

God is calling you to a new level of devotion to him; he is drawing you to himself in a more intimate way than ever before; he is trying to equip you for the ministry he has called you into.

Will it be scary? Yes. Will it shock our system? Yes? Will it glorify God? Yes. Will it help share Christ? Yes. Will it help develop disciples? Yes.

This morning as we look at three short verses (short verses equal a short sermon) we will see a church that is having a major impact on their community, training up leaders, having skilled people, their growing in Christ, their exalting Christ, but then they do the craziest thing-they send 2/5 of their leadership away.

As we go through this short story today, we will notice several principles of a healthy sending church, helping its people live a sent life.

*Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. <sup>2</sup> While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." <sup>3</sup> Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.*

If we remember in Chapter 12, the church was greatly challenged.

James was killed and Peter was arrested and given the death sentence. The church prayed for Peter and God, in his mercy, sent an angel to rescue Peter.

Herod, who had James killed and Peter sentenced to death, is himself killed by God for claiming glory for himself.

At the end of Chapter 12 we see Paul, Barnabas, and Mark heading to Jerusalem with the famine relief for Jerusalem that the church in Antioch collected.

Chapters 13-15 begin the story of the mission to the "ends of the earth."

Chapter 13 will show Paul's first of three missionary journeys.

Throughout the rest of the book of Acts we will see similar themes and we will be reminded that faithfulness in following Jesus will bring a similar response and present familiar challenges throughout life.

What is new is that this is the first time a local Christian church was led to see the need for a witness beyond them to the larger world and they commissioned missionaries to carry out that task.

Before we dive into the text let me ask us this morning:

- What is your focus in life?
- Are you truly worshipping Christ in all of your life?
- Are you willing to grow, serve, and go as Jesus calls?

One of the things we see in the text is that a sending church, helping its members to live a sent life is a worshipping church.

## **I. THE SENDING CHURCH**

### **a. IS A WORSHIPPING CHURCH**

In verse one, Luke gives a description of the church's leadership.

In this description, we are to understand the whole of the church is involved in the rest of the actions of the text.

Notice in verse 2 what takes place. This is a theme that will have wonderful implications for the rest of our time this morning.

Luke writes, "As they were ministering." Some translations say, "As they were worshipping."

The church was engaged in worship.

A church that is not worshipping, not exalting God is a church that is not focused on God.

The word "ministering" here is also used of the priests and Levites who minister and serve the Lord in the temple.

Early Christians lifted this word and applied to their understanding of worship and prayer.

What does this mean? Why is this important?

When the church gathers in prayer and worship they are actually ministering unto the Lord.

This is quite literally our spiritual act of service unto the Lord.

Here at FBCD when we are planning our services, we are extremely intentional about the songs, about the scriptures, the prayers, and the message.

You may think, "All that planning stifles the Holy Spirit."

Quite the opposite.

Our planning of the worship service is geared to raise our hearts and minds to heaven. The entirety of our time together is focused on one thing-worshipping God and exalting his holy name.

God himself planned the ministries of the priests of the temple. An orderly worship does not stifle the Spirit but is actually biblical.

Notice the text. It was as the church was worshipping or ministering to the Lord, that was when the Holy Spirit showed up.

A church that exalts Christ is a church that is pointed in the right direction.

The Antioch church is a beautiful picture of what the church can be; a church focused on Christ above all else.

What about you this morning? As you entered, what was your heart focused on? As we were singing, was your heart aligned with the words? Were you actually singing to Jesus?

When we pray, what is your mind centered on?

May we be a church that first and foremost exalts Christ.

### **b. IS MADE OF ALL TYPES OF BELIEVERS**

The Antioch church was the first Christian congregation to witness to Gentiles in its own city.

Antioch was a large city, with a large Jewish population and a large Gentile population

Major commerce and as such, many different people from all over the world

Antioch was the first multi-cultural, multi-ethnic church.

The church mirrored its community, as the community was multi-cultured and multi-ethnic.

What's the principle here: the makeup of the church should mirror its community.

Luke introduces us to the leaders of the church and their job titles.

Barnabas and Paul we know.

Barnabas is an encourager who will go to great lengths for the gospel. We have seen him serve as a deacon in Jerusalem, give away the prophets from the sale of land, travel to Antioch to assist the church, search for Paul in Tarsus and bring him back to Antioch, disciple the Antioch church for a year, and travel back to Jerusalem to minister during a famine.

Paul has been trained as a Jewish Pharisee and was marvelously converted on the road to Damascus.

Simeon, called Niger (meaning the black one because of his darker complexion), probably came from Cyrene

Lucius of Cyrene.

Manaen, a well to do individual who grew up with King Herod.

Luke mentions these leaders as teachers and prophets.

The prophets had a forthtelling ministry, meaning they provided divine revelation for understanding the Old Testament in light of Christ and in bringing a new word from the Lord.

The teachers helped the church understand the words and truth of Jesus and turn them into action.

Some scholars say these were two separate offices separated among the leaders and some say they were both shared by each leader.

Paul tells us in Eph. 2:20 that it was the prophets who helped lay a foundation for the church.

Antioch was truly blessed to have wonderful teachers, speaking into their lives

But what I love about this description here, is that it shows me two great truths:

- The church was made up of the members of its community
- The church allowed the gospel to transcend ethnicity and culture

The church was made up of all types of believers.

