

Here I am..

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[0 : 00] Thank you for your welcome and thank you for inviting me here this evening. Let's bow our heads in prayer before we return to God's word. O Lord, may the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight.

O Lord, my rock and my redeemer. Amen. Thank you again for inviting me to really draw to a close this mission weekend here in Edinburgh, which you have organised in the city of Edinburgh.

I was excited yesterday and I'm sure those of you who were present at the meeting yesterday were also excited to hear from so many different aspects and fields of the Lord's work in the church.

From the East, Indonesia to the South, Southern Hemisphere in Peru, to more local things in Europe and also here in Glasgow, as we've just recently been thinking about.

That excited me to see so many different people and a lot of them are young people, but some of them were almost as old as I am and that really, I think, excited me to see that so many people are involved in mission.

[1 : 29] We learned some new words yesterday and if you weren't there, I want to share a couple of them with you. We often hear about holistic ministry and yesterday we were told of the dangers of half-istic ministry.

That's an interesting word that's been coined and you can decide for yourself exactly what it means. We heard too about submarine Christians and I wondered at first exactly what a submarine Christian was, but the speaker explained it immediately and very clearly, the surface on a Sunday and then they go under water for the rest of the week and up they come the next Sunday and he was warning us against that tendency, of course.

But it was exciting to be present hearing about mission and what's obvious is that it is an exciting subject and I hope you're as excited and enthused about it as I am and I hope this evening just briefly to what Derek said I could speak for at least a couple of hours and if you think he exaggerates, well, we'll find out.

It very much was obvious that there's a lot of studies, a lot of research, there's a lot of investigation into all the different aspects of mission that we can undertake.

An innumerable quantity of organizations that are working in different ways, in different societies and cultures, people with an expertise in this or an understanding of that and all of these things are good and perhaps necessary.

[3 : 15] There are structures in place for the policies that different organizations and churches are going to follow in their mission or missionary program.

And I was asking myself, listening to a lot of this huge range, how can we distill this? What actually is it about?

And I want to suggest to you this evening as we look at the Bible passages that we've been reading or heard, read in our presence, that it's about Jesus and it's about our relationship with him.

Every single one of us who is a Christian here this evening, it forces us to ask ourselves what kind of people are we?

What kind of Christian are you this evening? And do we have a love for the lost?

[4 : 17] Do we have a compassion for the lost? And as we look at some of the prototypes that we find here in the New Testament in the Book of Acts and you'll be familiar with them, you know that for instance in chapter 2 and chapter 4 in the early chapters of the Book of Acts, you have these summary descriptions given to us of the Christian community, the early Christian community.

You recall in chapter 2 just after the day of Pentecost and all those 3,000 who were saved that the writer Luke reminds us that they devoted themselves to the Apostles' teaching and to fellowship and to breaking of bread and to prayer.

And these features are given to us of that early church and the Lord added to their number daily those that were being saved. You have a repetition in very similar terms in chapter 4 in the Book of Acts.

And then when you jump forward to where we are this evening to chapter 11 where we're going to focus our thoughts you find that Luke shifts the attention of the narrative of the story that he's telling to this community of God's people here in Antioch.

And he centres the attention for quite a while on this Christian community here in Antioch for our instruction because what we'll see is that it's a community of people who love the Lord Jesus.

[6 : 00] And it's a mission-minded community. And as we look at it, it acts as a kind of checklist for us that as we think about ourselves in our communities in our different congregations, whether it's here in the East or West or wherever, is our congregation.

It acts as a kind of checklist for us of ourselves operating together. Are we a community of people who are mission-minded because we love the Lord Jesus Christ?

And it gives us, I believe, important insights into mission itself. So I want this first of all just to look at various features of this community.

And the first that I draw your attention to, there are going to be several but don't worry because some of them will just notice in passing and some of them will look at in a little bit more detail. The first feature that we notice, if you have your Bibles open in chapter 11 at verse 19 where the paragraph begins, now those who had been scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen, that's where we read in chapter 8.

That's what we read in chapter 8, that there was the martyrdom of Stephen and those who were there were scattered.

[7 : 33] And we read those few verses at the beginning of chapter 8 that Luke gives us that tells us what happened to them. And then Luke comes back to it here in chapter 11, he says, now you remember what I was telling you in chapter 8 about those who were scattered?

Well, here we are again, we're going to pick up the story of these people. And so we see the first feature is that this is a church community, a community of believers which arose out of persecution and suffering.

