

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, June 9nd, 2024
Rev. Gerry Gallant

Doing God's Will
Proper 5
Acts 13: 1-12

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

O Lord, our Lord,
there are many places we could go this morning,
but we have desired to come to your house.

There are many voices to which we can listen today,
but we desire to hear your voice.

It would be easy to scatter,
but we have chosen to gather.

We need to behold your beauty,
to inquire in your temple,

to be wrapped in your love,
and to experience your renewing Spirit.

Come close, Lord Jesus,
to fill us and renew us. Amen.

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

With you, gracious God,
we move into this time of worship,
grateful that you are never farther
than the reach of our need and our prayer.
You who tower over the universe
are yet intimately present,
always renewing the face of the earth,
always renewing the faith of your children.
Now, in your mercy, make your way past

all that worries and distracts us
to lodge in us anew and to center
our small worship on your great glory. **Amen.**

Children's Hymn: "O Be Careful Little Eyes"

Call to Confession

Prepare the way of the Lord!
Let us make our confession to God.

Prayer of Confession

**Almighty and merciful God,
we have erred and strayed from your ways like lost sheep.
We have followed too much
the devices and desires of our own hearts.
We have offended against your holy laws.
We have left undone those things which we ought to have done;
and we have done those things which we ought not to have done.
O Lord, have mercy upon us.
Spare those who confess their faults.
Restore those who are penitent,
according to your promises declared to the world
in Christ Jesus, our Lord.
And grant, O merciful God, for his sake,
that we may live a holy, just, and humble life
to the glory of your holy name. Amen.**

Assurance of Pardon

The scriptures say, "Do not worry about anything, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God."
The forgiveness we seek is ours through the grace of Jesus Christ. May the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, be with you.

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.
For Thine is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory,
Forever and ever. Amen.**

Hymn #438: "When Morning Gilds the Skies" (V 1,3,4)

When morning gilds the skies,
 My heart awaking cries:
 May Jesus Christ be praised!
 Alike at work and prayer
 To Jesus I repair:
 May Jesus Christ be praised!

Let earth's wide circle round
 In joyful notes resound:
 May Jesus Christ be praised!
 Let earth and sea and sky,
 From depth to height reply:
 May Jesus Christ be praised!

Be this, while life is mine,
 My canticle divine,
 May Jesus Christ be praised!
 Be this th' eternal song
 Through all the ages long,
 May Jesus Christ be praised!

Responsive Reading

Psalm 33:1-12

1 Shout for joy in the Lord, O you righteous!
 Praise befits the upright.

**2 Give thanks to the Lord with the lyre;
 make melody to him with the harp of ten strings!**

3 Sing to him a new song;
 play skillfully on the strings, with loud shouts.

**4 For the word of the Lord is upright,
 and all his work is done in faithfulness.**

5 He loves righteousness and justice;
 the earth is full of the steadfast love of the Lord.

**6 By the word of the Lord the heavens were made,
 and by the breath of his mouth all their host.**

7 He gathers the waters of the sea as a heap;
 he puts the deeps in storehouses.

**8 Let all the earth fear the Lord;
 let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him!**

9 For he spoke, and it came to be;
he commanded, and it stood firm.

**10 The Lord brings the counsel of the nations to nothing;
he frustrates the plans of the peoples.**

11 The counsel of the Lord stands forever,
the plans of his heart to all generations.

**12 Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord,
the people whom he has chosen as his heritage!**

Anthem (Music Ministry): “Come and Kneel at the Cross”

Prayer for illumination
(Congregant Prepared)

Scripture

Acts 13: 1-12

Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. ² 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.” ³ Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

Barnabas and Saul on Cyprus

⁴ So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus. ⁵ When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. And they had John to assist them. ⁶ 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. ⁷ He was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence, who summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. ⁸ But Elymas the magician (for that is the meaning of his name) opposed them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. ⁹ But Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him ¹⁰ 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? ¹¹ And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will 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. ¹² Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had occurred, for he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord.

Sermon

The book of Acts is the story of God's Church and the carrying out of the Great Commission by the apostles and other devoted followers of Jesus.

ACTS 1:8

⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

In Acts 1:8 we see the command for the disciples to bring the witness of who Jesus is to the people of Judea, Samaria and to the end of the earth.

In the Scripture we are studying today, there are two men standing on a dock preparing themselves to carry out the last part of that Commission, to bring the witness of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour to the end of the world.

But we need to acknowledge that they are doing so with the Holy Spirit. This is a critical understanding of how God's Word works. As we talked about last week, it is not us that convinces anyone to believe in God, it is the work of the Holy Spirit which does this.

In fact, the book of Acts has the most references to the work of the Holy Spirit in the entire Bible.

