The Church that God Uses

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 19 August 2020

Preacher: Mike Scrivani

[0:00] Amen. Good to see you all. Glad you're here. It's good for me to be back. I appreciate Tom standing in last Wednesday and finishing out chapter 10.

! Did a good job. If you hadn't heard that study, I encourage you to go back and listen to it. And it's also good that I know last week we encountered an issue with our air conditioner, and so it's good to be back in our sanctuary with air conditioning.
Obviously, that issue has been rectified, so I know we're kind of wimps over here, but thank God for air conditioning, right? Acts chapter 11, and tonight's study will cover, well, the whole chapter. At least, that's the hope.
And so, I'm going to read that. If you want to follow along with me in Acts chapter 11, it says there, Now the apostles and the brothers who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God.
So when Peter went to Jerusalem, the circumcision party criticized him, saying, You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them. But Peter began and explained it to them in order.
[1:23] I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision, something like a great sheet descending, being let down from heaven by its four corners, and it came down to me. Looking at it closely, I observed animals and beasts of prey and reptiles and birds of the air.

And I heard a voice saying to me, Rise, Peter, kill and eat. But I said, By no means, Lord, for nothing common or unclean has ever entered my mouth. But the voice answered a second time from heaven, What God has made clean, do not call common.
This happened three times, and all was drawn up again into heaven. And behold, at that very moment, three men arrived at the house in which we were, sent to me from Caesarea.
And the Spirit told me to go with them, making no distinction. These six brothers also accompanied me, and we entered the man's house. And he told us how he had seen the angels stand in his house and say, Send to Joppa and bring Simon, who is called Peter.
He will declare to you a message by which you will be saved, you and all your household. As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on him, just as on us at the beginning.
[2:34] And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit. If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?

When they heard these things, they fell silent, and they glorified God, saying, Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life. Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews.
But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord.
The report of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose, for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith.
And a great many people were added to the Lord. So Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people.
[3:52] And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians. Now in these days prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch, and one of them named Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

This took place in the days of Claudius. So the disciples determined everyone, according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea, and they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.
So we know that word travels fast, and sometimes it seems that in churches it travels faster than in other places.
We know that today as a result of the internet, word travels quickly, more quickly than it ever has before. It used to take days, maybe weeks, even months, even sometimes years, for news to travel from one side of the world to the other.
But today we almost know instantly whenever something major has happened in our world, whether that's in a nation close by, on our side of the earth, or all the way across the world.
[5:04] We know within moments of its happening what has happened, and we know many of the details because word travels so quickly. And so here we see that word has traveled quickly back to the church in Jerusalem that the hated Gentiles had, in fact, received the Holy Spirit, and as a result of that were incorporated into the church.

The news arrived in Jerusalem, actually, before Peter himself did, since, remember, he stayed in Caesarea for a few days there with them. And so when the news got to them, it sent shockwaves throughout that Christian community who, again, were of Jewish descent.
The event was so significant, in fact, that Luke, the human author of this book, though inspired by the Holy Spirit, repeats the account of what happened in chapter 10, here in chapter 11 as well.
Peter is then able, once he gets there, to clarify and testify to the offense that had unfolded in Cornelius' house, and demonstrated that the church's outreach to the Gentiles was the next crucial step in God's redemptive plan.
As we have been blessed to experience today. Amen? This is a room, as far as I know, full of Gentiles, who have been saved by the grace of God through Jesus Christ.
[6:38] And so now, no doubt, you are thankful, I hope, to be included in the body of Christ, and for those to whom the Lord has sent to you, with the good news of Jesus Christ, his life, and his death, and his resurrection.