Here we are perhaps five or six years after the death of Stephen. And these believers who had been scattered, had scattered because of the persecution that arose that day.

And there was separation from their homes and families and places of work, their roots that they had in their communities that they were there in Judea.

They were forced to endure loss and separation and forced to flee and to leave whatever livelihoods and situations that they had there.

[8 : 51] And we would see that probably in negative terms. We would see this as a bad development. But the comment that one of the commentators gives us on this is, I believe, quite instructive, where it is said of this act that the intention of those who persecuted them was to scatter them and lose them.

But God's plan was to scatter them and use them. And this is exactly what we see here arising in chapter 11 verse 19.

What we do know is that as they were scattered, and imagine that scattering, they did not give up their calling and their devotion to the Lord.

We read in Acts chapter 8 verse 4 that they preached the word wherever they went. The temptation surely would have been to keep a low profile, to put down the shutters, to decide that you don't want to draw any more attention to yourself in this circumstance and situation where persecution and suffering is highly likely.

And yet we read that that's exactly the opposite of what they did. And this community that ended up in Antioch was a product of that scattering.

[10 : 19] And the flourishing of the Christian church, as we know, is often in times of persecution and suffering. And the converse is also often the case.

The second feature I want to draw your attention to of this community in Antioch is that it's a community which spoke to others about the gospel. This group of Christians saw as one of their primary activities that they should speak to others about the gospel.

We're told that they spoke to Greeks now, Greeks, some debate among the commentators over who exactly these people were, Hellenists, but we read in verse 20, they spoke the good news

about the Lord Jesus.

It's central to the life of any Christian community, central to their lives as Christians in a community. One of two things that I think we can notice about what Luke says here in verse 20 when they spoke the good news about the Lord Jesus is, first of all, there's a surprising lack of detail given to us about their method or their content.

[11 : 42] The method that often Luke shows to us, for example, when Peter preached his sermon at Pentecost, when Paul preaches his various sermons in different places, in Athens, in Thessalonica, in Corinth, we're given quite a lot of insight into how it was and what he said and how he approached the different audiences.

What we have here is surprisingly lacking in that detail. And I think that's a very helpful thing that what we have here is simply the core activity is this.

They spoke the good news and that's the Gospel. They were focusing on communicating the Gospel. Remember, as you do, that the Gospel is an announcement.

It is an announcement of good news. It is telling people about something that's already been done and it is not giving people moral instruction.

That might be appropriate and a good thing to do in certain circumstances. It's not giving people ethical teaching either. It is giving them an announcement.

[12 : 58] It is giving them a piece of news that is life changing in its importance and significance. Just as those who are even older than I will remember the news given perhaps in 1945, the war is over and that's a piece of news that changes people's lives.

And it's not that you have to do anything. It's not that you have now to set out on some path of action, but rather it is to receive that news. And that's what these people were communicating.

They spoke the good news, we're told. And we also note that it's news about a person. It's about the Lord Jesus and what he's done.

The Gospel of the Lord Jesus. What we can deduce from that, just briefly in passing, is they're not communicating information primarily about an organization or an institution.

And they're not saying come to this church or that church or this group of people or another to this denomination or any other. Not coming to this program or special event.

[14 : 16] But rather they're pointing the attention and giving this basic piece of news information, the Gospel, about this person, about what this person has done.

And I think it's instructive to us to keep these two features that we're giving news and we are giving news about a person and what he's done.

It's central, isn't it, to our purpose as Christians. If we ask why are we kept here in this world?

Well, God keeps us here to speak to others about the Gospel of his son Jesus Christ. And that's what this community was engaged in doing.

The next feature I want to draw to your attention is there as well. It's also in verse 20 that it was a community of Christian people who were adaptable to change.

[15 : 23] And I hesitate to use that awful word here amongst ourselves. The idea of change is anathema to some.

It's the worst thing that anybody can ever get up and mention. What we do know is that they began to do something new and different.

And the first thing that happens when anybody does anything new is they draw opposition and criticism. Now, Peter had already experienced this in his dealings with Cornelius in the previous chapter, in chapter 10 in the book of Acts.

And because of what he had done, we can see what happened at the very beginning of chapter 11. If you just cast your eyes to the first few verses of chapter 11.

Because we read there, the apostles and the brothers throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him and said, you went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them.

[16 : 41] Peter had to defend himself for doing something that was also new and different. It was change. Folks didn't like it.

Don't bring us something new. We don't want something new. They wanted the comfort and the reassurance of things that they were familiar with.

