

The Book of Acts – part 2

Daily Reading and Reflection

Immanuel Lutheran Church



Paul's First Missionary Journey (see map on page 6)

Monday, July 15: Acts 13:4-12

In Paphos, they met a magician. Wealthy Romans loved keeping magicians around to help them make important decisions. (Though Paul refuses to let the magician advise them against Christ!). How do you make important decisions? Do you ever ask God for guidance? Holy Spirit, guide us as individuals and a congregation to follow God's good will. Amen.

Tuesday, July 16: Acts 13:13-25

We swim in a sea of mass communication – bombarded by information. In a pre-print world, visits from outsiders, such as Paul and Barnabas, is the only way to get information and new insights from the outside world. What other viewpoints would you like to hear from in your life? In your church? Holy Spirit, help us listen to new voices and carefully discern their message for us. Amen.

Wednesday, July 17: Acts 13:26-43

Once again Paul looks to the past to talk about the good news of Jesus. He wants the people of Antioch to know that Jesus isn't a new phenomenon, but part of the whole history of God's people. If you wanted to tell about the good news of Jesus from your own history and experiences, what would you say? Holy Spirit, help us to see your work in all of history, even my own. Amen.

Thursday, July 18: Acts 13:44-52

Paul and Barnabas see a lot of highs and lows in this reading. Crowds come but people disagree with them. The word of God spreads, but they are driven out of the region. Still it ends, "The disciples were filled with joy." Is it possible to find joy in the Spirit in low times? How? Holy Spirit, be with us in our highs and lows, filling us and giving us joy. Amen.

Friday, July 19: Acts 14:1-20

Talk about a turn around! One minute the people are calling Paul and Barnabas gods, the next they're stoning Paul and leaving him for dead. There is a clash of cultures and a capricious crowd. Where do you see the Spirit working here? Holy Spirit, sometimes you are hard to see. Help us trust that you are still working among us. Amen.

Monday, July 22: Acts 14:21-28

Paul and Barnabas return to the churches they had established to give them encouragement, and help them know they aren't alone in the faith. How can we encourage one another in the faith? What kind of encouragement do you need? Holy Spirit, help us be there for one another as we learn and grow in faith. Amen.

Tuesday, July 23: Acts 15:1-21

This was a major disagreement in the early church: Should Gentiles have to become Jews before they can become Christians? What methods have you found helpful when someone disagrees with you? What should the church do when there are disagreements about theology or practice? Holy Spirit, help us learn to listen to each other and to you when we disagree. Amen.

Wednesday, July 24: Acts 15:22-35

The community comes to a compromise. The Jewish Christians ask for some concessions from the Gentiles that would benefit the whole community (like dietary limits that would allow them to eat together), but give up some things in the desire to be open to the Gentiles. What would you give up to welcome others into our church? What would you want to keep?

Holy Spirit, help us see what is really important as we reach out to our neighbors. Amen.

Paul's Second Missionary Journey (see map on page 6)

Thursday July 25: Acts 15:36-16:5

Here we find some staffing changes among the evangelists. But they continue to work in pairs (as did the disciples when Jesus sent them out.) Why do they work in pairs or groups? Who do you talk with when you have questions or need support?

Holy Spirit, help us be there for each other as we learn to follow your ways. Amen.

Friday, July 26: Acts 16:6-15

The Spirit seems pretty determined that they will go to Macedonia! Have you ever been led by the Spirit to go somewhere or do something? How did that feel?

Holy Spirit, guide me today for I am listening. Amen.

Monday, July 29: Acts 16:16-40.

Paul does the equivalent of freeing a girl from human trafficking. He and Silas pay a heavy price for doing so, but Paul remains focused on sharing the life-giving power of God... so much so that he won't leave when the jail cell opens. What do you focus on? One or many things? How does that focus guide your actions?

Holy Spirit, guide us to live lives focused on your loving, life giving way. Amen.

Tuesday, July 30: Acts 17:1-15

Notice how the people of Thessalonica are in an uproar over the good news of Jesus, while the Bereans welcome the message. Paul and Silas continue to speak where ever they go, regardless of the reception.

What in your life are you so excited about that you want to tell everyone? Kids or grandkids? A hobby or sport? What in your faith can you get excited about?

Wednesday, July 31: Acts 17:16-34

"In him we live and move and have our being" is probably from the philosopher-poet Epimenides (6th century BCE), but Paul uses it to speak of Jesus. What do those words say to you about life in God?

Holy Spirit, you are our source of life and being. Hold us this day and fill us with your life and love. Amen.