So, again, we pick up in chapter 11 with Peter's return to Jerusalem, where he is going to give a report to the Jewish believers, his brothers and sisters in Christ, of what had happened that day in Cornelius' house.
I think he realizes that it was difficult for him, as difficult as it was for him, I should say, to accept that God would bring the Gentiles into the body of Christ, so he understands that it was difficult for these Jewish believers to receive, and to hear this news as well, that the Gentiles had received the Holy Spirit.
And so, again, likewise, they would have struggled with that truth. It's not an easy thing, or it wasn't an easy thing for them to handle and fully grasp at the time, because they were still of the mind at that time that Gentiles were the outsiders.
Gentiles were the ones who were on the outside of God's people. But now they're learning that God had other plans. And so the main idea for our study tonight, if you have your handout, is this.
[8:08] The church that God uses will be characterized by the right attitude, experience the right kind of growth, and be busy about doing the right kind of work for the glory and honor of Jesus' name.

And so that's what we'll see here through chapter 11. I'll say that again. The church that God uses will be characterized by the right attitude, experience the right kind of growth, and be busy about doing the right kind of work for the glory and honor of Jesus' name.
So again, Peter arrives in Jerusalem, discovers that before he could get there to give his report, to break this news to them, that now, all of a sudden, he's got to take a defensive posture, because people have heard it, and they've got questions, and some of them don't like what they've heard.
So I think of it like football. You know, if you're on offense, and the quarterback throws an interception, all of a sudden, you're on defense. You know, we went from trying to score a touchdown, and not getting tackled, to now we're trying to tackle, and not let the other team score a touchdown.
So I almost feel like Peter has to switch so quickly from, I'm going to give this wonderful news, to now they've heard it, they haven't understood it, and now I've got to go into a defensive mode to testify and to bear witness that what has happened is of God and is a good thing.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

[9:32] And so, first of all, we see that for the church that God uses, they must have the right attitude, the right attitude. That comes from verses 1 through 18.

And so when Peter gets there, and again, the news has already arrived in Jerusalem, in verse 3, we see that some people said to him, you went to uncircumcised men and ate with them.
Right? They are upset. They're calling him out right away. No, hey, Peter, welcome back. Good to see you, brother. You went and you ate with uncircumcised men.
What's going on? So we understand from that culture, that time period, that eating with non-Jews for a Jew was a clear violation of the ceremonial law because Gentiles did not follow the dietary laws of the Old Testament, nor did they follow through with the ceremonial washings that the Jews had in place and so they were viewed by the Jews as being an unclean people.
They didn't like the crowd that he had been hanging with. Similarly, we see with Jesus in Matthew 9, verse 11, remember the Pharisees and the scribes expressed their same kind of indignation with Christ to his disciples by saying to them, why does your teacher eat with tax collector and sinners?
[11:06] And so this is the same kind of attitude, the same kind of prejudice that our Lord encountered, now Peter and others in that early church were encountering as well. Made me think of a time when, as a youth pastor, first church I was a youth pastor at, we would take our teens downtown, Kansas City, there was a shelter there for homeless people, and it was inside a church and they had a thrift store inside that, you know, they would sell clothes and they would give those proceeds to help benefit the homeless people there.

One of the things they did as well is that they would feed them and so what we would do typically is we would go help in the thrift store, it was a mess, and so we'd just try to put things in order by folding clothes and doing just whatever they needed us to do.
And then we would go eat lunch in the cafeteria area where all the homeless people were being fed. It just so happened that on that day that the church that was providing the meal for the homeless people was our church.
We didn't know, but it was our church. And so, you know, for me I thought it was important, a lesson that I had learned is that when you do these things, it's good for our teens, have them sit with the people who they're serving and have them talk with them and, you know, ultimately want to share the gospel with them, right?
And so I encouraged them to do that and I remember one of the ladies who was with our church providing that meal came out of the kitchen because they wouldn't, I mean, you know, they stayed back there, came out and kind of got in my face and said, why are you letting them sit with these people?
[12:49] And I just, you know, was so shocked at first and then had to, you know, explain why that was important as Christians for us to, not just to serve, but, you know, why are we serving?