In the first Chapter we have the mention of the coming of the Holy Spirit, then in the second chapter we have the baptism by the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost.

In the fourth Chapter we see the Sanhedrin threaten believers and when those believers pray, we see that they are filled with the Holy Spirit and speak God's Word faithfully and boldly.

In Chapter five we see those who are false believers, Annias and Sapphira are judged by the Holy Spirit.

In Chapter seven Stephen is filled by the Holy Spirit as he stands before the Sanhedrin and preaches the truth to them.

In the eighth Chapter Peter prays that the Samaritans would receive the Holy Spirit and we see the Holy Spirit leads Phillip to meet the Ethiopian in the desert, and he is taken away by the Holy Spirit.

In Chapter nine Ananias prays for Saul and after Sauls's encounter with Christ he is filled with the Holy spirit and his sight returns.

In Chapter 10, the Spirit speaks to Peter and instructs him to go to the house of Cornelius and the Holy Spirit is brought to a house of Gentiles.

In the eleventh Chapter the prophet Agabus prophesized through the Spirit that a sever famine would come to the land.

And in Chapter thirteen, we have two men standing on a dock preparing themselves to go do God's will to the ends of the earth. The book of Acts is filled with the stories of the Holy Spirit, that same Spirit that is present in the world today and we need to Listen to Him as he Guides us through the Word of God in our lives.

Up until Chapter thirteen the Gospel of Jesus Christ was being preached to the gentiles of the local region, and it came about mostly as a result of the persecution that Jesus's followers suffered at the hands of the Sanhedrin. The disciples were forced to move and wherever they went they brought the Gospel with them, sharing it with everyone who they could.

Yet here as these two men stand on this dock, something has changed, they are no longer moving away from the Sanhedrin, but instead moving toward something new. The Holy Spirit is moving these two men to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world.

Among the leaders in the Church of Antioch were Barnabas, Lucius, Manaen, and Saul.

Did you notice that Barnabas's name is listed first, and Saul's name is listed last. Barnabas was most likely the most senior leader of the Church in Antioch, carrying his reputation from the Church in Jerusalem with him. And Saul, well he was the most junior leader of the church, who was about to embark on a wonderful journey in his life under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

It is also interesting to note that this was not a general call out to the church, but instead a specific call given by the Holy Spirit to these two men, Barnabas and Saul had been chosen to carry out this mission.

They had been happily and successfully teaching the Word of God in their church for a year

Acts 11: 25-26

²⁵ So Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, ²⁶ and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people. And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.

This mission was not something that these two men had come up with, this was the will of God. The Holy Spirit had come to these two men and moved them to go forth and do God's will someplace new. It was while they were in worship, fasting and in prayer that the Lord had spoken to them, and they had listened.

They heard because they were in relationship with God! They were spending time in worship, fasting and prayer, they made time for God in their lives and because they sought him out, they heard him when he spoke to them. They sought God out and listened for his response.

This is one of our problems today, we spend a lot of time speaking to God but very little time actually listening for his response. Prayer does not always have to be us speaking, sometimes it should be us listening. We need to be listening to God, picking up his Word and seeing the works of the Holy Spirit in the world around us, so that we can be guided down the routes that God wants us to walk in this world.

This pattern of worshipping, fasting and praying is repeated over and over in the book of Acts as an example for us to follow.

In Acts Chapter four they were praying after they were threatened by the Sanhedrin.

In Chapter twelve they were praying when God delivers Peter from prison.

We need to worship and pray, to read the Word of God and meditate upon its meaning in our lives, we need to set aside more than a single hour on Sunday for God, we need to be with him so that we can hear him.

God speaks through the Holy Spirit to us all of the time, the problem is not that he is not speaking but that we are not listening. Most of the time we are not listening because we are distracted by the things of this world, distracted by the things we want to pursue and we fail to spend time alone with God, listening to his Word in our lives.

We need to stop allowing the noises of the world, or society and modern culture drown out the voice of God in our lives. We need to set aside time to listen to him and carry out his will in our lives.

This is what they were doing in the Church of Antioch.

ACTS 13: 2-3

² While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." ³ Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

The Church was worshipping and praying, and they heard the will of God and submitted to it in their lives. Do you think they wanted to send off two of their leaders? probably not, it would drastically change their church, but they knew that it was God's will, so they humbled themselves and obeyed.

Barnabas and Saul were being sent out not by the church itself, but by the Holy Spirit, God initiated the movement, not man. This is another issue we face in the world today; we often initiate change and movement and mission because we believe it to be appropriate! We need to remember that we are to follow the direction of the Holy Spirit, when things fail it is often because we followed our own will and not God's will.

When the Holy Spirit sends us, he accompanies us, and helps us to carry out the work which he has called us to do in this world.