So it was here also in Antioch in verse 20. We read again, some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began, there's the idea of something new, began to speak

to Greeks also.

And these two words began to do it and also have this implication that here was a departure. Here was something fresh. Here was something different. Change. How resistant we are to any idea of change.

And often it's a fear that people have, a fear that, you know, if you change anything, you're changing the gospel and it can't be right.

[17 : 53] And so people oppose it for all sorts of reasons. Sometimes people oppose it for their own comfort. We like things the way they are.

Sometimes we oppose it because just of our own preferences, well, this is what I like. This is how I like things to be.

And I ask you the question, is it about you and what you like? Or is it about what the Lord is doing and what the Lord wants to be done?

Did the believers in Antioch need to change something to meet the challenges of the situation in which they found themselves? Had they come to the realization that the good news about Jesus was also, well, it was not only for the Jews, that tiny, tiny nation of people.

It was also for the other 99% of the world's population. And something has to change.

[19 : 07] And in conversation this afternoon I was having with someone, we mentioned the fact that perhaps 95% of Scotland is an unevangelized nation.

And do we take seriously the fact that the gospel, the good news about the Lord Jesus Christ is for them? There was a community adaptable to change.

A further feature I want to draw your attention to was that there was a community which enjoyed the presence of God. And Luke uses what I think is a beautiful phrase to describe the sweetness of the presence that they enjoyed.

If you look at verse 21 there in chapter 11, Luke writes, and the Lord's hand was with them. And in those few words you have what is the dream and the hope and the aspiration of so many Christian communities.

For the Lord's hand to be with them, expressed in that beautiful image that Luke gives us there. Key to the Christian church for the Lord's presence to be with us.

[20 : 27] You know, if it isn't, if it isn't, then what are we doing here? Are we just a gathering of people with a mutual interest? Are we just a group of people who happen to come together on a Sunday and we sit and we read this book?

Or is there something more? And surely there is. Surely there must be that motivates the very gathering of God's people together.

The enjoyment of the presence of the Lord with us. And there weren't any recorded miracles here in Antioch. They were in other places during the Apostolic era.

But what is obvious is the Holy Spirit is present and working in the midst of these people. Just notice in passing in this feature, if you would, the order in which Luke gives us this information.

We read in verse 20 that they began to tell the Gospel to others. And then it is in verse 21 that we're told, and the Lord's hand was with them.

[21 : 43] Do you see the order? And do you see the significance of that order? First the obedience, then the blessings.

And I don't know if you're like me, but I tend to think of it the other way around so often. That I want the Lord's presence first and then I'll go out and do these wonderful things.

And so many of us, I think, are like that. That we wait for the Lord's presence to be with us. But Luke says, go out and tell others the Gospel and the Lord's hand will be with you in that order.

They obeyed the Great Commission and the blessings followed. A further feature, I'm on to number five if you're keeping count.

A community which saw others coming to faith. A Christian community, a mission-minded community which saw others coming to faith.

[22 : 58] Things were happening in Antioch. And you read that in the second part of verse 21, 21b. The Lord's hand was with them and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

They saw growth, the normal New Testament expectation to see growth. We are in the era of the outpoured spirit.

We should expect to see growth. There they enjoyed great success. And we long for this.

One of the wonderful things is to learn that the church is not just here in Scotland, it's worldwide, as we were hearing yesterday. And we hear and rejoice when we hear of the millions and possibly billions coming to faith, perhaps in Asia, in China, in other parts.

We rejoice when we see the church growing as Jesus predicted and prophesied it would. Here in Antioch, this mission-minded group of people were enjoying that success.

[24 : 12] Now numbers of course are not everything. And we can say and rightly so I think that there are blessings in small gatherings. And it's also true that we may go many years and many servants of God have done so, many years seeing little fruit for their work.

They are living in a time when they are sowing and seeing nothing in the way of reaping or harvest. But there's no denying that seeing great numbers is a wonderful blessing.

It's something that gladdens the heart. Seeing people believing and turning to the Lord is a tremendous privilege.

And he who derides great numbers is I think unnecessarily perverse. A mission-minded community enjoys the presence of the Lord and it sees ordinarily others coming to faith.

This community also submitted to teaching. Excuse me.

[25 : 34] This community of believers submitted to teaching. The change in practice came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem. I'm not quite sure how that happened in the days prior to texting and Facebook and so on.