We want to share the gospel with these people and not be afraid of associating with them. Why would we be afraid of that? And so that's the attitude that exists here within some of the Jews in Jerusalem when they confront Peter and scripture gives them, this group, the title of the circumcision party.
And so again, they confront Peter with this question. These were a group of Jews who believed that the only way that you could become a Christian, truly be a Christian, was that you had to be a Jew first.
Be a Jew, be circumcised, then you can be a Christian. That's how things worked in their minds. It'd be similar if we said something like, well, in order to be a member of Highland Park Baptist Church, you've got to earn that red shirt, right?
You've got to be out at one of our engage events. You've got to get that shirt. You know, we don't care if you've been baptized before. We're going to baptize you again. And we give them all these different things and then we say, okay, now you've passed the test or whatever the case may be.
[14:12] And so, to them, this is what they thought. Their position is summarized in Acts chapter 15, verse 5, where at the Jerusalem Council, where this very issue was debated, there it says that, but some believers, again, this circumcision party who belonged to the party of the Pharisees, rose up and said, it is necessary to circumcise them and to order them to keep the law of Moses.

So, this was their opinion. You become a Jew and then you become a Christian. They were upset that their Jewish heritage and tradition was being threatened by these new Gentile converts.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

They thought that the converted Gentiles, again, must be brought into Judaism through circumcision in order to preserve all of that. But at that council, if you remember, and, you know, eventually we'll get there, Paul spoke up and recognized that forcing Gentiles to be circumcised might make them think that salvation must be earned through keeping God's law, which obscured the freedom of God's grace and the sufficiency of Christ's cross to save us, right?
That's a work. That's not the way salvation works. It's of grace in faith in Jesus Christ. And so, when we think of that, I think that we should ask ourselves some questions, right?
One of those would be, are there ways in which Christians today act like the circumcision party did back then? Are there some attitudes that we have when we see new people walk through our doors?
[15:57] Do we view them as, are we joyful to think, okay, you know, I'm excited that God has brought somebody to our church to worship with us today?

Or do we have the attitude of, who are these strangers? Who are these strange people? New members, we may think, we may be tempted to think, well, they might change the status quo.
We could be and feel threatened if, you know, well, these new people, maybe they are going to want to take my spot and I don't want to have my spot taken. Or we could be tempted to think as well, well, maybe they're not going to appreciate our past and our heritage that we cherish.
Any of these things can be something that causes us to have the wrong attitude, to kind of mirror this circumcision party.
Again, I once had a deacon in my church who I loved, that man, and he's with the Lord now. But as our little church was starting to grow and fill our little building, in one of our meetings, I remember we were talking about how to accommodate for this growth and I was surprised by what he said.
[17:17] He said, you know, basically, if we get to this number and he said it, he said, I'm out of here. And we thought, well, we love you, you know, we're not going to let you go. But in his mind, you know, it was going to be filled with strange people that he didn't know and it was going to make him too uncomfortable, I guess.

So anyhow, we can get that way and we need to be careful about that. So again, Peter's being hassled right off the bat by these legalists. They were like a wet towel.
You ever try to dry off with a wet towel? It doesn't work quite so well, does it? And so Peter was excited, I think, excited to come, excited to report the workings of God now in this Gentile community that they had been saved, that they had received the Holy Spirit just as they had.
And what these people were doing is they were really trying to, like a wet towel, just dampen that fire, attempting to put it out. But notice how Peter responds to them. He provides us in his response with an example of how we should likewise confront legalistic attitudes in the church.
What does he do? He recites the facts. He says, this is what happened. This is what God said. This is what God commanded me to do. This is what I witnessed.
[18:38] And so in a similar way, today we point back to Scripture. What does God's Word say about this? How should we feel about this? How should we respond in this?

Well, we allow God's Word to teach us and to tell us and to command us how we should act and feel and respond to different things that are going on.
And we always allow God's Word to have the final say. The final say. And that's what he's really doing in verses 4 through 18. He's telling what happened in chapter 10.
Almost verbatim, this is what happened. And I think he's kind of saying, I was there and you weren't there. You know, I saw the vision. You didn't. I heard the voice. You didn't.
He doesn't come right out and say that, but he's just saying, this is what God did. This is what I witnessed. And he's telling them what all he saw.
[19:36] And so we also know here, or should understand, whenever God repeats something in his Word, especially when he repeats something soon after he's just said it or stated it, it reveals that that statement is very important.

