Acts Chapter 13

13:1-12

* Luke opens the second half of Acts by giving the church in Antioch a bit of a flourish. They were becoming a major center of faith, followed only by Jerusalem.
* The leadership of the church in Antioch was quite diverse, including people from Africa and a member of the court of Herod.
* Luke shows the church leadership of Antioch discerning the movement of the Spirit through worship, prayer, and fasting.
* What is at the center of our communal life of faith? How do we listen for the Spirit and discern what God is calling us to do?
* Paul and Barnabas are called out to begin their first missionary journey, 3 of which will take up most of the rest of Acts. They begin by setting out toward the island of Cyprus, which is where Barnabas is from.
* They begin a pattern they will continue to follow - visiting the Jewish synagogues first and then moving on to preach the good news to the Gentiles.
* In Paphos, they go to speak with the main Roman leader of the island, to share the good news with him, but the magician Bar-Jesus doesn’t want to lose his political influence with the leader.
* Paul looks into Bar-Jesus’ eyes and discerns his true motives - he is Jewish, but blatantly breaking their laws, he is only out for his own gain.
* This first confrontation on the first missionary journey shows that God is present and God’s word is active even when faced with confrontation.
* How do we experience God’s presence in the face of confrontation?

13:13-43

* Finished in Paphos, Paul and Barnabas move on to thea area we now know as south Turkey. They attend a synagogue, and are invited to speak. That would have been a standard practice at the time, as communication was much more limited and visitors may have interesting news.
* In this speech of Paul’s, he focuses on the connection between David and Jesus. He is telling the Jewish people their own story, in light of what God has since done through Jesus.
* In focusing his speech on the story of David, Paul is pointing out the long history of God being at work in the world, as well as pointing to what God is doing in this new age.
* How do we see God at work in our own history? What work is God pointing us toward?
* Paul tells the story of God in the world showing that the whole of God’s history with Israel was to eventually show the breadth of the grace of God to all of God’s creation.

13:44-52

* When Paul and Barnabas begin speaking the next week, we see the anger of some of the Jewish people at their words. “Jealousy” may be better translated as “zeal” - these people had been faithfully following God their whole lives expecting God’s promises to be for them, and now Paul and Barnabas are showing up and telling people that those promises are actually for all nations.
* Do we ever feel some sense of righteous indignation when we see examples of God’s love being shown for those we think haven’t earned, or don’t deserve God’s love? Does our zeal ever contradict God’s actions?
* Nevertheless, Paul and Barnabas continue teaching and the Word of God remains at work in the world, as we often see it even today.