This is evident in the Scriptures.

Barnabas and Saul leave that dock and travel to the Island of Cyprus, they arrive on the east side of Salamis and then work their way westward towards the city of Paphos, the capital of Cyprus.

The Scripture does not record a lot of what happens along the way, however when they reach Paphos, we see the power of the Holy Spirit evident in Saul.

The proconsul of Cyprus, a man by the name of Sergius Paulus, being a 'man of intelligence' wanted to find out the truth about God from Barnabas and Saul.

A proconsul was a man who served in the Roman Senate, so they were powerful people, and unless you were invited into their presence, there would be no chance of ever meeting one in your day-to-day life.

God made it happen. God worked in the heart of Sergius Paulus and had him invite Barnabas and Saul into his court for God's will to be done.

This should sound familiar. Cornelius in Caesarea, a gentile sent a letter to Peter from Joppa inviting him to his household because he wanted to know the truth about God.

God knows where his children are in this world, he knows where the ones who will hear his voice are, and he moves his people through the Holy Spirit to bring His Word to them. God had called Barnabas and Saul from Antioch to Paphos so that His people could hear his Word proclaimed.

However, Satan wants to stop this from happening. Satan uses his own minions, in this case Elymas the magician.

This is still happening in the world today. As the true Church proclaims the Word of God faithfully into the world. Satan uses his minion to try to stop that Word from reaching the ears of the lost.

Satan through his minion Elymas seeks to block the proconsul from hearing the truth about God. And the Holy Spirit acts.

Acts 13:8-10

⁸ But Elymas the magician (for that is the meaning of his name) opposed them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith. ⁹ But Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him ¹⁰ 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?

Saul calls Elymas a false teacher, a man of wickedness and deceit. This is how Satan works in this world. The only way for him to counter the truth of God's Word is through lies and deceit, through falsehood and the evil twisting of the truth for his own purpose, to keep man away from God. Satan's biggest fear is that people will somehow hear the truth of God's word and walk in it.

Satan knows that once you know the truth of God's Word, that the truth will set you free from the bondage of Sin in this world. That the truth of God's Word will allow you to see the false teachers and their lies and deceit in this world. Satan knows that in the end God is going to come against all that oppose him, and Satan wants as many people on his side as he can get.

There is a spiritual war going on in this world every day, a war between light and darkness, between good and evil, between God and Satan for the salvation of every soul.

That is what is happening here in Paphos, and God strikes his enemy through the Holy Spirit.

Satan uses Elymas, a false teacher, one who calls himself Bar-Jesus, son of Jesus in Aramaic. Elymas claims to be a follower of Jesus Christ, yet everything he teaches is counter to the Gospel and goes against the Scriptures. Does this sound familiar?

Our world is filled with Churches that call themselves Bar-Jesus, Christians, disciples of God, followers of Jesus and yet they teach things that go against God's Word in so many different ways! Satan is still seeking to turn people away from God through lies and deceit, to turn people from the faith, to twist the path so that they can never find God.

So, God sets the path straight. He uses Saul to pronounce judgement upon Elymas. This is the first time we see Saul acting as Paul, exercising his authority as an apostle called to the Lord and being chosen instrument to carry His name before the Gentiles.

From this point on in the book of Acts, Luke no longer refers to Paul as Saul, and it is no longer Barnabas and Saul, but Paul and Barnabas.

ACTS 13:11

¹¹ And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will 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.

To be blinded for a moment is a simple thing to do, but to be made blind and then to have your sight restored is not just a single miracle, it is two. God was graciously giving Elymas a chance to repent, to reflect upon his ways of deceit and lies and to change. We are not told if Elymas

ever did, we are just told of the judgement as a demonstration of the truth of God's ways and the false ways of this world.

ACTS 13:12

¹² Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had occurred, for he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord.

The Proconsul becomes a believer, not because of the miracle he has witness, but because the truth of God's Word and the Gospel was confirmed in the actions of Paul.

In Paul's witness he saw the truth of who Jesus was to Paul. In the way that Paul proclaimed God in his words and deeds he taught Sergius Paulus, who God could be in his own life and that message of who Jesus Christ is and can be in his life allowed him to see the reality of the Living God.

Like we talked about last week, the world is blind to God's Word. Satan is out there distracting them, lying to them and deceiving them in every way that he can. Yet, the Lord can restore the sight to the blind and make clear the path to Salvation.

God will sometime blind those who oppose him, and at the same time, give sight to those who seek him. We saw this with Saul himself, a man who openly opposed and persecuted followers of Jesus Christ, who was blinded by the Lord and then had his sight restored.