Scripture, as we know, was first written on large scrolls that you would, you know, unravel. And that's how you would read them. The longest one that has been found was around 35 feet long. That's a pretty large scroll. Well, considering the fact that Acts has 28 chapters, this is not a small book, from a human standpoint, Luke then had a limited amount of space to write in.
And again, all of his words are inspired by the Holy Spirit. All of the words that he records are God's words for us. But again, we have to understand that, you know, there wasn't a whole lot of space.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

And we know that in some cases, not everything was put in. Of all the things that we could tell you about what we saw and witnessed Jesus do. All the scrolls in the world couldn't contain all of that.
[20:47] So, if you would think maybe that you would want to conserve space, maybe don't repeat things verbatim. So, but since this is repeated verbatim, it must be very important.

There's a reason for that. I know for me personally, my sermons are usually between six to seven pages in length. Sometimes, you know, they are longer than that.
But, but I try and, I try to keep them about that length. And if they go a little bit longer, then I've got to go back through and think, okay, is this, this might be okay, this might be good, but is it essential to the message?
And so, you've got to cut some things out that aren't as important. But again, the Bible is God's word inspired by his spirit. So, whatever he's putting in it is essential for us.
Each and every verse is essential. So, the fact that Luke repeats the events of Cornelius' house verbatim, instead of using maybe a couple of sentences to summarize Peter's report to the Christians in Jerusalem about the inclusion of the Gentiles into the body of Christ, God, that reveals that this was a milestone moment for the church.
[22:01] This was a big deal. That's why it's there written twice for us. It reveals, again, I think, how strong the prejudice was of the Jews towards the Gentiles.

And again, how important it was to God that that prejudice be shattered and done away with completely. The Gentiles should not be viewed as second-class church members by the Jews. That idea had to go. And so, they had to have the right attitude in order for them to be actively engaged in the Great Commission. And Jesus told them, go to the ends of the world.
Right? And so, we know that the ends of the world included many, many Gentiles. So, again, Peter displays the right attitude in confronting the issues in the church.
As I've already mentioned, he did that by stating the facts. That's reflecting the right attitude. But notice how he didn't answer their questions or their confronting him.
[23:07] Notice what he didn't do. First of all, he didn't pull rank on them. He didn't say something like, well, do you know who I am? I'm Peter, one of the twelve disciples, one of the inner three, Jesus' closest circle of disciples.

Did you realize that that's me? Do you realize that I'm the one who preached on the day of Pentecost? That was me if you hadn't forgotten? And so, he certainly had rank to pull, but he chose not to do that.
And he didn't do that because doing so irritates people, doesn't it? Peter had taken six people with him to Cornelius' house.
And he recites in verse 15 that as he began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning. And I remember the word of the Lord, he says, how he said, John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.
So, Peter, in giving his defense defense of the Gentiles' believers' inclusion in the church, states first that he had brought with him other witnesses as well who could verify his testimony.
[24:26] And second, that he, what he had experienced, again, matched what Jesus said would happen, what God's word said would happen. This reveals to us that having the right attitude in the church also entails that our experiences match Scripture.

Often, I've heard, maybe you've heard people say something along the lines of, well, God told me this or God told me to do this or maybe they've said I've had a dream and they believe that that dream was a message from God for them or for somebody else or for their church.
And not to say that God doesn't still speak in those ways but that you better make sure that whatever you witnessed in your dream matches what God's word says, right?
So we've got to be very careful whenever we say things like, well, God told me this because when you're doing that automatically, I mean, you're putting yourself in a pretty important position, aren't you?
And so we know that sometimes, unfortunately, people will misuse that. They haven't really heard from God. You know, really it's maybe a voice they've imagined in their head.
[25:43] This is what I wish God would have told me to say or to do and so they convince themselves and try to convince others. Peter presents them with all this evidence and so again, they couldn't really argue with him.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

They couldn't argue with the testimony of the reputable witnesses who he had brought along with them nor with the words of Jesus Christ who said that this would happen. And so we see that Peter builds his defense based upon the word of Christ.
So again, having the right attitude in the church must be based upon the word of Christ. The right attitude is it makes for a useful church to God.
People who aren't prejudiced, people who are trusting in God's word, who are believing in God's word, who are walking in line with God's word and encouraging others to do the same.
Second, we see the right growth in verses 18 through 26. I know I kind of skipped through 1 through 18 but again, because we've covered them extensively in chapter 10, all the events that happened in Cornelius' house.
[26:51] So second, the right growth. The result of Peter's report in Jerusalem served as a shot in the arm to the church as they then intensified their outreach to the Gentiles.

