

Acts 13:26-33

26 "My brothers, you descendants of Abraham's family, and others who fear God, to us the message of this salvation has been sent. 27 Because the residents of Jerusalem and their leaders did not recognize him or understand the words of the prophets that are read every sabbath, they fulfilled those words by condemning him. 28 Even though they found no cause for a sentence of death, they asked Pilate to have him killed. 29 When they had carried out everything that was written about him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. 30 But God raised him from the dead; 31 and for many days he appeared to those who came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, and they are now his witnesses to the people. 32 And we bring you the good news that what God promised to our ancestors 33 he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising Jesus; as also it is written in the second psalm, 'You are my Son; today I have begotten you' (NRSV).

Over the past year we have all been basically shut in due to the pandemic. We have been anxious for some good news. Does anybody have any good news? In the Old Testament Israel repeatedly faced some hard times. However, each time they faced difficulty, God cared for them. The exile was the hardest time of all. It was much worse than anything that we have ever experienced. To put it in perspective, during World War 2 our cities were left intact while Europe was devastated. During the exile Israel and Judah were on the worst end of war. Their country was invaded and destroyed. Jerusalem was destroyed. Most of their people were either killed or captured. But during this most difficult time in their history they had hope, good news; it was a promise from God that God would once again intervene to rescue them by sending them the Messiah.

In the New Testament Bible we see the good news. The Gospel of Mark starts off by telling the very beginning of the good news. This is the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It is known that Jesus is the Christ, Jesus is the Son of God, and Jesus is the good news that the nation of Israel had been hoping for as promised by God. The ministry of John has two fundamental principles; conduct a baptism of repentance and proclaiming the good news. The good news is Jesus. The disciples left everything for Jesus and the good news (Mark 10:20). They were told that the good news will be proclaimed to all the nations (Mark 13:10). They were also told to go and proclaim the good news (Mark 16:15). The disciples then went out and began to proclaim the good news everywhere (Mark 16:19). So, the good news is Jesus. God's promised Messiah has arrived, the kingdom of heaven is near, and he is risen.

Today we are in the book of Acts; it connects the gospels to the letters. It is an account of the history of the early church as it developed from the early followers of Jesus who were led by Holy Spirit to spread the good news. Acts starts off by telling the good news in Jerusalem and from there the good news spreads in Judea and Samaria. Chapter 13 is a pivotal point of the book. The good news is now being extended out to the Gentiles. This is very serious business. Israel, the children of Abraham, had the God of Abraham as their very own God. Their perspective was that their God was only for them, the children of Abraham. In their perspective, their God would only accept very few Gentiles – those that were willing to embrace their faith practices and get circumcised.

Today's Scripture is when the Apostle Paul gives a speech in the synagogue in Antioch. When the Apostle Paul gets up to speak, he mentions the God of his people Israel, then he gives

them a concise biblical history lesson. He tells them about Jesus, who Jesus actually is, and what they did to him. He delivers a testimony of their past. He says “you descendants of Abraham's family, and others who fear God.” From this we discern that the audience is made up of ethnic Jews and others who fear God. The term to fear God is a matter of reverence for those who recognize the God of Israel as the one true God. Then he proclaims that a message of salvation has been sent to us. Jerusalem and the religious leaders did not recognize Jesus; they did not understand the prophecy which was read every Sabbath in the synagogue. So, they condemned him even though he was innocent. However, God raised him from the dead. So we bring you the good news. What God promised to our ancestors has been fulfilled by raising Jesus from the dead. The Apostle Paul delivers the good news. The good news is the testimony of the scriptures. The good news is what God promised has been fulfilled by raising Jesus from the dead. His resurrection is proof that Jesus is the promised Messiah. From there the Apostle Paul spends his life devoted to a missionary journey to go throughout the world to tell the Good News.

There are three points to the contemporary lesson for us today. First of all we are to receive the Good News that God brought the promised Savior to the world. The second point is that we are to believe the good news. Jesus is the Christ, the promised Savior, the Son of God. He died and was raised from the dead. He offers his life as a ransom for many - gives his life for the forgiveness of sins. Jesus is the resurrected Son of God. The third point is that we are to tell the good news so that others can receive it and that is exactly what the Apostle Paul was doing in today's Scripture.

Today we have learned a lesson for the modern church. The leaders in Jerusalem should have known better. They had the prophecy but ignored it. They violated justice. There was no cause for the death sentence. This is a very serious offense, the worst offense that has ever been committed in world history. What we learn is from the action of the Apostle Paul. He does not fix blame, he fixes the problem. Jesus is God's Messiah. Through him we have the forgiveness of sins proclaimed for us which could not be achieved through law of Moses. The good news is one of salvation. The good news is he is risen.