Here in Paphos God did not just blind the false teacher Elymas, he blinded him and turned him from a stumbling block into a steppingstone for Sergius Paulus to come to faith in Christ. In God's hands, the crisis became an opportunity for Paulus to see the work of God and believe in the truth of God's Word.

The Lord won the spiritual battle. He always wins.

We have to know that as we carry out God's will in this world, we will always face opposition, Satan and his minions will always be working counter to us, yet God will always win.

Around the turn of the 19th century there was a Salvation Army worker in Boston who worked in a very dangerous part of the city by the name of Samuel Logan Brengle. One day as he was walking past a saloon, a drunk threw a brick at him, striking him on the head and nearly killing him.

As he struggled through 18 months of recovery, he began to write down his thoughts in little articles which would later become the basis of his book, *Helps to Holiness*. A book that when published in 1896 began to influence people all over America, helping them come to faith in the Lord.

His wife actually saved that brick, and she had Genesis 50:20 engraved on it.

Genesis 50:20

²⁰ As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.

Paul and Barnabas faced obstacles and opposition in their mission, Samuel Logan Brengle faced opposition and obstacles in his mission. Every Christian carrying out the will of God will face obstacles and opposition in their mission because Satan does not want one more soul to be saved.

Yet Christians carry on in their mission, they persevere through trials, troubles and tribulations because they have the Holy Spirit with them. Christians can expect that as long as they are doing God's will in this world, they will face opposition and perhaps even persecution, yet we also know we can turn to God and rely on him to carry us through to accomplish his plan for us.

If we are doing God's will the Holy Spirit is there with us, opening doors, and making path straight. He can blind those who oppose us and straighten out that which Satan has made crooked, we just need to trust in him.

Proverbs 3: 5-8

**⁵ Trust in the LORD with all your heart,
and do not lean on your own understanding.**

**⁶ In all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make straight your paths.**

**⁷ Be not wise in your own eyes;
fear the LORD, and turn away from evil.**

**⁸ It will be healing to your flesh
and refreshment to your bones.**

God wants to lead us, he wants to direct us in our lives, he initiates the plan, he guides, he empowers, and he saves, but are we hearing him when he calls to us?

Ask yourselves:

Are you too distracted by the business of life to hear God?

Are you reading his Scripture and understanding what he is saying?

When was the last time you prayed by just sitting silently and listening to God?

The truth is that God is always with us, always in our lives, but we are not always listening when he speaks. God desires for us to hear his call and go out as the Salt and Light of his word in this broken and lost world.

Let us pray,

Thank you, Lord, for the gift of the Holy Spirit, for His presence in our lives to guide and quicken us and help us walk in your ways and not stray from your path. Keep us from all evil and falsehood.

Enlighten us that we may understand your heart and obey Your Word. Show us your way Lord and we will walk in it. Let the truth of your Word set us free to enjoy all your goodness and blessings for us, in this new life we have in Christ. Help us, Lord make time to hear you.

In the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, we pray. AMEN.

Hymn: "O Church Arise"

Invitation to Offering

Offering

Offertory Prayer

(Congregant Prepared)

Closing Hymn #431: "Jesus Where'er Thy People Meet"

Jesus, wher e'er thy people meet,
there they behold thy mercy seat;
where'er they seek thee thou art found,
and every place is hallowed ground.

Here may we prove the power of prayer
to strengthen faith and sweeten care,
to teach our faint desires to rise,
and bring all heaven before our eyes.

Lord, we are few, but thou art near,
nor short thine arm, nor deaf thine ear;
oh rend the heavens, come quickly down
and make a thousand hearts thine own.

Pastoral Prayer

Lord, our God,
 whose glory is beyond compare;
 whose mercy is boundless, and love for us is endless;
 look upon us now in your compassion.

We pray for peace that calms our hearts and saves our souls,
 and for peace in the whole world and throughout creation,

We pray for the stability of the church and the unity of this congregation,
 for the ministries of your church around the world in these challenging times,

We pray for our country, our leaders, and all those in public service
 for this community, and for every neighbourhood and nation,
 and for all who offer themselves in service for the common good,

We pray for the whole of God's creation in its beauty and bounty,
 for the wellbeing of every creature and their habitats,

We pray for the sick, the suffering, and the isolated,
 for victims of violence, refugees, and captives,
 and for our protection against all affliction, danger, and distress,

We pray all this to you, Holy God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
 To whom belongs all glory, honour, and worship,
 now and forever, and to the ages of ages.
 Amen

Benediction

As you leave this place this day,
 may God's love sustain you,
 and may you love those who surround you.
 May God's Spirit empower you,
 and may you empower all those you meet.
 May God's joy fill your hearts,
 and may this joy overflow
 to the ends of the earth for God's glory,
 now and forever. **Amen.**