They understood now that salvation was for Gentiles too, that they needed to be going out. They needed to be sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with pagans, with Gentiles, with these ones who they once thought were on the outside.
As the prejudice towards the Gentiles came crumbling down, verse 18 serves as a catalyst in church history. They finally admitted that Gentiles could be saved. Church historians say that it had been at least seven years at this point from the day of Pentecost to now here in Acts 11, the founding of the church in Antioch.
So almost seven years have gone by until they finally make this statement, realizing or expressing their realization that Gentiles can and should be saved too.
And so they begin to move out. They begin to intensify their evangelistic efforts to these people whom many of them once despised. The apostles had been used to establish the church to solidify its doctrine during that seven year time period and then also to equip other believers for service.
[28:22] And we've seen that the church as a result of all of that has grown. But now it's really, truly about to grow and to spread like it hadn't before.

I believe that this church has been blessed with great Bible teachers. Speaking of Highland Park Baptist Church, this church has been blessed and it's 90, almost 90.
Somebody know? Anybody been here for 90 years from the founding? I think it's 90. It's close to 90, I want to say. It's out on the wall out there.
Somebody needs to look at that after church. Maybe it should be me since I brought it up, right? But church has been around for a long time, this church, let's just say. And in that time, God has blessed this church with great Bible preachers, teachers, who have preached through books of the Bible.
And one of the major benefits we know of preaching through God's Word book by book and chapter by chapter and verse by verse is that it builds and it frames a church's doctrine.
[29:28] And doctrines are basically principles. And they are the principles that guide us and that govern us as a church.

And they are doctrines, principles that are rooted in Scripture. So hopefully, if you have a copy of our bylaws, and I'm sure you all know it forwards and backwards, right, and you look at what we believe and how our church is governed, you know, you'll see a lot of Scripture references and why are they there?
Because we are attempting and wanting to do things according to what God's Word says. That's important. Now the danger though in this can be that having such a high view of the Scripture and doctrines that we have gleaned from Scripture is that we can, if we're not careful, become something of theological snobs or theological slobs, right?
We don't want to be snobs, we don't want to be slobs. And we think of the Ephesian church in Revelation. Remember what the Lord had against them, that they had lost their first love.
They had all the right doctrine and the right teaching, they loved God's Word, but they had forgotten their first love. And they'd failed to put their doctrines, it seems, into everyday practice in their own lives.
[30:52] And so my hope in my prayer, as I hope it's your hope in your prayer, is that when people come here, that they grow here, that they grow in their knowledge of God's Word, that they grow in maturity and becoming more like Jesus Christ.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

So that as a result of that, they can better share the gospel, they can better help others to grow, that they would be disciples who God uses to make other disciples.
Along with that, I also pray that our children and youth would grow very much spiritually here. We know how important that is for younger people, especially in the world, that they're entering into when they become adults.
And so my hope, and I hope that it's your hope as well, is that we want to prepare them when they're here and help them to grow here, be used by the Lord to help them grow here so that when they enter into adulthood, you know, and we know that they're not all going to stay around here in Bartlesville.
I know we would like to keep them all here, but as they go out to college, if that's what they do, or out into the workforce, they move out of our city and they even move into other states, maybe even other countries, that we're sending them and they're mature and they're going into churches and they're continuing to do the same.
[32:14] They're continuing to worship. They're continuing to be disciples who make disciples. They're making the churches that they leave from here to go to strong churches that are adamant that the Word of God is the Word of God.

