

Text: Acts 13:1-3, Title: A Church on the Move, Date/Place: The Road, 4.27.17, AM

A. **Opening illustration: a catcher in baseball throwing out a runner at second—one smooth motion...**

B. Background to passage: This is such a turning point in the book of Acts. From here on out, the book will focus upon the one thing that happens in this passage. God sends his first missionaries (whose lives are chronicled for us) to leave the mainland of Israel and the coastlands north of it and head for the rest of the Mediterranean world. With the exception of the Jerusalem council, Paul's four missionary journeys form the remainder of the book, and the story of the early church, complemented by the scattered details in the letters, stand for us as the testimony of how God grew his church, and turned the world upside down with 11 Jewish fisherman, political radicals, tax collectors, and such. God wants to move us forward as a church.

C. Speak a little about the five teachers at Antioch

D. Main thought: Three qualities of a church that is being used by God.

A. **Seeking Church (v. 1-2)**

1. The word used for worshipping is a word that can encompass all aspects of worship, sacrifices and offerings, priestly temple service, personal prayer and song. Here in this text, its meaning is probably more specifically prayer, since it is coupled with fasting. A common theme for Luke all through his gospel, and all throughout the book of Acts is prayer. The phrases, words, and concepts in the two amount to over 40% of those instances in the NT. It was presented as a constant in Jesus' life, often before and after major miracles, teaching, or ministry. The only parables specifically related to prayer are found in Luke—The Friend at Midnight, The Unjust Judge, and The Publican And The Pharisee—elaborate on those parables a little for those that may not be as familiar.
2. Fasting in the NT is presented as an expectation of Jesus, following his ministry. He assumes/teaches that disciples will fast, just as they are to give, and to pray in the Sermon on the Mount. Speak a little about what fasting is not—designed for hypocrisy, pride, or superstition. In the OT, there are many apparent uses/motivations behind fasting, but in this passage it's probably doing two things, strengthening prayer, and seeking guidance.
3. Argumentation
4. **Illustration:** "Jesus takes for granted that His disciples will observe the pious custom of fasting. Strict exercise of self-control is an essential feature of the Christian's life. Such customs have only one purpose—to make the disciples more ready and cheerful to accomplish those things which God would have done." Dietrich Bonhoeffer
5. We could speak more on fasting and prayer, and spend lots of time ladening you with extreme conviction and guilt for our lack of it, but I would rather get to the heart of the problem. The question that I want to pose for you is: are we hungry for God. This was a church in pursuit of God. It was a church awaiting the ball, already turning the shoulder. It was a church eyes behind and in the air looking for that floating pass. This was the church going to the garden every day to see if the seeds planted were breaking through the surface. Have we been, are we now, a church hungry for God? Do we really want to see him move? Are we content with going through the Sunday morning routines as our reasonable service? If we are not, it is because our hearts are allured by earthly things. We are counseled in Colossians to set our eyes on the things above, and if we are gathering and not seeking the face of God, not pleading with him to work, not pleading with him for the leadership of the Holy Spirit that we may know and accomplish all things, then we have a heart problem, and the gospel is it's only solution. Would you say that we are that church with the callous passivity, or the one who is seeking the Lord like a man in a desert with no water? If the former, we are doing far more damage than we realize.

B. Sensing Church (v. 2)

1. During this time of seeking the face of God, the Holy Spirit spoke. Next point. We gloss over similar statements, because we don't know what to make of them, because it makes us nervous, because we never have this experience, or because we never have the expectation. The UCC church in Maine is an ultra-liberal denomination that doesn't even remotely qualify as a gospel preaching church, but their slogan while we were there was, "God Still Speaks." I am not sure what they meant, but biblically they are correct, God does still speak. The Holy Spirit was clear, the church was listening, and they discerned what God was saying, and because of that, the gospel exploded throughout the Mediterranean world, changing world history forever.
2. Argumentation
3. **Illustration:** It's kinda like when I am watching something on TV. I am usually all-in, focused on what the idiot box is saying. And suddenly I hear Erika ask if I heard what she said. Sitting in the same room, I do not hear, because I am not listening. Of course then comes the "you didn't hear a word I said" look, either followed with rolling of eyes, repeating herself, or more explicit expressions of frustration, Piper's speaking of solemn, joyous, reverent EXPECTATION in their weekly worship
4. We come to gather with God's people, to hear God's word, but don't expect God to speak. One concern in many of our churches is overly manipulative, emotionally charged altar calls. I wonder sometimes how often God desires to use his churches to do many great things, and he speaks, but we don't hear. This is not a knock on his sovereignty. Jesus did not do many miracles in Nazareth because of their unbelief. What doesn't get accomplished through The Road because we have not been intentionally listening and attempting to discern the leading of the Holy Spirit? Part of our union with Christ, is that we have the Holy Spirit living inside of us. We are not crippled in our resources or connection, but our shortcoming is lack of intentional anticipation, that God will speak. He will lead. Different ways at different times. Have we allowed the noise of our Christian subculture, the world, our own flesh/mind, and Satan distort our worship to the point where we don't hear God? The rescue is the gospel. The expression of the cross, and the message of the gospel are the greatest example of speech from God to man. The bible is his word preserved. If these two things are true, why would he not want to continue to speak, lead, guide.

