

Preaching in Pisidia (Acts 13:13-43)

Introduction

I listen to two or three sermons every week. It's really important for us to be fed with good Biblical preaching and even though I'm a pastor, I need to be fed too. This week, as I was listening to the podcast from Machias, Pastor Ron reminded me of a frightening prophecy from the book of Amos.

"Behold, the days are coming," says the Lord GOD, "That I will send a famine on the land, Not a famine of bread, Nor a thirst for water, But of hearing the words of the LORD. They shall wander from sea to sea, And from north to east; They shall run to and fro, seeking the word of the LORD, But shall not find it. (Amos 8:11-12)

We are an incredibly privileged people. We have unprecedented access to the words of the Lord. We can read it in our own language. A feast has been set before us, yet so many of us take it for granted. It's why Spurgeon said "There is dust enough on some of your Bibles to write damnation with your finger."

We must not take our privilege lightly because there is a famine coming. It's a famine of hearing the words of the Lord. It probably won't come because the Bible is unavailable. It will come because people are not interested in what it has to say.

I believe that famine has already arrived. What is being preached from so many pulpits this very morning is not the words of the Lord. You might hear the philosophies of men. You might hear pop psychology. You might hear the words of the Lord twisted to make it more palatable to our post-modern ears. Way too often you will hear a sermon that is focused on the perceived needs of people rather than the righteous requirements of Almighty God.

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. (2 Timothy 4:3-4)

So what do you want to hear this morning? Would you like me to avoid the difficult truths we find in our Bibles? Would you like a message that makes you feel really good about yourself? Would you like to hear that God loves you no matter what and that He wants to make you healthy and wealthy, that He wants to make you a champion? Would you like to hear that God doesn't care about your sin and your depravity? Or would you rather hear from God?

I've prayed that God would give me the words to speak this morning. I'm praying that I'm faithful enough to get out of the way and let God speak. I want to disappear; I want you to have an encounter with the living God.

The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12)

My friends, please don't be deluded. Receive the love of the truth and hold me accountable – don't let me deviate from the truth of God we find in this Bible. I want to preach truth to you this morning.

You might be wondering what all this has to do with Acts, Chapter 13. Well, quite a lot, actually. As we continue our journey through the book of Acts, we find Barnabus, Paul and Mark on a missionary journey. They went first to Cyprus and there they preached the word of God. No famine there; they delivered the truth and they would continue to do so wherever they went, no matter what the consequences. Today, we're going to see how Paul preached in Pisidia.

Now when Paul and his party set sail from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia; and John, departing from them, returned to Jerusalem. (Acts 13:13)

There are a couple things I want to note before we move on. The first is that Paul now seems to be taking the lead in this ministry. Prior to this, it was always Barnabus and Saul. But something changed while they were on Cyprus. It was Saul whom the Holy Spirit chose to confront Elymas the sorcerer. That was also the first time that we heard Saul called Paul. I think that is significant.

The second thing I want you to note is that the young man, John Mark, seems to have cut and run. He left the mission and returned home to Jerusalem. Luke doesn't give us any reason for the departure, but we'll learn later that Paul wasn't happy about it. It sounds like maybe the ministry was getting a little too uncomfortable for the young man, so he stole home. This will become important later, so stick it back in your mental archive for now.

But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and sat down. And after the reading of the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent to them, saying, "Men and brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say on." (Acts 13:14-15)

So the boys caught a ship from Perga on Cyprus, and sailed up to Asia Minor and they arrived in the town of Antioch in Pisidia. This is a different Antioch than the one they left when they started their missionary journey. The Antioch they left was in Syria. Don't let this tip you over because it isn't unusual to have two cities of the same name. In fact, did you know there is a hamlet of Coram in New York State? That's right, we're not the only one, and the other Coram is about ten times our size.

On the Sabbath, they went to Synagogue, like good Jewish folks were expected to do. Since they were visiting rabbis, it's not surprising that would be given the opportunity to speak. It was customary and Paul took full advantage of the opportunity.

Then Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said, "Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen: (Acts 13:16)

Paul was preaching to a mixed audience. There were ethnic Jews there for sure. It was, after all, a Synagogue. These, Paul addressed as "Men of Israel" But there were also God-fearers in attendance. These were Gentiles, Gentiles who had come to believe in the God of Israel but had not undergone circumcision to become proselytes. Right off the bat, Paul sets the stage for the wonderful truth that salvation is for all nations. Next, Paul is going to give them a history lesson:

The God of this people Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an uplifted arm He brought them out of it. Now for a time of about forty years He put up with their ways in the wilderness. And when He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He distributed their land to them by allotment. "After that He gave them judges for about four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet. And afterward they asked for a king; so God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. And when He had removed him, He raised up for them David as king, to whom also He gave testimony and said, 'I HAVE FOUND DAVID THE SON OF JESSE, A MAN AFTER MY OWN HEART, WHO WILL DO ALL MY WILL.' (Acts 13:17-22)

One thing we must never forget: Christianity is based on history. This is not some made-up religion. It's not based on myth. It's based on historical fact. And the Bible is God's historical record of how He is working out His plan of redemption.

