

Series Title: FOR ALL PEOPLE: A Journey through the Book of Acts, Part 7- The Original Road Trip

Sermon Title: Week 2: Amazed!

Date: 05-16-21

† Amazed

- **Imagine with me for a moment- time machine, go back 2000 years, be part of the crowd at Sermon on the mount. How do you think you would react to seeing and hearing Jesus teach? Based on what we see throughout the Gospels, if you were anything like the other people in that crowd, you would be AMAZED.**
- **Time and again, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John record for us that when people had an encounter with Jesus, they were amazed- friends and enemies alike.**
- **Powerful example of this comes at the end of the Sermon on the Mount... As Jesus wraps up his teaching with the parable of the wise and foolish man...**

Matthew 7:24 “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. ²⁶ But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.” ²⁸ When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, ²⁹ because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.

- **There were many amazing things about Jesus. Just his personality, his presence. We probably first think of his MIRACLES as being the most amazing- and people were amazed at what he did. But if you look closely at the gospels, you will see that more than anything, people were amazed by what Jesus SAID. By his teaching, the truth that he proclaimed with AUTHORITY.**
- **SO WELCOME! Thanks for joining us... Sunday May 16th, PE, TO**

† Hitting the road!

- **Today we are hitting the road at the beginning of Paul’s first missionary journey.**
- **As we do every week, we’re going to look at the story in our text- this true event of how God was at work 2000 years ago, then seek to learn, consider the principles we see of how God is at work in our lives, by Holy Spirit, TODAY- because HE IS!**
- **Last week we saw the Spirit work through the church- the gathered community of Christ followers in Antioch to raise up Paul and Barnabas for the task of taking the Gospel to the gentile cities of the northern Mediterranean world. We read...**

Acts 13:1-5 Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. ² While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” ³ So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

– **STORY CONTINUES....**

⁴ The two of them, sent on their way by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus.

⁵ When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues. John was with them as their helper.

- *Little context... about 16 mile trip from Antioch to Selucia, port of Antioch. From there, about 50 mile boat trip to the city of Salamis on the east end of Cyprus.*
- *CYPRUS is about 140x60 miles, and in the first century had a multi-cultural and diverse population, which was true of most of the Roman Empire.*
- *When they arrive, Paul, Barnabas, and John (PB&J) first seek out the local synagogue, or Jewish place of worship. This would be their pattern. Purpose of the journey was to take the gospel to the gentiles, but Paul would strategically first go to the Jewish community- the people who shared the common foundation of faith in YAWEH- the Hebrew God- and who shared the expectation of a coming messiah- the expectation that was fulfilled by Jesus.*
- *They then travel across the island- weeks journey- to the main city of Paphos- where they encounter two key individuals... o*

† The listener and the liar

Acts 13:6-8 *They traveled through the whole island until they came to Paphos. There they met a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet named Bar-Jesus,⁷ who was an attendant of the proconsul, Sergius Paulus. The proconsul, an intelligent man, sent for Barnabas and Saul because he wanted to hear the word of God.⁸ But Elymas the sorcerer (for that is what his name means) opposed them and tried to turn the proconsul from the faith.*

- *Here we have two men who both heard of Paul's message, and their response couldn't have been more different.*
- *FIRST, Sergius Paulus, a proconsul, Roman authority on the island. INTELLIGENT-thinker... he wants to listen, to hear, to consider this new message.*
- *I've said to people "if there is such a thing as TRUTH about God, would you want to know it, to consider it?"... Sergius would have answered that question YES..*
- *Then we have Elymas- also known as BAR-JESUS (son of Jesus, ironically), who was Jewish, but against the teaching of his own people practiced sorcery. He was a false prophet, a liar. Through is trickery and deceit he had managed to secure a place of influence with Sergius (wormtongue, LOTR).*
- *Basically, Elymas wasn't just a liar, he was a leech- had attached himself to Sergius, was using him, likely profiting from his place of influence and authority- his ability to fool and manipulate Sergius and those around him. He recognizes that P&B- the message they bring- are a THREAT to his status, to his place of influence. THUS, he tries to prevent Sergius from hearing and responding to the gospel.*
- *PRINCIPLE here.*

† Reality! Life is full of voices seeking a place of authority

- *These voices- people and institutions- may be GOVT, businesses, entertainment, news, peers, individuals.*
- *Voices who want you to believe they are NECESSARY... necessary to you, for you to be secure, to have what you need. To be content, to have peace, to be safe, to be happy.*

- **Interesting- In 1 Thessalonians 5, Paul describes the voices that will be present in the end times. The seductive promise of that time... PEACE AND SAFETY. When people ask you to surrender your freedom in exchange for peace and safety, be cautious, because they may deliver neither.**
- **These voices want us to grant them – in our hearts and minds- a place of authority, so they may profit from us, and have a place of power and control in our lives.**
- **THESE VOICES/powers will OPPOSE the gospel- they will oppose the work of Christ, because Christ is a bringer of FREEDOM, of LIBERTY. IN CHRIST we do not need ANYTHING of this world for our identity, our peace, hope, contentment, security, and fullness. Rather, these are all gifts we receive from God through FAITH.**
- **There is MUCH we may enjoy, but only one thing we NEED. This is our one source of LIFE, our union with Jesus Christ and the experience of our relationship with Him.**
- **Reminds me of the story from Luke 10, when Jesus came to the home of two sisters, Mary and Martha. If you remember the story, Mary is sitting and listening to Jesus while Martha bustles about stressing over the details of the day...**

Luke 10:40-42 But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, “Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!”
⁴¹ “Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “you are worried and upset about many things, ⁴² but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.”