Thursday, August 1: Acts 18:1-17

"Speak and do not be silent; . . . there are many in this city who are my people." (Acts 18:9-10). Paul is reassured as he goes up against the synagogue leaders and Roman governor. He will have support and help along the way. Who do you turn to for help and support when you have to do something difficult or unpopular?

Holy Spirit, help us to not be afraid, but do and say those things that speak the good news.

Paul's Third Missionary Journey (see map on page 6)

Friday, August 2: Acts 18:18-28

Apollos is eloquent and passionate, but his knowledge of baptism is lacking, so Priscilla and Aquilla gently take him aside to instruct him. If you were asked to instruct someone about baptism, what would you tell them?

Holy Spirit, help me to find words to speak about what I believe. Amen.

Monday, August 5: Acts 19:1-10

“When Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them” – Have you ever felt that you were being filled by the Holy Spirit? Have you ever felt a peace or rightness or energy in a situation? If so, when? And what was it like?

Holy Spirit, let me feel your presence today. Amen.

Tuesday, August 6: Acts 19:11-22

Acts NEVER talks about Paul doing miracles or Peter performing miracles. It’s always about God performing miracles THROUGH Peter or Paul. God does miracles and wonders through all believers. What is God doing through you this week?

Holy Spirit, I am open to be your servant. Work through me as is your will this week. Amen

Wednesday, August 7: Acts 19:23-41

There is a riot in Ephesus because artisans are afraid of losing their livelihood. Paul tries to rush in, and is stopped – which turns out to be a good thing, since Alexander is able to calm and disperse the crowd. How do you choose when to get involved and when to stand back? How does God help you make decisions?

Holy Spirit, speak to me today, and help me know when to speak and when to be silent. Amen.

Thursday, August 8: Acts 20:1-12

That must have been one boring sermon! Eutychus falls asleep and falls out the window. But raising him from the dead seems almost secondary to Paul’s conversations. What do you think Paul is talking about that is so important and can’t be stopped? What is the most important thing the church has to say today?

Holy Spirit, keep me centered today on the most important thing. Amen.

Friday, August 9: Acts 20:13-24

“I do not count my life of any value to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the good news of God’s grace.” Paul is so centered in the good news that even imprisonment and persecutions are not going to stop him. What is so good about the good news? What about this kingdom of God is so compelling that it makes Paul unstoppable?

Holy Spirit, remind me today of the incredible good news of your presence and love. Amen,

Monday, August 12: Acts 20:25-38

This is Paul’s farewell speech to the church in Ephesus. If you were going to give a farewell speech to your congregation, what would you tell them?

Holy Spirit, thank you for your blessing of communities of faith. May I help others in their lives and faith journeys.

Tuesday, August 13: Acts 21:1-16

How difficult it must have been to say, “The Lord’s will be done,” knowing that they would never see Paul again, and that amazing evangelist would be silenced. How do you find help when following the Lord is difficult? To whom do you turn for support and advice?

Holy Spirit, sometimes your will is hard. Give us the courage to follow in your way. Amen.

Paul Goes to Jerusalem

Wednesday August 14: Acts 21:17-26

When Paul is being falsely accused, he performs a Nazarite vow – a way of recommitting himself to the law, to show that the accusations are not true. It seems that these days people are constantly accusing or assuming things about others. How do you think someone should respond to a false accusation?

Holy Spirit, help us to respond to each other assuming the best intentions and with grace. Amen.

Thursday, August 15: Acts 21:27-22:1

In the book of Acts, one doesn't expect the Roman Army to be the one to save a Christian. Yet in this case, the tribune of the cohort (commander of about 600 soldiers) does just that for Paul. Have you ever seen God work in unexpected ways through unexpected people?

Holy Spirit, help us be open to the unexpected ways you work in this world. Amen.

Friday, August 16: Acts 22:2-21

This is the second of three times we hear the story of Paul's conversion. This time Paul adds a few things, including the question, "What am I to do, Lord?" Such a beautiful question. Can you ask God that question today?

Holy Spirit, give me strength to continue to ask, "What do you want me to do, Lord?"

Monday, August 19: Acts 22:22-30

The tribune is having a bad day. First he mistakes Paul for an Egyptian assassin, then discovers he has been mistreating a Roman citizen. He can't let Paul go because of the mob, but he's not sure what Paul has done. When you are having a bad day, do you ask anything of God? If so, what do you ask?

Holy Spirit, help us bring our joys and our sorrows to you in prayer. Amen.

Tuesday, August 20: Acts 23:1-11

"Keep up your courage! For just as you have testified for me in Jerusalem, so you must bear witness also in Rome." In this difficult time for Paul, Jesus appears and endorses what Paul is doing. How hard is it for you to trust that God will hold you in hard times? Is it possible to "Keep up your courage?"

