



Sermon Text: Acts 11:19-30

Sermon Date: March 11, 2018

In our passage, Luke turns his attention to the historic ministry of the church in Antioch. On Sunday we saw four new things that happened in our passage.

A NEW MISSION – vv. 19-21

Some of the Jewish Christians who were displaced from the persecution of Acts 8:1 travel to Antioch where they begin to preach the gospel to pagan Gentiles. Up until this point, in the few occasions the gospel reached beyond the Jews, it reached a group or a person who was connected to Judaism. But now the gospel is being preached to Gentiles who have no connection to Judaism at all—they are completely “unchurched,” so to speak. In the massive city of Antioch, ordinary, unnamed Christians believed the gospel enough to share it over and over again in the midst of their everyday life, and *“the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord.”*

A NEW INVESTIGATION – vv. 22-26

News reaches the church in Jerusalem and they send Barnabas—“Son of Encouragement”—to investigate. He comes, sees God’s grace, rejoices, and encourages these new Christians to focus on Jesus and make him everything. As a result, the church continues to grow. In response to the growth, Barnabas recognizes his need for help and goes to Tarsus to recruit Saul. Their unique ministry gifts complemented one another beautifully and resulted in a powerful ministry partnership.

A NEW NAME – v. 26

Luke tells us “in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.” In a sprawling city where it would have been easy to blend in, they stood out because of their singular devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ. Kent Hughes says, “Christ was so much on these believers’ lips, they lived so like Christ, that no other name would do.” They were Christians first before anything else in their lives. Their identity was fully rooted in belonging to Jesus Christ. If we were to interview your co-workers and neighbors, how would they describe you? If they had to pick a single term to define you, would it be “Christian?”

A NEW MINISTRY – vv. 27-30

Sometime later the church at Antioch receives a Spirit-inspired prophecy about a famine that will profoundly affect the church in Judea. In response, they collected money and sent a gift to the church in Jerusalem. Boice says, “As far as I know, this is the first charitable act of this nature in all recorded history—one race of people collecting money to help another people. No wonder they were called Christians first at Antioch.” Luke reveals that the church in Antioch isn’t simply growing numerically, but growing in maturity also. David Peterson says, “Church growth is shown to be a matter of maturation, not simply numerical increase, and an important sign of maturation is generosity in giving to believers in need.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What stood out to you from the sermon and the biblical text from this Sunday?
2. What are some things you assume are necessary for a church to grow? How does our text challenge those assumptions? What does this passage show us is needed?
3. If we were to interview your co-workers and neighbors (people who know you), how would they describe you? What would you want their #1 description to be?
4. What are some ways you can follow Barnabas’ example by being an encourager?