

## SERMON TRANSCRIPT

06.29.2025 | Sending Out | Acts 13:1-3; 14:24-28 | Dr. Ben Day, Senior Pastor

If you have a Bible this morning, I wanna invite you to turn with me to Acts chapter 13, where in the third week of a series studying the mission of the church began a couple of weeks ago looking at Jesus' words to his disciples right before he ascended. As it's recorded in Matthew 28, Jesus told his disciples that all authority in heaven and on earth had been given to him, and now he was sending his disciples out to go and to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that he had commanded them. He told them that he would be with them until the very end of the age. So what we saw from the beginning of the series is that our call, the main thing for the mission of the church as we join in the mission of God is to make disciples. We are to make disciples of all nations.

And so last week we were in Acts chapter 17, we saw that Paul in Athens gives us an example that we can follow of what it looks like to make disciples, to bring the gospel to our own city, how we live in a city that is full of idols. That should provoke our spirits. It should break our hearts. It should compel us to go out to meet those who are lost, to understand what they really believe and to proclaim the gospel to them in a way they can understand. But we also recognize that we have a call to make disciples of all nations. And while we live in an international and diverse city and the nations are certainly here in San Francisco, there are still so many who have not yet heard the gospel. So many where the gospel is not being preached, languages where the word of God has not yet been translated. And so we know that there is this call to not just go to the people right around us, but to go to people who are far from us. There's this call for our church to send out members, to reach the nations, to make disciples of all nations. And that's where we're gonna be today in Acts chapter 13. In some ways we're backing up from Acts 17 of last week to kind of see how did Paul get to places like Athens. Here in Acts chapter 13, we see Paul, or here he's called in the text Saul and Barnabas sent out. What you have in the book of Acts in Acts chapters 13 and 14, it is an account of Saul and Barnabas' first missionary journey.

So what we're gonna do is we're gonna read the first few verses of Acts chapter 13 to see how they were sent out. And then we're gonna jump to kind of the end of that missionary journey at the end of Acts chapter 14 and see what it looked like when they returned. So Acts chapter 13, I'm gonna read for us verses one through three. It says, "Now there were in the church at Antioch "the prophets and teachers Barnabas, Simeon, "who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, "Meneon, a lifelong friend 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. "Let's jump to the end of chapter 14." So again, chapters 13 and 14 of Acts recount the missionary journey of Saul and Barnabas, who we just saw were sent out from the church in Antioch. But then at the end of chapter 14, it says starting in verse 24, "Then they passed through Pisidia and came to Pamphylia. "When they had spoken the word in Perga, "they went down to Italia. "From there they sailed to Antioch, "where they had been commended to the grace of God "for the work that they had fulfilled. "And when they arrived and gathered the church together, "they declared all that God had done with them "and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. "And they remained there no little time with the disciples."

Now I mentioned that we began this series by looking at Matthew chapter 28, Jesus' great commission that is recorded in Matthew's gospel. You have a very similar account in the beginning of the book of Acts. So Luke writes the book of Acts. In Acts chapter one, he is speaking about the way that Jesus spoke to his disciples before ascending to heaven. And he shares it, something very similar, as the great commission in Matthew 28 was given in Acts chapter one. Specifically, a pretty well-known verse, verse eight, Luke says this, "Jesus told his disciples, "'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.'" So this is Jesus' great commission to his disciples in Luke's account in the book of Acts. They're gonna be his witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the end of the earth by the power of the Holy Spirit.

And what you can basically do is you can basically take Acts one, eight, and use it as an outline for the whole book of Acts. What we see first in the book of Acts is the gospel going forth in Jerusalem. By the power of the Spirit, the apostles, the disciples are witnesses in Jerusalem. The Spirit comes at Pentecost, they proclaim the gospel, thousands are saved, and we see them continue to be witnesses primarily in Jerusalem. So the first part of the book of Acts is primarily the church, the gospel, bearing fruit in the city of Jerusalem. But then, something happens. There's a man named Stephen

who is a deacon of the church, and he is killed for his faith. The fact that he is preaching the gospel and promoting the way of Jesus there in Jerusalem, he is martyred. And it says that at his martyrdom, there was a man named Saul. And then in Acts chapter eight, verse one, we read this.