Reminds me of the description of the church when Jesus returns. In **Rev. 7:9-12**,

*After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands; <sup>10</sup> and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." <sup>11</sup> And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, <sup>12</sup> saying, "Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen."*

This shows us two things:

- All people are valuable to the church
- Each person has something to contribute to the work of the church (don't think God can't use you)

### **c. IS WILLING TO LISTEN TO THE SPIRIT**

So, things are going well, the church is exalting Christ, equipping believers, and engaging its community.

The church is blessed with 5 great teachers and then all of a sudden, while they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit pops in the service.

Notice what they were doing when the Spirit spoke. – they were focused on God.

Yes, they were busy. Yes, they were invested in their community. Yes, they had to organize, plan, and administer this large congregation, but you know what they did not forget to do-  
**WORSHIP!!**

God blessed them, not because of What they were doing, but because of Who they were focused on.

In the middle of worship one Sunday, God showed up and when God shows up you know you can throw everything out the window.

God showed up and said, "give me Barnabas and Saul."

Now, what they could have done was ignored God and pretended not to hear him.

Many churches have done it. God has called many churches to do and be wonderful places of worship, ministry, and missions and instead of changing, instead of leaving the status quo, instead of obeying God, they simply decided they liked things better their way

How do you think that works out when we do that in our lives?

They were willing to listen to the Spirit!

Are we? As a church? As individuals?

If we are going to be a church which glorifies God, we must be a church that listens to His Spirit.

#### **d. IS WILLING TO GIVE ITS BEST AND GIVE AWAY ITS BEST**

So, God calls and says, "I want Barnabas and Saul."

The chief encourager and the best testimony and hardest worker we have is about to leave.

God wants to take 2/5 of their staff away in one swipe.

You see, for Antioch, there was no warning, they could not prepare for this change. God showed up without warning and called them to action.

God will often reach into a smooth running life or church and say, "You go there, you stay here" "You begin this ministry, you end this ministry."

They could have responded, God you take two, but take uncle Elmer and Cousin Logan, don't take Barnabas and Saul.

But they didn't.

You see, selfishness, wants to keep, not release.

Selfishness views your time, talents, and treasures as solely yours to keep and distribute.

Selfishness treats others as a means to an end. Selfishness says, "I don't have time to serve," but makes time for literally everything else.

Selfishness says, "My money and my talents are mine to use for my glory and my happiness."

But selflessness releases our time, talents, and treasures so God can use them in a more meaningful and impactful way than we can ever imagine.

"Releasing and obeying requires that kind of fearless devotion to God's will"-Charles Swindoll

What about you? Are you willing to give away your best to the Lord? Why not?

I promise you that whatever is holding you back from truly living for, following, and serving Jesus is keeping you from experiencing the most magnificent and meaningful relationship in you can possibly imagine.

We must be, as a church and as individual believers, willing to give away our best when God calls.

I don't know what God may be calling you to give up in order to step up and serve, but I know if he is calling you to serve then you better serve.

If he is calling you to baptism, then be baptized. If God is calling you to join, then join. If God is calling you to salvation, then surrender. If he is calling you on mission, be on mission. If he is calling you to the ministry, get busy.

We need to be willing to give up the best of ourselves when God calls. Be ready to serve when he knocks.

#### **e. IS WILLING TO SERVE WHEN CALLED**

This goes with being willing to listen and giving away our best.

Barnabas and Saul could have said, “Hey God, we got a good thing going here, we are just gonna ride this train out.”

But remember when God saved Paul on the road to Damascus? Remember the vision he gave Ananias?

If Paul was going to suffer for the gospel, if he was going to fulfill God’s mission for his life, then he had to leave Antioch.

In his commentary on the life of Paul, Charles Swindoll says this in relation to serving:

- Don’t remove any possibility
- Don’t allow business to dull your spiritual sensitivity
- Let God be God and be willing to say yes.

I don’t know what God is calling you to do as an individual, but I know you better say “yes” when he calls.

I want to highlight a few opportunities to serve:

- Late Start Mondays
- RA program
- Nursery

I don’t exactly know what God will call us to do as a church in the years ahead, but I know we better say “yes” when he calls.

Are you actively serving right now? Is there a ministry team you are on? Are you blessing others through your service?

Look into one of the many opportunities to serve here at FBCD and see how you can be blessed by being a blessing.

I know both individually and corporately we will be wise not to remove any possibility, to stay sensitive to the Spirit, and to say “yes” when God calls.

#### **f. IS WILLING TO SEEK AND OBEY THE WILL OF GOD**

When God called on Barnabas and Saul in the middle of worship how did the church respond?

Did they conduct a business meeting? Did they bargain? Did they do a pro and cons list?

Did they postpone the obedience?

They continued worshipping, finished praying, laid their hands on Barnabas and Saul and said, “bye.”

This church was willing to continually seek the will of God.

We, as individual’s and as a body of Christ, must always humble ourselves before the Lord, submit our pride, seek God’s wisdom, and fierce fully seek to know AND obey the will of God.

Henry Blackaby says not to worry so much about God’s will for your life or what you think God wants you to do. He says to find where God is at and where he is working and go there.

Would you join us in our work here? We desire to be a sending church, meaning we want to help our members, our family to live a sent life.

Would you step up and serve? Would you seek out God’s will for your life?

**God may surprise you in what he calls you to do.**