

# Don't Keep The Kingdom To Yourself

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Date: 17 October 2021

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[ 0 : 0 0 ]      heavenly father i thank you so much that we can be here and we can be gathered around your word your word is truth and we want to know the truth and we want our children to know truth also so please by your spirit would you ensure that we hear the truth and that our children always hear the truth amen well this morning we're in acts chapter 13 um continuing on our studies and we're reading from verse 13 to 52 the end of chapter 13 um and before i read if you remember or if you weren't here the previous section last week paul and barnabas had went out on a mission and they went to cyprus and they went through the whole island and they ended up talking to the proconsul a man named sergius paulus and he wanted to hear the word of god um however there was a jewish false prophet and magician who wanted to prevent them hearing the word from word of god and so again we see this theme that there's this spirit in the world that wants to prevent the world from hearing the word of god um but it was the holy spirit and paul who overcame this uh this magician so that sergius paulus could indeed hear the word of the lord this was an instance of two individuals one was a jewish person who was against them hearing the word of god and the other was a non-jewish person who really wanted to hear the word of god and this intersection this morning we're going to hear that same scenario except on a much larger scale a whole bunch of jewish people and a whole bunch of non-jewish people and we begin to see although it starts well we begin to see the same kind of the same kind of uh opposition and spirit against spirit battle so let me read chapter 13 from 13 to 52 now paul and his companions set sail from paphos and came to perga and pamphylia and john left them and returned to jerusalem but they went on from perga and came to antioch of pasidia and on the sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down after the reading from the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent a message to them saying brothers if you have any word of encouragement for the people say it so paul stood up motioning with his hands he said men of israel and you who fear god listen the god of this people israel chose our fathers and made the people great during their stay in the land of egypt and with uplifted hat and with uplifted arm he led them out of it for about 40 years he put up with them in the wilderness and after destroying seven nations in the land of canaan he gave them their land as an inheritance all this took about 450 years and after that he gave them judges until samuel the prophet then they asked for a king and god gave them saul the son of kish a man from the tribe of benjamin for 40 years and when he had removed him he raised up david to be their king of whom he testified and said i have found in david the son of jesse a man after my heart who will do all my will of this man's offspring god has brought to israel a savior jesus as he promised before his coming

john had proclaimed a baptism of repentance to all the people of israel and as john was finishing his course he said what do you suppose that i am i am not he no but behold after me one is coming the sandals of whose feet i am not worthy to untie brothers sons of the family of abraham and those among you who fear god to us has been sent the message of this salvation for those who live in jerusalem and their rulers because they did not recognize him nor understand the utterances of the prophets which are read every sabbath fulfilled them by condemning him and though they found in him no guilt worthy of death they asked pilate to have him executed and when they had carried out all that was written of him they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb but god raised him from the dead and for many days he appeared to those who had come up with him from galilee to jerusalem who are now his witnesses to the people and we bring you the good news that what god promised to the fathers this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising jesus as also it is written in the second psalm you are my son today i have begotten you and as for the fact that he raised him from the dead no more to return to corruption he has spoken in this way i will give you the holy and sure blessings of david therefore he also said in another psalm you will not let your holy one see corruption for david after he'd served the purpose of god in his own generation fell asleep and was laid with his fathers and saw corruption but he whom god raised up did not see corruption let it be known to you therefore brothers that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you and by him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of moses beware therefore lest what is said in the prophet should come about look you scoffers be astounded and perish for i am doing a work in your days a work that you will not believe even if one tells it to you as they went out the people begged that these things might be told them the next sabbath and after the meeting of the synagogue broke up many jews and devout converts to judaism followed paul and barnabas who as they spoke with them urged them to continue in the grace of god the next sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the lord but when the jews saw the crowds they were filled with jealousy and began to contradict what was spoken by paul reviling him and paul and barnabas spoke out boldly saying it was necessary that the word of god be spoken first to you since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life behold we are turning to the gentiles for so the lord has commanded us saying i have made you a light for the gentiles that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth when the gentiles heard this they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the lord and many as many as were appointed to eternal life believed and the word of the lord was spreading throughout the whole region but the jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city stirred up persecution against paul and barnabas and drove them out of their district but they shook off the dust from their feet against them and went