But that news came and I don't know how accurate it was and how it was transmitted. But nevertheless word traveled down the wires of those 300 or so miles from Antioch down to Jerusalem.

Have you heard what's going on in Antioch? Well, it led to the dispatch of Barnabas from Jerusalem.

And he had quite a journey in front of him to travel 300 miles north. And those days would take quite a considerable number of days. I don't know was he sent with the attitude that we read in verse 3 at the beginning of chapter 11, that critical attitude which they directed at Peter.

Or after having heard Peter's defense, their attitude that we read of in verse 18, they heard Peter's defense when they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God.

[26 : 54] Saying so then, God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life. We don't know exactly what attitude, with what attitude Barnabas was sent north.

But what we do know is what Luke tells us that he made that journey and he gets there and he has a look. And he sees, we're told, verse 23, he saw the evidence of the grace of God and he was glad.

He saw that what was happening, different, new, a change, it was of God. It was God driven and because of that he was glad.

And so he exhorted and encouraged them and they submitted to his teaching for some considerable time, as we'll see. Now this is Barnabas. Now you know Barnabas from the pages of the New Testament.

He's known as the encourager and he encouraged, we're told, encouraged them there in Antioch. How easy it would have been to have been critical, to have picked holes in what they were doing, to have said, no, no, you've got this all wrong and to have adopted a rather negative attitude towards it.

[28 : 20] But he was convinced that it was of God. He saw the grace of God. He saw what was happening and he encouraged them. That was Barnabas' talent.

He's described for us here in these verses, verse 24, he's described as a good man, perhaps better translated a good natured man, good tempered. We're told he was full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. Verse 24, we know him. This is the one who had sold a property and donated the proceeds to the church. This is the one who had welcomed Saul, the persecutor of the church, and introduced him to the apostles when they were afraid of him.

And this is a ministry of encouragement that we see Barnabas undertaking and here it brought many to the Lord, we're told, in verse 24.

A ministry of encouragement, bringing people to the Lord through a ministry of encouragement.

[29 : 30] Could I do that? Could I encourage other people? Could you do that? Could you encourage other people, perhaps the person sitting next to you, perhaps the person who comes into the church for the first time, perhaps the person who's been away for some time and has

decided to pluck up the courage to come back?

Could I encourage them? Could I be a Barnabas in my congregation? Could you have a ministry of encouragement? Because we're told that here in Antioch, that ministry of encouragement brought many to the Lord.

And so I encourage you to be an encourager. But they also submitted to the teaching of Paul. Barnabas maybe thought, this job's too big for me. Or I don't have the gifts that are needed for this ministry.

Look what's happening. The Gentiles are coming in and believing. Where will it end? Indeed. Where will it end? But here it's beginning. And Barnabas realizes he needs somebody else to help him.

[30 : 55] So off he goes and brings Paul out of the relative obscurity in Tarsus to participate in this wonderful opportunity here in Antioch. There's no doubt Paul was a different person from Barnabas. Paul's a great theologian. We know that from his epistles.

But he's working alongside Barnabas, this encourager. And the people were taught. And the disciples, and they taught.

We're told they met with the church and taught great numbers of people for a whole year. And a challenge I think for us, as we look at that experience of the church there, the community there in Antioch.

A challenge for us is to be taught. We were hearing this morning in Bacleau about listening and hearing and the difference.

Do we understand what we are hearing? And I think there's something else that's coming here as well that says something about being taught. We sit and listen to a countless number of sermons. And we love to do so.

[32 : 17] And maybe we're blessed that we have a service on a Sunday morning where we worship and a service on a Sunday evening. And maybe a meeting during the week where there is another address.

We listen to an incredible number of sermons. But I want to ask you, are you taught? Because being taught is different from simply listening to a number of sermons. Being taught implies much more than just hearing.

Those of us who are older can perhaps recall our painful school days or student days. And perhaps some of you people here this evening are still going through the painfulness of that experience, the pain sometimes of the hard, hard graft of learning, of being taught.

Because it means you've got to learn new things. And that's hard work. Simply getting new pieces of data information into your head.

And so it is in the Christian life. And it's also about acquiring and developing new skills. If we are being taught, we are being taught facts, but we're also being taught how to do certain things.

[33 : 43] And that's hard work. And in any learning process we face the possibility of failure and disappointment. But we also experience the enjoyment and the pleasure of progress and success in learning.

So being taught, I would suggest to you, is not just a passive activity. We're blessed very often with wonderful teachers. But so much depends on you and me as we sit and are taught as we have a responsibility as learners.