- **Many things to do, but only one thing is needed. Church- in our society of endless demands upon our time and resources, that is a source of FREEDOM. There is only one thing I NEED, and this I have in ABUNDANCE- it is the LIFE of GOD through faith in Christ.**
- **For Elymas, and what he represents, this could not be tolerated. Elymas had a place of control and bondage over Sergius, and Paul came bringing the hope of true freedom- and so Elymas fought back... a decision he would come to regret. HERE we see the...**

† The Spirit’s response

- **This is KEY! What happened here was not just Paul. This was the work of the Spirit THROUGH Paul. Faced with this opposition, Paul was not afraid. He didn’t get angry, defensive, and he didn’t feel threatened. Rather, Luke tells us that Paul was FILLED with the SPIRIT.... In this situation, Paul looks to GOD. Probably moment of prayer “God, ok, this is intense, but I’m trusting you. I’m looking to you. Lord, right now, you are in charge, how would you have me respond?” And through Paul, the Spirit ACTS....**

Acts 13:9-11 Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Elymas and said, ¹⁰ “You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord? ¹¹ Now the hand of the Lord is against you. You are going to be blind for a time, not even able to see the light of the sun.” Immediately mist and darkness came over him, and he groped about, seeking someone to lead him by the hand.

- **The symbolism here is powerful! There are...**

† Two kinds of blindness

- **Elymas was already SPIRITUALLY BLIND. He was living in darkness. The spirits action here is actually merciful- his physical blindness was to be temporary. Perhaps this time of**

disability would soften Elymas' heart to respond to God, to believe and be set free from his true blindness. I MEAN, could a person like Elymas, an enemy of the work of God, come to open their heart to Jesus?

- *The answer, of course, is YES- for this is precisely what had happened with PAUL- and I'm sure the irony of the situation wasn't lost on Paul as he remembered his own time of blindness- blindness that ultimately resulted in his coming to SEE.*
- *We don't know what happened to Elymas... But we DO know what happened to Sergius. Seeing this event, he was AMAZED.*

† What is amazing?

Acts 13:12 *When the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord.*

- *Sergius BELIEVED. But why?*
- *He saw what had happened. He witnessed a miracle (albeit judgment).*
- *But the miracle was NOT what led Sergius to believe! It was not what amazed him.*
- *The miracle was EVIDENCE- it was an authentication- but what AMAZED HIM, what brought Sergius to belief, was the TEACHING ABOUT THE LORD. It was the GOSPEL. THE AMAZING TRUTH OF THE AMAZING GRACE OF JESUS CHRIST.*

† Takeaways

- *Considering this story, a few things...*
 - *To whom, or to what, do you grant AUTHORITY?*
- *Sergius had granted Elymas, the liar, a place of authority, and it held him in bondage.*
- *What are your sources of Authority? To what, or whom, have you granted influence in your heart and mind?*
- *Perhaps today more than ever, we must exercise great caution, wisdom, and discernment over what we grant a place of voice, of influence! Be it news, the internet, other people... If we seek to be led by the Spirit, He will lead us to be DISCERNING. To THINK. To not allow our own pride, our intellectual biases, our own agendas and what we want to be true, to make us easy targets for deception and manipulation.*
- *Ultimately my friends, we only have ONE SOURCE OF AUTHORITY, and it is GOD. It is Jesus Christ, his teaching and his presence. Remember how the crowd responded to Jesus that day we saw?*

²⁸ *When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, ²⁹ because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.*

- *Be the EVIDENCE!*
- *Elymas faced the consequence of his lies, and what happened to him was evidence of the power of God. CONSIDER! We too are evidence, but not negative like Elymas. When we reflect, authentically, the goodness of God, the fruit of the Spirit, we are walking, talking, EVIDENCE of the truth of who God is.*
- *In what we say, HOW we say things, what we do, our very countenance, we have the opportunity to MAKE GOD BEAUTIFUL, to evidence of the truth of the Gospel.*
- *Finally, as people of FAITH, may we..*
 - *Be AMAZED.*

- *Lots of things that might amaze us. But more than anything, may we be amazed by the goodness of God. This is to get to KNOW HIM. TO LOOK TO HIM. TO BUILD OUR LIVES IN HIM. This is to see the life changing, freeing, courage imparting, LOVE GIVING, wellness receiving TRUTH of GOD's GRACE... and my friends, it is AMAZING.*