to iconium the disciples were filled with joy and with the holy spirit now we pray that god would bless the reading of his word well before we get into the passage i want to highlight just a couple of things concerning the nation of israel now john a jew and apostle of jesus wrote in the opening lines of his gospel that god came to his own and his own people did not receive him but then he writes but to all who did receive him so john who was a jew and a disciple and apostle of jesus wrote that god came to his own people but they didn't receive him but to all who did receive him some did receive him were given the right to be called children of god so there's a pattern that we see throughout the gospels and through acts it's a pattern we see even today in our time that collectively the nation of israel do not receive god but some jewish individuals do and i want to highlight that because as we're going through acts it could easily begin to sound anti-semitic but that's absolutely not the case luke is simply recording the historical fact that jesus was proclaimed as the jewish messiah and although some jews did believe the nation of israel did not believe and that's the same today the message went out to the world that jesus is not only the jewish messiah but the savior of the whole world and the gospel goes to the jews first and then it goes to the rest of the world and look already recorded jesus himself saying this and look 24 47 when jesus said to his disciples before he ascended repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations beginning in jerusalem so when we keep seeing and highlighting various groups of jews rejecting the message it's important to note that it's not because this book is anti-semitic in any way in fact at the end of the book we see paul and barnabas although at the end of our chapter we see them shake the dust from their feet and go with joy that doesn't mean that paul and barnabas are quite pleased that the jews have rejected it they're not at all in fact paul will go on for the rest of this book to put himself in danger time and again by going to the jews first in every place because he really wants to see his own people being saved and if you were to turn to the very last page of the book of acts you'll still see paul even under arrest trying to get the jews to receive their own messiah so i just want us to know that it's not like it's not like look the author of acts wants to paint the jews in a bad light that's not what he's doing rather he's explaining to this chap theophilus who he's writing to why the jews were still trying to kill paul just like they tried to kill jesus and did kill him and it's not because paul is a fake apostle just as it's not because jesus is a fake messiah that they were killed rather it's because the nation of israel have always rejected their prophets and that's what luke is showing luke is also shown in this book that paul actually loves his fellow jews he doesn't hate them even if they hate him paul never stops trying to show them jesus because he loves them and even when he gets rejected kicked out of the synagogue beaten and driven out of town the very next place he goes you find him in the synagogue again trying to convince the jews so why does he have this rule of jews first

because it's not about ticking a box nor is it about favoritism really he has a heart for his kinsmen his kinsmen he has a heart for his fellow jew that reflects the heart of god for israel so this is how paul describes it and this will help us because from this moment on in acts it's going to be mostly about the gentiles now and not the jews but this is how paul describes his heart in romans chapter 9 paul says this i am speaking the truth in christ i'm not lying my conscience bears me witness in the holy spirit that i have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart for i could wish that i myself were accursed and cut off from christ for the sake of my brothers my kinsmen according to the flesh they are israelites and to them belong adoption the glory the covenants the giving of the law the worship the promises to them belong the patriarchs and from their race according to the flesh is the christ who is god over all blessed forever amen paul loves his fellow jews and he wants them to know the christ from this point and on in acts we'll see the gospel not only go out to non-jews but the word of god begins to increase among the non-jews while the jews try to prevent it so i want to highlight these things as we go on we'll remember that the heart of god is for israel just as we'll see the heart of paul is constantly in pursuit of the jews jesus himself shared the heart of god for the jews because he is god and he shows us this in the parable of the prodigal son you'll know the parable it's in look look records this in fact funnily enough look is the only gospel that records this parable and we see this happening the parable of the prodigal son there's this father who has two sons it's in look 15 father has two sons note first that he is calling god their father and then his son it's not like he's calling the jews an outcast god is their father now when jesus told this this parable he was in a room filled with two groups of people they were all jews they were two groups of people on one side tax collectors and sinners on the other side pharisees and scribes the tax collectors and sinners were drawing near to hear jesus while the pharisees and scribes were grumbling what they don't realize yet is these two sons in jesus parable represent everyone in that room in some way so when jesus said that the younger son takes what is the father's and squanders it on prostitutes and and in reckless living when jesus shows the disregard for the father and the younger son it would be quite natural for the pharisees and scribes to immediately think that way of the tax collectors and sinners yes that's them that's them over there so the father has two sons the younger one wants his share of the inheritance early and then he leaves the father and he goes on a journey away and squanders the inheritance and reckless living and he ends up working on a pig farm in the middle of a famine and realizes that the servants in his father's house are better off than him so he decides to go home he decides to say sorry and plead even just to be a servant no longer being worthy of being called a son but before he gets