That's the kind of growth that we should pray for and aspire, I think, to see God using us to make disciples and then our sending disciples, our equipping them.
You know, wherever, you know, you're transferred from work, you know, I hope to see young people called to ministry here, called to the mission field here and that God would use our church to prepare them and equip them for that so as they go, they are disciple makers who are strong in their knowledge of God's Word and in the faith.
God using us here to make disciples who make disciples. But, that's the good kind of growth, but we know that there's a kind of growth that churches experience and in some cases even attempt to cultivate that truthfully is really sheep stealing.
People leave churches for good reasons and if they leave one church in town to go to another church has been the case I know for our church, I know one thing that I like to do and other pastors do think is essential is try to figure out why is that because sometimes people are leaving their church for all the wrong reasons.
[33:49] One of those reasons being that they like to follow a crowd and I'll tell you I had a friend of mine who I went to, who was one of my college roommates lived here in Bartlesville for a while.

I think he was gone within a couple years of my coming, had no idea but he came back maybe a couple years ago, maybe even three years ago, I don't remember but we had this conversation and we were talking about Bartlesville and he's like, yeah I know and he mentioned the church and he said, I know that's the church, that's the cool church now I think is the way that he put it and he said, and all those people, you know, five years ago they were over here and five years ago they were over there and so, you know, there's a group of people unfortunately and it's not a thing that's particular to Bartlesville, we see that, that a lot of times people will follow the crowd and we see that happening in churches, that kind of growth is unhealthy growth, that kind of growth is superficial growth, it's attractional growth which seeks to make the time of worship more of a time of entertainment for those who come, another form of Christian entertainment but they aren't really feeding people, they're not really digging into the word of God,
I'll stop there because I might say something that I'll say some other time but you know, I think what happens is they, and I've talked with others, what happens in a lot of those kinds of attractional churches is people come in through the front door and they leave through the back door without anybody noticing, you know, but they're seeing all these new people coming in and they think they're doing a good job but what's happening is they're coming and they're coming and staying for a while but because it's so shallow and there's no depth there, they leave but because it's built on coming anonymously and leaving anonymously, you don't even know the people who you're worshiping God with in your church, they don't even realize the leaders or the pastors of the church that these people are going right out the back door.
Verse 19, we see that Christians as a result of Stephen's persecution had been scattered throughout the neighboring regions but notice that they were preaching to the Jews only at least for a time because they were still of the mind that salvation was only for Jews.
They'd go and they would find Greek-speaking Jews, the Hellenist Jews and they would share Christ with them and what they would do is they'd start a little church in those communities but in

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

verse 20, we see that some of them were already beginning to share the gospel with Gentiles. [36:37] The Spirit was already working on their hearts to let go of their prejudice and preach to the Hellenists, a Hellenist being a Greek-speaking Gentile and this is what was happening in Antioch.

Now, if you were judging a book by its cover, Antioch would probably not be on the top of your list of places to start a church depending on why you would want to start a church.
If you want to, I want to go to the vilest place where the gospel is not being shared, where there are no churches, then Antioch in that case would be at the top of your list. But if you're trying to avoid persecution, then Antioch would probably be down at the bottom of your list.
It was founded in 300 BC. It was a free city under the Roman government in 64 AD. They made that happen, meaning that it had its own self-government.
It became the capital of Syria and it grew into becoming the third largest city in the world at this time behind Rome in Alexandria.
[37:42] Again, it was famous for its culture, for its business operations. Cicero said that it was a land of most learned men and liberal studies. But with all of those good things that it had going for it, it was, again, basically known as being a very evil city.

