

4/15/18 Pastor Jordan Gades Acts 9: 1-19

Good evening! Grace and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Did you know that greeting is the greeting that Paul makes to all of the different churches in his letters? It's a good one that has lasted the test of time for sure.

We finally get to see and hear about Paul today. After 7 months of marching dutifully through the bible.

Creation Story

We talked about Isaac and him as a sacrifice, and then God saying no, no more human sacrifices.

God speaking to Jacob, renewing the covenant with him and his descendants

We heard a little bit about Moses, about the exodus, the saving of the people of God we heard the name of God the I AM

We heard about 40 years in the desert and God show abundance and provision and faithfulness to his people

We heard God calling Samuel in the darkness, Here I am Lord.

We heard God picking David, the least of the brothers to lead all of Israel

Then we heard about God's Justice and Grace though the prophets of Isiah, Amos, Jeremiah and Daniel being saved from the furnace. About God people feeling lost and abandoned but again and again calling to them and reassuring them.

Then we jumped to the birth of Jesus. We've spent the last few months going through all those stories about Jesus in the Gospel of John, through Jesus' death and resurrection just a couple of weeks ago.

And here we are with Saul.

Have you caught on yet the thing that brings all of these stories together? The string that ties them into one epic.

God. God showing up. God showing who God is.

-We have to expect God to show up. God show up in the least likely places and does the least likely things

Forgives, blesses, provides when none of the people in the story deserve it.

Today with Saul and Ananias. God Shows up. Let's take a quick look at who God shows up for this week.

Right after the stoning of Stephen for being a Christian, Acts picks up with this.

And Saul approved of their killing him.

That day a severe persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout the countryside of Judea and Samaria. **2** Devout men buried Stephen and made loud lamentation over him. **3** But Saul was ravaging the church by entering house after house; dragging off both men and women, he committed them to prison.

Ananias knew who Saul was alright. What do we do when a person proves who they are? We do the same thing that Ananias did. Turn away and try to convince ourselves that they aren't worth the effort.

But who are we as followers of Christ and who are these others that we judge and cast aside.

In baptism we become new creations. After the healing Saul gets baptized in our reading. We are new and full of life not because of anything we have done but by the Work of God. That's straight Law right there. We are just the same as Saul, as all those others that we so easily cast our eyes down upon. But in the midst of all of that what happens. God shows up and Gods story continues right now. God shows up and change happens.

There is this interesting little tid bit that I found while researching this sermon. When God tells Ananias that Saul is going to be a chosen instrument, the word in Greek is the same one as Paul's famous line in 2 Corinthians "we have this treasure in clay Jars"

Jars, instrument, vessel, all the same word. All of these things pointing back to our reality as Christians who know new life through our Lord, Its' not us, it's this other thing acting in our lives, in our very being that is changing everything. I'm just this jar, this instrument, this chosen vessel by which our Lord has chosen to work today. And he's going to be picking you tomorrow and that person that you looked down on, that person who bullied you, that person who made your life horrible; God might be using them tomorrow.

Coming to grips with this is insanely hard. There's no way around that. It wasn't for Ananias, who was about to pull a Jonah and sail to the ends of the earth to avoid helping Saul. But God showed up. And God filled him with mission and grace. And changed the world forever.

God is showing up right now. God will be showing 5 minutes from now and 5 years from now. And all those times in-between and after. And God is going to keep giving us this treasure of the love of the gospel to us, his chosen instruments to go and change this world. And we are just in the middle of this amazing story. Let's keep it going strong.