So we just read Acts one, eight. Here's Acts eight, one. And Saul approved of his execution. And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria except the apostles. What is Luke telling us here? Here is the next part of the outline. What did he say? You're gonna be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in Judea and Samaria. And how does Luke put it here? That as Stephen was martyred, Saul was approving of his execution. There became a persecution, an opposition against the church that pushed the church to the regions of Judea and Samaria. In other words, Jesus's words are being fulfilled. The gospel is going forth, and here primarily, it is persecution that is pushing the gospel out, pushing the church to carry out this mission in other places.

And this is how often God will work. Our God is sovereign, he is providential, nothing is wasted with God, even suffering, even persecution, opposition, even someone being killed for their faith is a way for God to work to accomplish his mission through his people. So in his providence, God works even through persecution for the gospel to spread. We see in the next few chapters is that the gospel spreads in Judea and Samaria. But what we have coming in really Acts chapter 13 is the gospel beginning to go to the end of the earth. And what's interesting is this man named Saul is right in the mix again. But in Acts chapter eight, Saul was a part of the mission being carried out because he was persecuting the church of Jesus Christ. Now we see the mission being carried out through Saul because he himself is a follower of Jesus Christ. Before, the mission was kind of being carried out to Judea and Samaria because Paul was harming people in the church. But now he is a member of the church, and he, along with Barnabas, is sent out for a specific call. And this is what I want us to consider this morning. Because while God will often use persecution and opposition, he'll often use things outside of our control to accomplish his mission in this world.

So often I believe God accomplishes his mission of reaching people who are far from him, of making disciples of all nations by faithful churches, hearing the spirit speak, being obedient to the spirit's voice, and sending people out to the nations. What we see here, starting in Acts chapter 13, with the church of Antioch, sending members out to reach other people is a model for us and for our church. It's been a model and example for churches for thousands of years. The way God is accomplishing his mission is through faithful churches, raising up and sending out people to make disciples of all nations. This has been our church for 176 years. We have been blessed to be able to be a part of sending out people to other parts of the city, to other parts of the state, to other parts of the world. This is who I want us to continue to be. I want us to continue to be a sending church. I want us to be a church that is very focused on bringing the gospel to our own city, but also a church that is very focused on sending people out to the nations, that we would be a part of what God is doing in those parts of the world. And here, if we'll follow the example that we see from the church in Antioch, I think we'll learn how we can continue to be that type of sending church.

So let's just look at what happens in the church of Antioch and see what we can learn from them. It starts in verse one. It says, "Now there were in the church at Antioch "prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon, "who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, "Meneon, a lifelong friend of Herod the Tetrarch, and Saul." Let's pause there for just a moment. We're not gonna spend a lot of time on this because there's not really the point of today's message, but I just want you to notice the diversity of this church's leadership. You have here, mentioned on the front and the back end, the two that are gonna be sent out, Barnabas and Saul, both Jewish men, although from different tribes and very different even areas. But then you have mentioned Simeon, who was called Niger. That word that Luke uses is a word that means black. Simeon was probably dark-skinned. Many people think he was probably from Africa. We know that Lucius was from Africa because he says Lucius was from Cyrene. Cyrene is modern-day Libya. Lucius was from North Africa. And then there's Meneon, who Luke tells us is a lifelong friend, a childhood friend, like he grew up with Herod the Tetrarch. Now if you were reading Luke's gospel right before the Book of Acts, you might remember that Herod the Tetrarch was a ruler in Galilee, and he was the one who had John the Baptist beheaded.

So you have a man here in church leadership with all these people from Jewish tribes, from parts of Africa, who's grown up with a ruler in Galilee, who persecuted the forerunner of Jesus, and together, these brothers are leading the church. What a beautiful picture of the way the gospel brings people from all different backgrounds, all different nations

together, brings them together in community in the church. This is why diversity is one of the core values of our church, because we believe in his way God works to reconcile us, not just to himself, but to each other. So you have here these leaders of the church in Antioch that were gathered together, and he says in verse two, "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." So here we have these leaders worshiping, Luke says, fasting, seeking the Lord together, and the Lord speaks. The Lord calls Saul and Barnabas out to a work that will be a part of bringing the gospel to the nations, and he brings that call, and he speaks to the church as they are worshiping together.

