



Good morning I am Josh Burnham and I'm the lead pastor here at Bethel. I want to personally welcome all our guests here today! And I'll like to say hello to everyone watching online. I know many of you couldn't make it today or are simply checking us out and we can't wait to see you soon. **Let's take a moment and let those who were baptized today know how proud we are of their step of faith!**

One day a baby bird fell out of his mother's nest. He could not fly but walk. So, this new born bird began to walk to search for his mom. First, he walked up to a kitten and asked, "are you my mother?" The kitten answered, no. So, the baby bird continued. He next encountered a hen, dog, cow, boat, plane and a "big thing" called snort. Eventually a crane carried the baby bird placed him back in the nest. The story ends with the baby bird seeing his mother and saying, "you are not a kitten. You are not a hen. You are not a dog. You are not a cow. You are not a boat, or a plane, or a snort!" You are a bird, and you are my mother."

I can relate to this bird. We all have fallen and are on a search for our rightful home. Except, you are not looking for your mother, you are longing and searching for your eternal Father. There is no greater feeling in the world than to **find what you are looking for**. In our time together today we continue our message series in the book of Acts.

[What Are You Searching For? Acts 14:14-23]

You and I were created to search for something more. In everyone's life the "search" is really the Imago Dei within you stirring you to worship. Worship is treasuring something above everything. True worship is a valuing or treasuring of God above all things. And this search is not new, we find in the book of Acts (2000 yrs. ago), a people searching.

Folks will never bring fulfillment (14:14-15) In Acts we find the people of Lystra rushing toward Barnabas and Paul. Why? Not because they are rock stars but gods. The villagers believed that Barnabas was Zeus (the most widely worshiped god in Galatia) and Paul, Hermes (the messenger of Zeus). Now before you dismiss these people as primitive, **according to ancient legend, Zeus and Hermes once visited the Phrygian hill country disguised as ordinary men. They were turned away from a thousand homes where they sought lodging, but were finally taken in by an elderly couple into their humble home. The gods turned that house into a temple.** Seeing the power of Christ in the lives of Paul and Barnabas, the people swarm the missionaries. These people of Lystra were **searching for something**. And they look in the very place what we search: **relationships**. Their

search ends in hero worship. Of course you are more educated and our society has evolved; therefore, you are not hoping Zeus or Hermes comes your way. However, how often have you thought, "if I could be like _____ then I would have it made." If I had their charisma, clothes, charm, rhetorical skills, or skill then I would be fulfilled.. **Comparison is the thief of joy and folks will never bring fulfillment**

How often do we elevate others into **relational** demi-gods. There is no bf or gf in this world that will satisfy your soul. There is no wife or husband on the planet that is created to bring you eternal peace. There is no friend what was designed to fill the god size hole in your life. **You were created to search and to seek Christ.** Yes you are longing for relationship, His name is Jesus. This is why Paul and Barnabas yell stop! **Folks will never bring fulfillment.**

These two missionaries serve as the archetype in how to handle the **praise** and applause of others. First, they humble themselves and deflect praise. No matter who you think you are, **no one has ever mistaken you for Zeus.** At the pinnacle of pride, with the potential to say "look at me," these men use this opportunity to deflect praise to the only One who is worthy. **When was the last time you deflected praise?** They tore their robes, a universal sign for blasphemy.

Before you think being a demi-god to others is a good position, know that the applause of men is fleeting. Worldly acclamation is like "snort," big, powerful, yet full of hot air. Five short verses later the same crowd **singing** the praises of Paul and Barnabas were **slinging rocks.** **If you live for the applause of men you will die by their criticism. If your search is for popularity your expedition is in vain!** So hated was Paul, the Jews traveled over 100 miles to oppose his missionary efforts. Don't be a man-pleaser. **Craving human praise is a cistern that cannot hold water -Piper** Instead, fear God and find the living water that satisfies. If others have let you down, there is hope. **Folks will never bring fulfillment.**

Find Abundant Life (14:14-15) Paul preaches a good revival message. Except it's not turn or burn but **turn and live.** The heart of the Gospel, and Paul's message is this, **change your orientation from vain and dead idols to the God who lives!** The Gospel is about new life. This is a change that only Jesus Christ can bring in your life. Think of the beautiful pictures of the good news: **born again, death to life, darkness to light, adoption into a new family, and redemption.** Whether you know it or not, this is what you are longing and searching for.