Another feature we notice of this Christian community, this mission-minded community, is it's a community made up of people. And made up of people sounds like something that doesn't really need to be said.

Is it too obvious? The church in the New Testament, the church here in Antioch is not a building. Maybe they used a building. Maybe they met in a home. We don't know. But the church is not a building.

There's a little word there in verse 26, the verse where we're more or less reached in our look through this passage. It says so for a whole year Bonobos and Saul met with the church.

[35 : 21] And that little word with is instructive, I think. It didn't say they met in the church, which is perhaps how we might describe things. I went to a meeting in the church. I'm going to a curbsession in the church, or I saw so-and-so in the church.

We don't find that in the New Testament. What we do find is that the church describes the redeemed people of God. It's a community of people. And so I say this is a community that is made

up of people.

And the emphasis in the New Testament, and here with Luke as well here in Antioch, is the church is the people. We're met here this evening in a building. And we are the church.

Those of us here, there in the pews, including myself here, upstairs, downstairs, we are the church, not the bricks and mortar or stones or whatever that make up the building that we're in.

And we are the church, and we are no less the church tomorrow, Monday and Tuesday and Wednesday in the days of the week when we are not gathered here in this building. When we're in our homes, when we're in our work, when we're in our neighbourhoods, we are the church.

[36 : 47] And we should never confuse a building with the church of Christ, who are his redeemed people. Having the New Testament emphasis on the church as the people of God will, I think, free us from many errors.

An eighth feature, if you've been keeping count, is that this is a community which responded to the needs of others. A mission-minded community of believers responds to the needs of others.

And you see there in the last paragraph of chapter 11, because we read that there were prophets, came down from Jerusalem to Antioch and Agabas, stood up and predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world, which happened during the reign of Claudius, and the disciples, each according to his ability, decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea. This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.

So there was a famine in Judea, and the believers here in this Christian community in Antioch said, we need to do something about that.

They're quite a long way away. We say it's about 300 miles from Jerusalem to Antioch. 300 miles in those days was, perhaps relatively speaking, a greater distance of separation, and they decided to give some practical help.

[38 : 33] And not only did they make that decision, they put it into action in verse 30, the last verse of this chapter. They did it, and they put together their collection and sent it with Barnabas and Saul, sending them down to Jerusalem.

And it's a key component of the Christian church, the Christian community responds to the needs of others. James reminds us in his epistle that this is a key feature of who we are.

Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this, to look after orphans and widows in their distress. It's a natural thing for those of us who have received mercy to show mercy and to engage in what are called nowadays mercy ministries.

And I just think it's wonderful to note here that what we see in this instance here at the end of chapter 11 here in Antioch is that the ancient animosity between Gentile and Jew is here being overcome because of the love of Jesus, because of the salvation that people have in Jesus.

In this practical act of love, which breaks down those ancient barriers, a mission-minded community looks outward, not inward. It sees and responds to the needs of those near and far.

[40 : 23] Those on our doorstep and those who are at the other end of the world. And the final feature I want to draw to your attention this evening in this Christian community in the church in Antioch is what we read at the beginning of chapter 13.

That is a community committed to international mission. And so often when we think of mission, we automatically attach the word overseas, foreign, international. How good it is that our free church has focused and rightly so on the concept of home mission as well.

So that the word mission does not just mean over there. Yes, it does mean over there, but it also means right here.

Now we've seen that this group of Christians in Antioch was wholeheartedly committed to home mission. That's where they began. That's where they worked. That's where they operated. That's where they started.

Wholeheartedly committed to home mission, led them now to wholehearted commitment to international mission in the church of Antioch. We read at the beginning of chapter 13. Here's this curc session of the Antioch church.

[41 : 49] And they were a varied bunch of men. There were prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius from Cyrene, Manion from who'd been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and so on.

What a range of men are here and notice what these church leaders are doing. They're worshipping and fasting. And maybe they are looking for the Lord's guidance, this church leadership team.

They are doing so seriously. They're waiting on the Lord. And they're asking if I can conjecture what they were asking. Lord, this job is too big. The world is out there ready to receive the gospel of Jesus Christ.

What do we do? How do we start? And they were waiting for the Lord to show them. And the Holy Spirit said, set apart from me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them. And so they did. They placed their hands on them and sent them off.

And we know the rest of the story from chapter 13 onwards, the first missionary journey. And then in chapter 14, they come back and report all that the Lord has done, how the Lord opened a door for them to the Gentiles.