In fact, Juvenal, a Roman writer, said that the Orontus River spilled garbage into the Tiber and what he was saying was this river that flows from Antioch to Rome, all of this immorality that we are experiencing here, it's because of Antioch, right?
And so Rome was a very sinful city and if this guy was saying that, you know, Antioch, and I don't know the geography, but this is what this guy was saying, okay, some historian, but basically his point was Antioch and the business happenings that are going there and, you know, back and forth between here and Rome, they are corrupting us, which is a pretty strong and bold statement, again, for a people who in Rome were known for all kind of gross and crude immorality.
And so, basically to say, you think Rome, ancient Rome, immoral, gross immorality, well, Antioch up here, okay?
Let's just understand it that way. But again, we have some men here, either two men or a group of them from Cyprus and Cyrene. They were called by God, led by the Spirit, to plant a church in that city.
[39:18] Notice, though, that the names of these individuals are not recorded. And we could think, well, why not? Well, it doesn't mean that they weren't important, but it reveals their faceless commitment to Christ.

I don't think they cared. I don't think they care now that their names aren't recorded in Scripture because that's not why they were serving. That's not why they were sharing the gospel.
They weren't in it for their own name recognition, but to be used by God to share the gospel. And I believe that we'll find out what their names are in heaven. But again, going back to the right kind of growth is a result of the right kind of attitude.
These guys didn't care. They didn't want the glory for themselves or the name recognition. They wanted to be used by God to share the gospel. Again, the right kind of growth results from people having the right kind of attitude that it's not about me.
It's all about Jesus Christ. And as a result, verse 21 says, that the hand of the Lord was upon them and a great number there believed and turned to the Lord.
[40:23] And then, thirdly, for the church that God uses, they're about the right work, verses 22 through 30. So here, we were encountering Barnabas again.

Barnabas was one of those often found doing the right kind of work in the church. In Acts chapter 9, if you remember, Saul, who was saved and came to Jerusalem and kind of said, not like this, but I'm paraphrasing, hey, I'm your friend now.
I've been converted. I've been saved. And they see him and they think, yeah, right, you're a Christian killer. You're a wolf in sheep's clothing.
But you remember how Barnabas responded? Barnabas basically went and put his arm around Paul and stood up for Paul. And in doing so, he wasn't afraid to go against the crowd in order to do what was right.
He was an encourager. In fact, that's what his name means, son of encouragement. The right kind of work that builds the church is those who seek, like Barnabas, to give encouragement to others.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

[41:30] It can be as simple as acknowledging someone's presence when they walk into a room, acknowledging that they're there and saying hello and asking them about their week.

Maybe even during the week, giving them a phone call, writing them a letter, standing up for them when others won't. Look for ways to be an encourager.
And I'm sure that you, like me, have been blessed by people in the church whom God has used as a source of encouragement for you. One of those men for me, his name is Bob Goff.
And again, a man who's with the Lord, was the chairman of my deacon board and the first time I became a senior pastor. And I remember that first year, there was a lot of times I questioned myself and doubted myself and was worried about things.
And I'd call him and he'd tell me to come over and we would meet down in his den and we would talk. And I would go in there feeling like this small and I would leave, you know, feeling bigger.
[42:33] And it was because of his encouragement. And I just, I'll never forget that and I'll always appreciate that about him and I hope that God would use me to do the same to be somebody who encourages people in the church.

What made Barnabas such a great worker in the kingdom? Well, verse 24 says that he was a good man. He was full of the Holy Spirit and faith. He was a mature Christian. He was a devoted follower of Christ.
In verse 23, we see that he rejoiced to see the work that God was doing and he wanted to be a part of it. He saw God at work and he got excited about it and he thought, I want to be a part of what's going on there.
Verse 25, Barnabas goes to find Paul who's now in Tarsus. Again, we see him busy. Busy about being and doing the right kind of work.
He recognizes in Paul a brilliant man, a man who is passionate about the salvation that he's received from Christ, a man who is growing in his skill and teaching the word of God.
[43:40] Again, being a Pharisee, he already knew it well, but now with the Holy Spirit inside of him and able to interpret all those things for him and show him Christ in the Old Testament, he was a great teacher and preacher and so Barnabas grabs him.