Holy Spirit, sometimes your way is hard, even impossible. Help me to trust that you are with me in difficult times. Amen.

Wednesday, August 21: Acts 23:12-22

From this point onward, Acts become much less of an adventure story, and much more of a legal drama. The question becomes, "Can Paul convince political leaders that he is no threat but still continue to witness to Jesus Christ?" How do you decide when to speak out for what's right and when to step back and be silent? When to risk for your faith and when to play it safe?

Holy Spirit guide us, so we can do your will in this world. Amen.

Thursday, August 22: Acts 23:23-35

This story sounds very political. Yet, God is still involved in the life of Jesus' followers and the intrigues of the empire. Do you see God working in the world of politics and governments today? Why or why not?

Holy Spirit, help us see that you are involved in the interactions of nations and help us follow your will. Amen.

Friday, August 23: Acts 24:1-21

Paul's defense is centered on faithfulness, hope and resurrection. If you were to tell someone your hope for the world and for the future, what would you say?

Holy Spirit, give me hope. Let me see new life emerging even in difficult times. Amen.

Monday, August 26: Acts 24:22-27

Paul and Felix discussed justice, self-control, and judgement for over 2 years. Imagine what they talked about. If you were in on the discussion, what would you say?

Holy Spirit, open my mind to understand your justice, your grace, and what you desire from us. Amen.

Tuesday, August 27: Acts 25:1-12

"To the Emperor you will go." In chapter 23, Paul has a vision of Jesus telling him he will go to Rome. But it has been 2 years! Finally it appears that the governor will send him to Rome. Do you ever get tired of waiting for God? If God seems silent, what do you do to remain patient?

Holy Spirit, your time is not my time. Help me be faithful and patient as I wait for you. Amen.

Wednesday, August 28: Acts 25:13-27

Paul has spent a long time in captivity, yet Festus still is unclear what to do with him. He thinks Paul is innocent, but knows the Jewish leaders want him killed. Have you ever felt torn between two decisions? How did you decide? Was God in the deciding?

Holy Spirit, be in all of my deciding, let my decisions reflect your will. Amen.

Thursday August 29: Acts 26:1-23

Even in Paul's tense and vulnerable situation, he finds spaces to speak about Jesus. If you were to speak to someone about Jesus, what would you say? Who is Jesus? What has he done?

Holy Spirit, give me words to speak about Jesus. Amen.

Friday, August 30: Acts 26:24-32

"Whether quickly or not, I pray to God that not only you but also all who are listening to me today might become such as I am." Is there someone you can pray for today, that they might know the love of God?

Holy Spirit, today I pray for _____. S/he is _____. I pray that _____.

Monday, September 2: Acts 27:1-12

Now that Paul is on his way to Rome, we find the story once again meandering through the ports along the Mediterranean Sea. Weeks, perhaps months go by. How do you see God working in this slow, rambling story? Is God in the midst of your long or boring days? How?

Holy Spirit, when I can't see you in my days, open my eyes with a surprise! Amen.

Tuesday, September 3: Acts 27:13-26

"For last night there stood by me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship". Have you ever heard God speak to you – in a memorable dream, an idea that would not go away, the voice of a friend?

Take some time each day this week to listen – just listen for God.

Holy Spirit, speak, and I will listen. Amen.

Wednesday, September 4: Acts 27:27-44

In the midst of storms and being adrift, Paul decides to have dinner. "He took bread; and giving thanks to God in the presence of all, he broke it and began to eat." Does this sound familiar? (Luke 22:19 and 24:30)

What is Paul doing here? What do you experience when you hear those words on a Sunday?

Holy Spirit, be present at my table as I share food today. Amen.

Thursday, September 5: Acts 18:1-16

Paul goes from murderer to god to healer to prisoner. Yet, it is when he sees the believers that he takes courage. What does being with the community of faith provide for you? What do you provide others?

Holy Spirit, bless our community as we gather together. Amen.

Friday, September 6: Acts 18:17-31

In the end, we never hear what happened to Peter or Paul (though tradition tells us they were both martyred in Rome.) In fact, we don't hear what happened to any of the other characters in Acts – Phillip, the Ethiopian, Dorcas, Lydia, Barnabus, Timothy, Priscilla, Aquilla, etc.) The book is not about them, but about the Holy Spirit. After reading through the book of Acts, what themes did you hear? What did you learn? What does the book have to say to the church today?

Holy Spirit, continue to lead your church and me into the future. I will do my best to follow. Amen.

