

SERMON DISCUSSION

QUESTIONS

JULY 11, 2021

Acts: The Kingdom Advances – It Is Worth It

Pastor Connor Neigenfind

WARM-UP

1. Have you had an experience in life where your circumstances were a mixed bag of highs and lows – great times combined with trials or challenges, sometimes to the extreme? If so, share that experience(s) with the group and describe what each element or angle of your experience meant to the overall outcome, or even to the purpose of what you experienced. Did it change your life, or direction, or plans? If so, how? Was God involved? If so, how?

DIGGING DEEPER

Today, Pastor Connor continues his preaching series on the New Testament Book, The Acts of the Apostles. In this message, Connor explores the story of the first missionary journey of the Apostle Paul and his coworker Barnabas in Chapters 13 and 14. This first journey wouldn't be the last, but the pattern that Luke records in Acts seems to be a recurrent theme of good times (exceptional and miraculous in some cases) contrasted or followed by tough times, some nearly to the brink of death, and yet followed once again by good times. How can this be, for these early followers of Jesus and leaders of the fledgling church? Let's dig in to see what this first journey tells us about our own walk with the Lord.

THE JOURNEY – FOR HIS GLORY – Read: Selected Acts 13 and 14 Passages

2. As Pastor Connor surveyed across this story of the first missionary journey, he shared these verses to contrast and reveal 'the good and the bad' – 'the wonderful and the tragic' – 'the highs and the lows' Let's explore them again together: Read Acts 13:6-10; 11-12; 42-44; 45-46; 48-49; 50; 52; 14:1; 2; 3; 5-6; 8-10; 19; 20-22a and 23. What picture do these experiences paint for you in the life and times of Paul and Barnabas in this first journey – what particularly stands out? How does Paul himself describe it in Acts 14:22b? What does Paul mean by this?
3. How do we make sense of some of the extreme suffering and outright persecution of these two early evangelists? After all, wasn't this all according to God's plan? Have you asked yourself that same question at times in your faith journey? If so, and you are willing, please share with the others.

THE REPORT – FOR HIS GLORY – Read: Acts 14:24-28

4. What is significant about Paul and Barnabas concluding this first journey by returning to Antioch? What does this tell us about our faith journey and our local church family? Why is this significant?
5. In verse 27, how does Luke specifically record their report to the church? What is significant about their report? And what does this tell us about the 'highs and lows' of their two-year experience – do you think they thought 'it was worth it'? Why?

THE APPROACH – FOR HIS GLORY – Read: Romans 8:26-28

6. Connor said that what this first missionary journey teaches us is that in our lives, things are neither purely good or purely bad, but often a mix of the two, often within the same experience or event. Does this ring true in your life? And further, that as believers particularly, we will experience bad things – temptation, oppression, opposition, persecution, suffering, pain – and what are we to make of it all as followers of Jesus? Connor framed it for us this way – “How much is knowing God intimately and being used by Him greatly, worth it to you?” – knowing that there is a cost? How do you respond to Connor’s question?
7. The simplified question, then, that we have to ask and answer, is, ‘Is it worth it’? And let’s be completely clear – in this case, what is the first ‘it’? And what is the second ‘it’? Read 2 Corinthians 11:21b-28 – this is Paul’s description of the first ‘it’ in his life as a follower of Jesus – but notice how then he frames this in the Romans 8:26-28 passage – do you see the second ‘it’? And what does Paul say in the Romans passage is the ‘operative approach’ or mechanism in all of this? So again, we come back to the core question – ‘Is it worth it’? Paul tells us, with faith and conviction, a resounding, “Yes! of course” – Read Romans 8:18 for his summary conclusion – what does Paul say? Do you agree?
8. And Connor, as well, said, “Yes! of course”, even when it’s hard to see or endure. For perspective on this answer, he shared a quote from Pastor Hugh Halter: “God created us to come alive and truly grow deep when we are waisted deep in the things He cares about. If you want a ‘safe faith’, you will never really know God because He doesn’t hang out in the shallow end much.” What is Pastor Halter saying here? Does this ring true for you? Connor concluded by saying that ironically, as a believer, you can actually choose to be ‘safe’, but by doing so, you will miss out on all that God, through Jesus, has in store for your life – and He wants you to have it all! Do you see this? Do you believe this?

PRAYER

Connor concluded his message by offering three prayers for those assembled and online – a prayer for those who believe Jesus as their Savior and the eternity of that belief, but who have not yet fully embraced Jesus as Lord of their life now, and need His Lordship. The second prayer is for those who have Jesus as Savior and Lord of their lives, but who are in a season of challenge, of suffering, of pain, and need relief and comfort and joy. And the final prayer is for those who have not yet come to know Jesus, who haven’t said ‘Yes’ to Him, and are ready to make that decision for their lives. As you pray over this message, pray the prayer (or prayers) that Connor has given to us to place Jesus in your life right where He needs to be – He is ready! And through the Holy Spirit, rely on His leading, comfort and joy to be all that you need, in both tough and good times in your life. And, as always, pray that the Holy Spirit would give you ears to hear, eyes to see, and hearts to respond to His call to you, in order to be His hands, feet and heart in this world.

In case you missed the service, here are the EAC, Facebook, and YouTube links:

edgewateralliance.org/watch-now

facebook.com/edgewateralliance/

youtube.com/channel/UCWvQTWUv1FD_qsUJUZn93kw