He knows there's these Christians in Antioch. They're new believers and he's going to bring Paul to them, this great man of God to shepherd them and to get them on the right track in the beginning.
And I think in Barnabas and being about doing the right kind of work, you know, we've talked about this and I know it's often discouraging that we see a lot of needs here and not enough people willing to meet the needs and we wonder, for those of us who are willing to serve, why won't other people serve too?
I'll tell you, the most effective way of getting people to volunteer is I think in a way of what Barnabas does here with Paul. I don't think that he had to drag Paul to Antioch or anything like that, like maybe we feel like we have to, but you know, when we have a need in the church to pray first to God and ask him, who Lord should I ask to meet this need?
And then, after prayer, and that person comes to mind, you go to that person and you say, I've been praying about this and I think that you are the one that God wants to fill this role.
[45:19] Now make sure that you're really praying about it and you're not lying when you do that, right? But you've been really praying about it and I'll tell you, if you go to people with that, they're more likely to hear you out. Chances are they might even do it.

I remember being asked when I was a college student, going back to my parents' church, there was this trunk or treat event that our children's ministry was doing and each person dressed like a Bible character and this lady in my church just kept coming to me every Sunday for a couple months asking me to be Joseph and I told her, no.
No, I can't do that. I mean, I had a list of reasons why. I've got to work. I've got school. I've got all. She kept saying to me, I just, you're my Joseph.
I just know that you've got to be Joseph and she wouldn't take no for an answer and finally, I think it was probably after five times of asking me, I did it and I enjoyed it. I really did and I'm glad that I did it.
So, that's the way we need to encourage as well. You know, we notice the spiritual gifts that somebody has and we encourage them to put them to use for the glory of God and the benefit of God's people and his church.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host

[46:38] Verses 27 through 30, there Agabus we see foretells that a famine will come upon the land and so the disciples determined every one of them according to their ability to send relief to the brothers living in Judea and they sent it by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.

And so, here we see that the church views itself as one. They don't think, well, that's not our problem. We're all the way over here. They all each, according to their ability, did what they could do in order to send relief to their brothers and sisters in Christ in a distant land.
And so, that's what it means also to be busy about doing the right kind of work in God's church. It includes being active and serving others. It involves our being on mission and participating in missions.
Again, this is why we serve and volunteer in various places in our community. This is why we as a church cooperate in the cooperative program.
This is why we have the gospel debt. This is why we send relief to agencies in our community who are at the front lines trying to meet some of the needs that we know exist here and are better equipped to do so.
[47:57] That's why we partner with Agenskons Baptist Church in Latvia because we must be busy about doing the Lord's work and sharing and being good stewards of the resources that He has given us.

So, two questions of application. first of all, and I just want you to kind of reflect upon this one yourself. How does our church measure up to the church mentioned here in Acts 11?
Do we have the same right kind of right attitude? Experience the same right kind of growth? Do we have the same kind of right work ethic going on here that we're seeking to be on missions and to be a blessing to our community in the name of Jesus Christ trying to make disciples?
And then third, in what ways can we excel still more? And there's always room for us to improve. There's always ways in which we can seek to excel still more that the Lord Jesus Christ would be glorified by our church and that we would go and make disciples.
[49:13] I'm going to pray and then James will come up and we'll go over the prayer sheet and announcements. Let's pray. Lord God, we thank you for Jesus Christ, your Son.

We thank you, Lord, and we acknowledge that it's only through Him are we able to be saved. That it's only as a result of your grace, Lord. It's only as a result of your calling us that we are able to have eternal life through Him.
And so, Lord, in all things, we give you the glory. We're thankful for the men and the women whom you've called throughout the history of your church and how you've used them, how you have impacted this world as a result of they and their churches having the right attitude and experiencing the right growth as a result of their doing the right work.
Lord, we know that we're not alone in this, that you've given us your spirit, that you've commanded us to go. And as we go and make disciples, Lord, as we are on missions, we believe that you will be at work through us.
We thank you for this church. We thank you for all the good that you've done through the history of this church here. And God, we just pray that now, as those of us who are here now in this church, that we would be good stewards of what you've entrusted us with, that we would excel still more, that we would be a blessing to Bartlesville, to Oklahoma, to the United States of America, to the world, and that you would use us to make much of the name of Jesus Christ in whose name we pray.
[50:49] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.

Downloaded from https://yetanothersermon.host