Why is the good news such good news? Because Jesus saves you from worthlessness (v.15). Literally the word means "emptiness or vain." True conversion to following the Way involves turning away from every alternative object of devotion to the one living God. The **worthlessness of our idols only magnifies the worth** of the Savior. **"The worst thing about idols, as the Hebrew scriptures so tirelessly point out, is that they are utterly useless when you need them most." – Christopher Wright**

How do we find this abundant life? It is found in the witness of Jesus Christ. Even in the past, a person's ignorance and rebellion against the Lord was not and will not be ignored. God has always provided a witness to his majesty and glory in the world. Through Israel, who was called to be a light to the Gentiles, God ordained for this nation to be a blessing

and witness to salvation. God did not give them **direct or special revelation**, but graciously revealed himself through His **daily kindness**. Therefore, we should not “bless the food before we eat.” We must thank the Father for His blessings and witness.

No matter where you are in your life, God’s witness always before you, calling you back into relationship through His son Jesus Christ. Let’s go back to “Are you my mother.” When the baby bird lost all hope, **scooped up by “snort”** the excavator, little did he know that this machine was his way of restoration. Maybe today what you see as your **greatest obstacle is a witness to God’s redemptive plan working** in your life. **You will find everything you are looking for in Jesus Christ.**

Finding Christ Forges You into the Community of Jesus (14:19) I believe we see a picture of the model church imbedded within this passage. After proclaiming the goodness of Jesus Christ, Paul receives a hostile welcome: he is attacked with rocks almost to the point of death and removed from the city as if they were taking out the trash. **The reality is that some of you had a week like Paul.** You arrived here today beaten up by your life almost to the point where you are ready to give up. Don’t.

At this moment, the church rises up and becomes what they were called to be. **Disciples of Jesus always have their eyes open to help others.** And immediately they gathered, even at the expense of their lives. This word (v.20) means that they encircled or surrounded the person in need. What a beautiful picture of the church and the love of the Father. When someone or some group is in need, especially to the point of death, your immediate reaction as a Christ follower is to **surround not surrender**. I have to believe often our **pride prevents others** from serving and praying for us. Paul had no choice!

Our Spirit filled instincts as followers of the way should be to gather. We gather to glorify the name of Jesus Christ. We gather around others who are in need. We gather around because we are stronger together knowing that we have found everything we need in Christ Jesus our Lord. I want to show you a short video that beautifully illustrates how I think the church should look.

Turtle Video

When was the last time the Holy Spirit worked through you to turn someone right side up? When was the last time you admitted you were upside down and needed help? When was the last time you prayed for someone, out loud, in their moment of need?

Because of Christ working in Paul and the community gathering around him, the pain of being wounded and humiliated does not dampen enthusiasm for the mission God has given them.

Conclusion (Head-Heart-Hands)

The question is not “are you searching”, the question is, “**what are you searching for?**” Some today are trying to find fulfillment in others. Listen, folks will never satisfy your soul. Some today are searching for abundant life. It’s simple, turn from emptiness, acknowledge your need, and

follow Jesus and He will save you, and turn you right side up. You can't do it in your own strength. "You are not a bank account. You are not a religious experience. You are not a feeling. You are not a romantic relationship, a degree, or a career!" You are my Father, treasured above all, and giver of abundant life.

Some today need to be the church. Maybe you worried that if others see you upside down then you will lose face. No, you will gain faith because you will be surrounded. Maybe today right now God is calling you to encourage others. I don't want one day to pass where God does not use me to encourage someone in Jesus.

Lord's supper. Use this time of response to spend time with your Father. Ask the Lord to cleanse your heart as we prepare for communion.