It was in just a normal rhythm of the church gathering, worshiping and seeking the Lord that God met them and God spoke to them. So the first thing I think we can learn from the church in Antioch is that we need to be a church who worships faithfully. Let's worship God faithfully. Let's show up in the regular rhythms of worship. It says that the church in Antioch was worshiping together and fasting. Now we don't know if they were fasting for a particular reason. Maybe they were sensing that God was doing something and so they had a time where they weren't eating so they could seek the Lord more specifically through prayer. Maybe fasting was just part of their regular rhythms. We know that fasting was a part of just the practices of the early church. Jesus had told his disciples in the Sermon on the Mount, when you fast, this is the way you should do it. So maybe this was just normal worshiping and fasting.

But whatever the case was, I think it reminds us that it's in our normal worship rhythms. It's in our regular practices of worshiping God and seeking him that God is going to meet us and God is going to speak. I know that sometimes it can just seem like we kind of do the same thing every Sunday morning. We show up, we sing some songs, we pray, somebody preaches a couple of times a month, we take communion. It can seem just very routine sometimes. Sometimes you might wonder, is it really important that I go this Sunday? Is it really important that I'm here each and every week? Don't you know there's a lot going on in our city? It's making traffic terrible? Just be easier if I wasn't there with you guys this Sunday. How important is it that we gather together regularly? It is very important. It is important for us to be faithful in our worship of God together because this is where God is going to meet us. This is where God is going to move and where he is going to speak.

I remember a couple of years ago, there was a revival broke out at Asbury University. It was in February of 2023. It was a Wednesday chapel service. I don't know if you've ever been to a school where they have chapel services, but any of my experiences with chapel services that most of the people are only there because they have to be there. Like it's required for students and faculty to be there and so sometimes it can be just kind of going through the motions at a chapel service. And I don't know what it was like at Asbury on that day, but on this Wednesday chapel, they gathered together for their normal chapel service and they just did not stop. I mean, some people left for class and some people left the room, but many people stayed and many more came back, many more traveled in. For 16 straight days, people were gathering in that place, worshiping God. I don't think they planned that on that Wednesday when they just began to worship, but God did something. He met them there, He moved there.

We continue to show up, we continue to seek God because this is where He will speak to us. And it's not just in our Sunday morning corporate gatherings, it happens in our community groups and our discipleship groups and our Bible studies. We keep gathering together, worshiping God faithfully because this is where He is going to speak to us. This is where He's going to move. We don't know what He is going to call us to, but we know He is going to move in those moments. And not just even in times of community with other believers, but even in your own personal time with the Lord. Often try to encourage people to read the Bible on a regular basis, to spend some time with prayer, in prayer with God on a regular basis. And sometimes it can seem like a chore, maybe it can seem monotonous, seems like just something else to do in a very busy schedule that you already have. But this is when you are going to hear from God as you set your mind on the things of God, as you meditate on His word. So when you're gonna be able to sense the Lord's calling on your life as you seek Him and listen to Him. So let's keep worshiping God faithfully. Let's gather together regularly expecting that this is where God is going to move, this is where God is going to speak.

And if we're expecting the Spirit to speak, then we should take the time to listen. To the second thing that we can listen, excuse me, we can learn from the church in Antioch, is let's listen to the Spirit carefully. Let's worship faithfully, let's be diligent in our regular practices, being in God's word, of gathering together to worship the Lord. But when we do that, let's expect Him to speak and let's listen to the Spirit carefully. As they were gathered, the Spirit spoke to them. Verse

two, "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." Now we don't know exactly who the they or the them is here. It could be the leaders that were mentioned in verse one, that as they were seeking the Lord, God spoke specifically to the leadership of the church. It could be the church as a whole. Could be the whole church of Antioch sought to worship God, seek Him, and that the whole church heard from the Spirit. Now we don't know exactly how the Spirit spoke. Was it audible? Was there a vision? Was there something that they felt with them? We don't know, but one thing that seems pretty clear to me is it did not just come to one person. Whether it was to the group of leaders or to the church as a whole, it seemed that the Spirit was speaking to the church together.

And when I say we need to listen to the Spirit carefully, one of the ways that we do that, I think, is listening in community. One of the best ways we can listen to the Spirit of God is with the help of the people of God. The same Spirit that indwells me and dwells you, dwells each one of us as believers, we can expect that that Spirit who speaks to me will be speaking something probably similar to those whom I'm in community with. Seems pretty clear that God is speaking to this church as a whole, and I do think part of listening to the Spirit carefully is listening in community. Hearing not just from what you sense within, but also hearing from the people of God, allowing the other people of God who also have the Spirit to be able to confirm the Spirit's voice in your life.