C. Sending Church (v. 3)

1. Jesus asked the disciples why they called him Lord if they did not do what he said. The church here at Antioch was willing to do what God instructed them to do. According to the text, it was a work that God had already ordained them to, so really the church is affirming it publically. Note however, that the church sent its best. They didn't send the people that they wanted to get rid of. Why? They were not concerned about church preference and comfort and pleasure, but about obedience and the kingdom. The church would experience the pain of losing a teacher they loved, but the gospel would spread to the ends of the earth. Good testimony that the church was not tied upon a man, or a charismatic personality. The members of the church were committed to God through the bride, not to their favorite preacher. They set aside, or ordained and laid hands on and prayed.
2. Argumentation
3. **Illustration:** The Summit's practice of training church planting interns,
4. The obedience of this church transformed world history. They sent the first intentional missionaries. So what about us? Are we prepared to send the best? Are we willing to go to the hard places with the gospel? You may say, as I may have said, we are too small to do too much. **Tell them about Scott Dollar's church in Alberta; tell about the work at NR, tell about the work in Maine.** There is no reason that we can't be a sending church. When God speaks, we listen and obey, and missions happens. We should expect God to speak about mission and the furtherance of his gospel—no brainer right? So we should examine way, preemptively on responding to the leading that we know is coming!

A. Closing illustration:

B. Recap

C. Invitation to commitment

Luke's Gospel also has more to say about prayer than either Mark or Matthew. Luke develops this theme through 1) his retention (9:16; 19:46; 20:47; 22:19) or expansion (22:40-42) of Mark's tradition, 2) editorial insertions into Markan material (3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 28-29; 22:32, 44; 23:34, 46), and 3) the use of additional sources, whether "Q" or "L" (1:10; 10:21-24; 11:1-4, 5-8, 9-13; 18:1-8, 9-14; 24:30). Naturally, the story of apostolic mission and church expansion in Acts also contains numerous references to prayer (1:14; 2:42; 4:24-31; 6:4, 6; 7:59-60; 8:14-17, 22-24; 9:11; 10:2, 9, 30; 11:5; 12:5, 12; 13:3; 14:23; 16:13, 25; 20:36; 21:5; 22:17; 26:29).

Luke-Acts emphasizes several distinctive features in its theology of prayer.

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First, Jesus is presented as the ideal man of prayer; the one who perfectly models and teaches what it means to be intimate with and to obey the Father (3:21-22; 4:42; 5:16; 11:1-4; 22:31-32, 39-46). Second, the direction and success of Jesus' ministry is due in large part to his own prayerfulness. He learns how to proceed in God's will as he prays, experiencing the divine Fatherhood and exploring his own Sonship (3:21-22; 5:16; 6:12-16; 10:21-22). Third, Jesus' intercessory prayers are essential to the disciple's understanding of Christ's true identity; Jesus' petitions overcome his followers' spiritual blindness (9:18-22, 28-36; 10:21-22). Fourth, Jesus prays for his people, not only during his earthly ministry, but also from his heavenly throne; his ongoing prayers secure the disciples against evil and foster spiritual longevity (Acts 7:56-60). Fifth, because the church and its leaders in Acts follow Jesus' model and apply his teaching, they too experience the Spirit's illumination, empowerment, guidance, and preservation. Persistent prayer sensitizes disciples to the ways of God, facilitating their participation in Christ's work in this world (Lk 18:1-8; Acts 1:14; 2:1, 42; 4:23-31; 9:11-12; 10:1-10)