there before he gets home his father runs out to welcome him and he throws a robe around him and he gives him a ring and he gives him shoes and he throws a party for him and he sacrifices the fattened calf meanwhile the older brother is outside working and he hears that there's a party going on and he wonders what it's about so he says to one of the servants what's going on the servant says well your wee brother's home and dad's throwing a party and the older brother gets really really annoyed he's been faithfully working for his father and he's seen his wee brother just go away and take the inheritance and squander it and reckless living and yet the wee brother gets this party and he gets nothing so he's raging and he's standing outside and he won't even go in he doesn't even want to go into the house so much so that the father comes out again you see the father comes out to both sons the father comes out again to entreat the older brother and he says son you are always with me and all that is mine is yours it is fitting to celebrate and be glad for this your brother was dead and he's alive he was lost and now he's found it's fitting to celebrate you see both the sons in this story are jews the older son being the religious leaders the younger son being the tax collectors and sinners the younger brother is the one who was lost and is now found he was dead and is now alive whereas the older brother he just cannot wrap his head around how welcomed the younger one is despite all that he did how could the father welcome him back in like this after everything that he's done but notice again

[18:04] God is their father and he loves them both as though they are his own sons and although John said that only those who receive Jesus have the right to become children of God this parable helps us understand God's heart for the Jews because whenever we see the Jews rejecting Jesus constantly rejecting their own God by refusing to accept his son whenever we see that we need to remember that both sons in the parable went out from the house both sons went out the younger son went to reckless living the older son refused to go in the house and both times both times the father went out to both of them you see it's always us who turn from God every time he never ever ever turns away from us Luke shows and acts that there is always a faithful remnant of Israel constantly being added to kingdom but the nation of Israel national Israel have turned away from God God hasn't turned away from them they've turned away from God and according to Romans 11 the stumbling of the nation of Israel resulted in Gentiles streaming into the kingdom

Paul says that in his love for his fellow Jew he magnifies his ministry to the Gentiles he's making a big deal about his his ministry to non-Jews so that the Jews would become jealous and turn to their God again so thinking of the parable of the prodigal the younger brother who comes back is like the faithful remnant those who are coming in the Jews who are believing like the disciples and others there are some Jews who are believing whereas the older brother is like national Israel who largely rejects God and out of these two brothers these two groups here's a question which of these two brothers would be more welcoming and more accepting if the father were to also adopt a son who wasn't originally a child or a brother out of these two groups the older brother the younger brother who would be more likely to welcome in an adopted son because as we go through Acts and as Paul would later describe in his letters the Gentiles the non-Jews have been adopted by

God the father and the ones who are welcoming them in are the younger brother who have likewise been welcomed in but the older brother as we'll see in our passage don't want to see any of it not only could they not stand to see the younger brother being welcomed in they cannot stand to see God adopting another son so it's not as though it's not as though there's no evidence for Jesus being the Jewish Messiah in fact every time Paul goes to the Jews every time Paul goes to the Jews he reasons with them from their own scriptures he shows them all the evidence throughout the Old Testament and how it maps on to Jesus of Nazareth and this is an interesting point because God sends people out but he doesn't send them out to interact with people on a basis of a revelation they've not had Paul says that to the Jews were given the oracles of God the promises the covenants that's why Paul talks about this to the Jews when Paul goes to the Gentiles he doesn't he doesn't bring up a lot of the Old Testament because they just don't know it and that's the same with us if we were to go to strangers of Judaism they're not going to know the Old Testament there's no point trying to prove Jesus from the Old Testament in fact it's the other way about when non-Jews come to come to faith in Christ we actually begin to understand the Old Testament through Jesus whereas Paul's trying to help the Jews understand Jesus through the Old Testament you see we go to people on the basis of the revelation that God has already given them to the Jews with the Old Testament to the Gentiles with creation