[43 : 26] And then further missionary journeys and so on, the book of Acts, not one or the other, not either home missions or foreign missions, international missions, but both.

It's a church, no doubt, with folks. As every church is. But it's a church committed to missionary activity. Sometimes we use the word nowadays, mission-al activity.

To draw a distinction between those who are, you know, the missionaries, but no. Those of us, all of us, to be engaged in mission in our own community and internationally.

And I would draw to a close. Yes, the time has gone. I just want to do so very briefly, looking at, as every community is made up of these individuals and just in passing, in closing, I want to just draw your attention to who were these new believers in Antioch.

Because we're told a little bit about them. And it may be that you're here this evening and you're looking at this community in Antioch and it doesn't make any sense to you.

[44 : 56] What is this group of people? What are they about? What motivates them? Maybe this is all double-dutch to you. But we read in verse 21 of chapter 11 about these new converts. Because we read that the Lord's hand was with them in their mission-al activity and a great number of people believed.

That's the first step. They believed. They heard the testimony of God's own people and these people hearing it, accepted it.

They said, yeah. What God says about who I am and what's wrong with the world and what he's done to put it right, I accept that. I believe it.

My understanding has been enlightened. I'm convinced, if you like, of the truth. I accept the record that God gives of his Son.

But Luke says that's not enough. And many people there are who believe and they wonder why is something more dramatic not happening in my life?

[46 : 07] But Luke says they believed and turned to the Lord and there's the next step that we have to take. It's not simply enough to believe.

They have to turn to the Lord and you know that the word turn tells us something very basic, a change in direction in your life.

If you believe, then you should automatically turn. Turn away from all those things that you know are wrong in your life.

Turn away from idolatry. Turn away from self-reliance. Turn away from a vague notion and a wishy-washy idea that God will be merciful to everyone.

And turn to, and when you turn to, as we've noticed already, it's a person. It's not a set of ideas. It's not a propositional philosophy.

[47 : 06] It's turning to a person. It's a person whom you can embrace. It's a person whom you can trust. It's a person on whom you can rely.

And then Luke reminds us that such a person is a person no longer is their own. We read in verse 26 that in Antioch, people there were first called Christians. Many of us know that verse.

And simply to notice, although we could comment so much on what that verse might imply, is that it means these people were now the Christ ones, the people who belong to Christ.

In other words, you believe, you turn to the Lord, you don't belong to yourself anymore. You now belong to somebody else. You belong to him.

You've believed, you've turned, now you are no longer your own. You are now someone else's. And therefore you must submit. You must submit an obedience to him.

[48 : 22] If you love me, he says, keep my commandments. You must devote yourself, therefore, to the honor of Christ. You've got to serve him.

You belong to him. He's bought you. He's redeemed you. You don't belong to yourself anymore. You belong to him.

And finally, Christians must continue steadfast. Remember the Ministry of Encouragement that we said Barnabas had? He encouraged them to do what? To remain true to the Lord with all their hearts.

Second part of verse 23, to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. Barnabas' Ministry of Encouragement brought, we're told, many to new life in him.

But the Christian life isn't just about beginning. The Christian life is about going on. And as it's recorded for us here in Luke's words, words to remain true with all your heart.

[49 : 30] Now, remaining true, there's so much that we could say about it. But just notice, through times of suffering, are we going to remain true?

Through a time of ill health, am I going to remain true? Through a time of financial hardship, am I going to remain true?

Through the setbacks, through the hard times, when I'm tempted simply to give up, because it simply isn't worth it, am I going to remain true?

Are you? You may be going through a hard, hard time that I don't know about. But this word is for you this evening. Barnabas encouraged them to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. And she or he continues true to the Lord with all his heart through these difficult times.

And she or he who is going through those hardships continues to read their Bible and continues to pray and continues to fellowship together with God's people.

[50 : 43] When all seems pointless, remains true to the Lord with all your heart. Now, such people in summary, such people make up a church, not a perfect church, but a church that is a missional church, a church that is concerned about the outsider, like Antioch, people who love Jesus deeply.

They're the ones that have the vision that will change the world. May he bless his word to us. Let's bow our heads in prayer.

Father in heaven, give us, we pray, that love for Jesus that will change the world. Lord, we know that we rely on you to work great and wonderful things in the lives of those that you're calling into your family.

Thank you, Father, that you are working both here in our own land and to the ends of the earth. Let's glorify your name, we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.