Now I'm not saying you need to run every decision by your community group. You know, if you're at a Bible study and you say, you know, we're thinking about taking a trip around Christmas, what do you guys think is the Spirit confirming that with you? Not saying we have to be overly concerned with what everybody thinks and their opinions, but I do think if we sense the Spirit calling us to something, we sense God leading us to something, it is good for us to seek godly counsel from the people of God to listen together in community. Because it might be that you sense God putting on your heart the call to lead something, begin something, move somewhere, be sent out to share the gospel in another part of the world. And you might share that with faithful brothers and sisters and they might say, listen, we love that that is your desire, but have you considered this area where maybe you need to grow first?

Have you considered that that is a calling that requires some type of equipping? Have you sought that equipping before you respond to what you think God is calling you to do? Or maybe on the other hand, you might sense God is calling you to do something, but you might be very hesitant. You might say, well, it seems like God's calling me, but that surely, it can't be for me. I'm not equipped enough, I don't know enough, I'm not gonna be the one to lead that ministry, to be sent out there. And you might share that with brothers and sisters and they say, actually, we think you're exactly the right person for that. We sense that God has called you to this moment. It is good for us to listen together in community.

But I mean that for all of us. I think that applies to me as a pastor as well. As a senior pastor of this church, I think I have a responsibility to lead and to guide and to shepherd. Many times I believe that means helping cast vision for our church. But I don't believe that what God is going to show me is gonna be different than what he shows the rest of our church. Rather, I think together we should hear from the Spirit and where God is leading us. I mean, for a few years now, I've shared with you how we have a space, an old firehouse that we own, that I'd love to see be used for a missional purpose. For a few years, I've talked about how I'd like for us to be involved in seeing churches planted or revitalized in our city. That is something that God's only put on my heart or in my vision. I don't think that is for our church, but I share that to say, if God is putting that on our hearts as a church, then let's be obedient. Let's listen to the Lord together and follow what he is calling us to. So let's listen to the Spirit carefully by listening in community, but also listening for confirmation.

So notice what Luke says in verse three. Then after fasting and praying, they laid their hands on them and sent them off. They were worshipping and fasting, the Spirit speaks, and what do they do? They pray and they fast. They make sure that they heard from the Lord. Together, they were seeking the Lord, listening to him, and together, they continue to do that after the Lord speaks. It's good for us to listen in community. It's good for us to listen for confirmation, but it's not good for us to use that listening as an excuse to be inactive or to delay. They pray, they fast, but then they send out.

This is the third lesson that we can learn. As we worship and God speaks and we listen to him carefully, he is going to call us to do something. He is gonna call us at times to send people out, so let's send out people generously. After we listen to the Spirit, in times he calls us to multiply as a church, calls us to send people out, let's send people generously. You think about it, we were given five names of leaders of the church in Antioch. God has just said, take two of them, send

them out, set them apart for a work to which I have called them. That's 40% of the church's leadership. Think about the gap that's gonna be left there at the church in Antioch. Think about the Bible studies and the prayer meetings that Saul and Barnabas probably led. Think about their outreach ministries and the pastoral counseling that they offered. They were just gonna leave behind as they got sent out. And not just all that they would do for the church, but think about the relationships and the friendships that were shared. Barnabas is known as the son of encouragement. Does anybody wanna be friends with that guy? I mean, I want to. I don't wanna lose the son of encouragement from my church, but God says, send them out. What do they do? They obey. They lay their hands on them, setting them apart for the work that God had called them to and then sending them out generously.

We should be generous with all that God has given us. Resources, buildings, money, but also people. So often it is hard for us to send people out because of the work that they do in the church or because of the relationships that we have. We have to get the same vision that the church in Antioch had. The call is to make disciples of all nations. Not just of San Francisco. Yes, we wanna be diligent here, but at times, it's going to mean that we are sending people out to other parts of the world. Now there are some smaller ways I think we can practice the sending out as well. I think there are times when our community groups, you know, one of the most regular kind of discipleship rhythms we have in our church is our community groups that gather. We love our community groups and community groups. Hopefully you get to know people, you get to build friendships, get to do life together and share things together and build those strong relationships.