Notes

Acts 14:14 The apostles Barnabas and Paul tore their robes when they heard this and rushed into the crowd, shouting: 15 “People! Why are you doing these things? We are people also, just like you, and we are proclaiming good news to you, that you turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and everything in them.

The temple of Zeus stood just outside the city (BW3).

Hermes was the emissary and messenger of the gods.[1]Hermes was also "the divine trickster"[2] and "the god of boundaries and the transgression of boundaries, ... the patron of herdsmen, thieves, graves, and heralds."[3] He is described as moving freely between the worlds of the mortal and divine, and was the conductor of souls into the afterlife.[4] He was also viewed as the protector and patron of roads and travelers.[5]

Zeus was th most widely worshipped God in Galatia and was often linked with other gods. According to ancient legend, Zeus and Hermes once visited the Phrygian hill country disguised as ordinary men. They were turned away by from a thousand homes where they sought lodging, but were finally taken in by an elderly couple into their humble home. The gods turned that house into a temple and destroyed all the houses that had rejected them (NIV, 398).

In the OT and Judaism, the tearing of garments indicated that a blasphemy had been uttered against God.

Shouting

Paul and Barnabas could not understand what was being said by the people since they were shouting “in the Lycaonian language” (NIV, 398).

Just like you—literally of “like passions.” They are no different than anyone in the crowd, simply being creatures of the Creator God (ECNT, 477).

Paul’s message is that they are to change orientation from vain and dead idols to the God who lives and is the creator of heaven and earth and everything in them (ECNT, 477).

Turn

Conversation involves turning away from every alternative object of devotion and turning ‘to the living God’ who created everything.

Idolatry is condemned in Scripture because it ‘diminishes the divine to human size and makes God dependent on human actions and subject to human control’ (Peterson, 409).

16 In past generations he allowed all the nations to go their own way, 17 although he did not leave himself without a witness, since he did what is good by giving you rain from heaven and fruitful seasons and filling you with food and your hearts with joy.” 18 Even though they said these things, they barely stopped the crowds from sacrificing to them.

In past

He is not claiming that their ignorance and rebellion were ignored by God and without consequence. Since, in biblical teaching, his involvement in the life of Israel was for blessing and salvation (Peterson, 410).

15-17 is a speech summary (ECNT, 477).

Both this speech and the longer one in Athens show careful reflection on the problem of approaching Gentiles who do not share the biblical story nor Judaism's belief in one God, major premises for other speeches in Acts (Peterson, 409).

God did not give them direct or special revelation, but they were not without witness altogether for the kindness or blessing of rain from heaven and the granting of crops in due season (BW3, 427).

The daily experience of God's kindness in the created order should teach us to thank him and honour him as God (ECNT, 411).

Acts 14:19 Some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and when they won over the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, thinking he was dead. **20** After the disciples gathered around him, he got up and went into the town. The next day he left with Barnabas for Derbe.

Some time has passed between v. 18 and v.19.

The antagonism of these Jews can be measured by the fact that they travelled more than a hundred miles to oppose the missionaries and were unimpressed by any attempt to turn the pagans of Lystra to the worship of the God of Scripture (Peterson, 411).

The pain of being wounded and humiliated does not dampen enthusiasm for the mission God has given them (NIV, 399).

Are we to think that the new converts (here called disciples) prayed and/or laid hands on Paul and his wounds were healed or only that they surrounded and protected his body from further abuse (BW3, 427)?

Derbe is a little more than thirty-five miles southeast of Lystra and so a few days journey by foot. It is on the frontier with Galatia (ECNT, 479).

Acts 14:21 After they had preached the gospel in that town and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, to Iconium, and to Antioch, **22** strengthening the disciples by encouraging them to continue in the faith and by telling them, "It is necessary to go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God." **23** When they had appointed elders for them in every church and prayed with fasting, they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

In sum, an effort to share the gospel divides a community. In Gentile areas, idolatry will be a powerful force against embracing the Gospel sometimes the nature of opposition means that it is time to move on and trust that those ministered to and responding have the strength to remain faithful (ECNT, 479).

Illustrations

C.S. Lewis the Ring

Application

If God showed favoritism you and I would never be his.