I'm sure virtually everyone who was in that Synagogue was well aware of this history of the Nation Israel but Paul needed to make a point. The gospel is not some innovative new theory. The gospel did not begin with the incarnation, the crucifixion, the resurrection, or Pentecost. This was God's plan all along.

And now, after setting this historical stage, Paul is going to introduce them to Jesus.

*From this man's seed, according to the promise, God raised up for Israel a Savior—Jesus—after John had first preached, before His coming, the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. And as John was finishing his course, he said, 'Who do you think I am? I am not He. But behold, there comes One after me, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to loose.' "Men and brethren, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to you the word of this salvation has been sent. For those who dwell in Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they did not know Him, nor even the voices of the Prophets which are read every Sabbath, have fulfilled them in condemning Him. And though they found no cause for death in Him, they asked Pilate that He should be put to death. Now when they had fulfilled all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the tree and laid Him in a tomb. But God raised Him from the dead. He was seen for many days by those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are His witnesses to the people. And we declare to you glad tidings—that promise which was made to the fathers. God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus. As it is also written in the second Psalm: 'YOU ARE MY SON, TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU.' And that He raised Him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, He has spoken thus: 'I WILL GIVE YOU THE SURE MERCIES OF DAVID.' Therefore He also says in another Psalm: 'YOU WILL NOT ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO SEE CORRUPTION.' "For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption; but He whom God raised up saw no corruption. **Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.** (Acts 13:23-39)*

It's the Gospel of Christ! Jesus, the eternal Son of God came into the world to live a perfect, sinless life. He was crucified to pay for the sins of everyone who would believe. He was buried, but on the third day, he was raised from the dead. He appeared to many witnesses, and then ascended into heaven where He sits at the right hand of the Father making intercession for those who are called by His name.

and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses

You are a sinner, but you can be justified through Jesus Christ. You can be made righteous. All you have to do is believe. Just admit you're a sinner and believe that Jesus died to pay for your sins. Confess Him as Lord, and turn from your sin. Believe that He was raised from the dead so you can have a living relationship with Him.

The alternative is not attractive because we all stand guilty of cosmic treason. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23) You either believe and let Jesus pay for your sin, or you get to pay for your own sin with an eternity of unimaginable torment in hell, suffering forever!

Beware therefore, lest what has been spoken in the prophets come upon you: 'BEHOLD, YOU DESPISERS, MARVEL AND PERISH! FOR I WORK A WORK IN YOUR DAYS, A WORK WHICH YOU WILL BY NO MEANS BELIEVE, THOUGH ONE WERE TO DECLARE IT TO YOU.' " (Acts 13:40-41)

You see, there are people who cannot believe. They cannot believe because they are despisers of the truth. They cannot believe because they are despisers of God. They cannot believe because they want to determine their own course, to decide for themselves what is right and what is wrong. They want to make themselves the very center of the universe.

Well, remember the passage I shared from 2 Thessalonians? If you don't receive a love of the truth, then ...

... for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness. (2 Thessalonians 2:11-12)

The Gospel has been declared to you. It's God's truth. Will you accept it, or will you reject it? If you reject it, God Himself will make sure you fester in your delusion. Please do not reject God's love! Please do not reject His grace!

How do suppose Paul's sermon was received? Let's read about it:

So when the Jews went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath. Now when the congregation had broken up, many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. (Acts 13:42-43)

Some believed and some didn't. Some were so excited that they begged Paul and Barnabas to come back the next week. (And notice that these were Gentiles.) Some followed after the two, and let Paul and Barnabas persuade them to continue in the grace of God. Others left, jumped in the car, went down to the local Denny's for lunch. And if you asked them what they thought of the sermon, they might respond ... "I didn't really

get it. It was too long. It was nice. It was interesting but what are you going to order? The Reuben sounds good.” **Paul’s sermon really didn’t make an impact on them.**

I WORK A WORK IN YOUR DAYS, A WORK WHICH YOU WILL BY NO MEANS BELIEVE, THOUGH ONE WERE TO DECLARE IT TO YOU.

Okay, I understand that they didn’t have cars and probably didn’t have a local Denny’s. But that’s the way it is with preaching. If you preach the truth of the Bible, some will have ears to hear, some will not. Some hear the babblings of the preacher. Some hear from God.

I wonder who you are hearing from this morning. Are you listening to my foolish words or are you hearing from God?

Here’s the real question: Are you in, or are you out? Do you have a desire to get to know God better? Do you have a yearning to get to know Jesus better? Or are you too busy conducting your life in this world to think about Him very much?

After Paul preached in Pisidia, some longed to hear more. Others were ambivalent. As we’ll find out next week, some were openly hostile. That’s what God’s word does.

Jesus said:

"Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. (Matthew 10:34)

Jesus came to illuminate the Great Divide. He offered His life for the sins of the world. Some will accept His offer. Some will reject His offer. Those who accept it will have eternal life. Those who reject it will suffer forever. You don’t get to stand on the fence.

I’m begging you this morning: Go all-in for Jesus. Get hungry for God. Pray for God to soften your heart and unstop your ears. Renew your mind by devouring this Bible and seek the Lord with all your mind, all your soul and all your strength.