What can often happen is a community group grows and it becomes large. Maybe it becomes too large for the person's home that it's meeting him. Maybe it becomes too large for meaningful sharing to happen during the time together. So guess what? It is time for that group to multiply. It is good for that group to send some people out to start a new group. That's not always easy. You've built the friendships, you have the relationships, you wanna keep that time together. You've got a vision. This is what God is doing. Sends people out so that there can be more growth. It could happen in community groups. It could happen within our city. If we wanna see churches planted, revitalized, we're gonna have to send people out in our city. Be generous with our people. To be at other churches at times. To serve in other ways outside of our body at times.

But of course, I think what we see here in this text, something that we get to see, be reminded of as we visit with global partners, is that there's gonna be times when God calls people out to the nations. We need to send them generously. Meaning we need to be open-handed with the people, but also supportive in prayer, financial support, generously sending them out that they might fulfill the work God has given them. That means we're going to see people raised up in our church, Lord willing, and sent out. This is a sign of a healthy church, something we should hope to continue to see in our church. People raised up, disciplined in our church, and then sent out from our church. Which means it's probably gonna be one of you. Is God calling you to the nations? Have you stopped and listened recently to wonder, God, what are you placing on my heart? What are you calling me to in this next season, this next chapter of my life?

We respond obediently. We as a church, we wanna come alongside of you in that. We wanna support you. Wanna make sure that you're equipped, we wanna confirm the Lord's leading in your life, we want to be able to send you out generously. But sending out doesn't mean losing all relationship, cutting all ties. These days we have the opportunity to take trips to visit partners pretty easily a lot of times. These days we have ways of staying in contact through newsletters that are emailed out. Getting able to see pictures, being able to have them come visit. We still want to support, that's happened even from the beginning. Long before there was technology that made these things easy, the church was doing this.

What we see in Acts 13 and 14 is Solomon Barnabas going out doing this work, but then we see at the end of chapter 14 that they returned to the church in Antioch. And it says in verse 26, they sailed to Antioch where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had fulfilled. The church in Antioch had set them apart to the grace of God to do a work, and now they were coming back to celebrate the fact that God had accomplished that work through them. That's what they say happens in verse 27. When they arrived and gathered the church together, they declared all that God had done with them. Now he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles, and they remained no little time with the disciples. I love the way Luke writes. He says they remained no little time to show that they stayed there a while. They were refreshed in the company of their brothers and sisters, of their sending church.

But notice what Luke says they did. They declared all that God had done with them. When they came back, they were not bragging about their trips, they were not sharing about all that they had endured for the sake of the gospel. They were celebrating what God had done. So the last step I think is we send people out. Let's celebrate the work of God joyfully. As we send people out, we have the chance to hear from them what God is doing. We have a chance to pray for them, we have a chance to host them as they come back to San Francisco for a weekend or for a period of time. Let's celebrate what God is doing in their lives. To recognize it is only by the grace of God that he has involved any one of us in this mission. It is only by the grace of God that Saul and Barnabas were given this mission. Wasn't because they were so good, Saul calls himself the chief of sinners. Just a few chapters back, he was persecuting the church. But by the grace of God, he is called to a work. They come back and they celebrate the work that God had done.

This is what we want to do, is we want to regularly gather to worship God and to celebrate the work that God is doing in our midst and in other parts of the world. This is why we end each service with the doxology. Not because we can't be more creative and think of other ways to end the service, but because we do it intentionally. We hope that right before we are sent out from here, our eyes would be fixed on God. That we would be reminded that this is all for the glory of God and it is all done by the grace of God. This is why we regularly take communion, to be reminded that we are part of the mission of God. We are part of the people of God only by the grace of God. It's because Jesus was first sent out from heaven to earth to pursue us, to redeem us, to make us his own, that we are now part of his people. We are now involved in his mission, all by the grace of God, all for the glory of God.

So as we hear reports, as we support partners and missionaries, as we see the gospel going forth just in our own city and to the nations, let's celebrate what God has done. Let's be reminded it's all of him. It's all by his grace, it's all for his glory. Let's celebrate what he's doing in our lives. Let's allow it to inspire us, to compel us, to continue to make his name known. Convinced that we will be a church on mission in our city and sending people out to the nations when we are captivated by the glory of God. When we worship together faithfully and our hearts and our minds are moved by God, that's when we'll be moved to be on mission for his glory. So let's worship faithfully, expecting to hear from him, but also getting a sense of who he truly is that we might respond by sending people out and celebrating his work together.