God is the creator of all things so he draws on this we see this in chapter 13 in his complete story in the synagogue he uses the Old Testament he draws on the covenants and prophecies all the promises of God and shows how Jesus this man who was crucified fulfills them all you see there's only two options in Judaism either the promises have been fulfilled in this man Jesus or you're still waiting but if you're still waiting then you're waiting and the temple is suddenly destroyed you're waiting and suddenly Jerusalem is sacked you're waiting and suddenly the Jews continue to be scattered and oppressed you're waiting and there's no longer a Jewish nation you're waiting and it seems like God is no longer speaking to the Jews for over 2,000 years except he is speaking he's speaking through the apostles the witnesses of Jesus you see Paul is there in front of these Jews as a prophet speaking to the Jews he's telling them of the Messiah Jesus the one who sits on the throne of David you notice that he brings up David that when he removed him he raised up a king called David and of this man's offspring

God has brought to Israel a saviour Jesus as he promised you see in the old covenant the covenant that God made with David was that the house of David would be established forever there would always be a Davidic king on the throne that's no longer the case in their day but Paul says it is because Jesus comes from David and he is the king that sits on the throne he's the Messiah and then he goes on to say the one who is the begotten son of God in Psalm chapter 2 that's Jesus you are my son today I begotten you and then he goes on to say in Psalm chapter 2 that's the one who inherits the nations why is this gospel going to the whole world because Jesus is the king who inherits the nations and then he goes on to say that Jesus is the holy one who died but sees no corruption you see David spoke about this in the Psalms but even Peter back in chapter 2 says the same thing that Paul says here

[ 24 : 56 ] David saw corruption by the way the Messiah is not David because David is still in the tomb but Jesus who was raised from the dead didn't see corruption he is the holy one he's risen from the grave and at first when the people in the synagogue hear this they are absolutely astonished they're fascinated they love it they listen they beg Paul and Barnabas to come again please come back and tell us more then after the meeting some of them follow him and they urge them to continue in the grace of God it's going pretty well you see there is evidence and Paul and Barnabas have convinced the Jews from their own scripture that Jesus is the one but then the next Sabbath comes round next week next Saturday and almost the whole city gathers to hear the word of the Lord absolutely amazing imagine the whole of Bells Hill were knocking at the door it would be a nightmare form a queue but it's amazing the whole city are here to hear the word of the Lord amazing except when the Jews see it

I mean they're coming out to the synagogue the Jews synagogue when you think about those who are regulars in the synagogue imagine walking in and you're like wait a minute he's sitting in my seat who are you you don't even come to this synagogue you're sitting in my seat get out they see all these people coming out the normal churchgoers see the whole city coming out and they're like wait a minute you know we've been faithful like the older brother we've been faithful we've been here every week suddenly you come out and think it's alright and they get jealous and although it's not Luke's point I want to just say this kind of jealousy is not far from anyone anyone not far from any one of us see I remember when I first started dating Jennifer my wife she was the first relationship I started as a Christian believe it or not before that I had become a Christian when I was going out with a churchgoer

I was going out with a church girl before I became a Christian and then I became a Christian and in some ways that relationship that I was in became second to my Christian life and after three years she broke up with me and I remember thinking to myself okay now I can try and be an example of being a single Christian of course that didn't last long when I met Jen but then I met Jen and I thought okay now I can try and be an example of Christian dating but I remember not only getting jealous about a couple of things at the start of a relationship I remember being really surprised that I was getting jealous at that stage as a Christian thinking that everything was alright I remember getting really really surprised that I was still that prone to jealousy when something was threatened some affection of mine was threatened in some way so what if suddenly loads of people came to this church and because of that it no longer felt like our church or things were changing and focus shifted suddenly we were feeling like most of us were in the background now and I'm not saying anything about anything here other than it wouldn't be hard for any of us to see people being added to the church as being a negative thing you see it's very common in smaller churches to enjoy the intimacies of being a smaller church it's a good thing very common to feel that and enjoy that that there being fewer people means that you know one another you have that intimacy and you're able to do things that larger churches can't do and then it's very easy to see that when more and more people are added it feels like a loss something's lost and legitimately something is something of that intimacy is lost begins to feel more and more crowded we don't want this place to become overcrowded and you understand why but what is that actually saying is it saying that we would prefer fewer people to come to Jesus of course it doesn't mean that but any one of us at any moment is prone to this kind of thinking you see one thing is for sure in our passage that not only more people but different kinds of people being added to this synagogue would change things and it's the same in any church any church of any size a significant number of people and different kinds of people being added would change the dynamics of the church and so the Jews here become jealous when all these

Gentiles come out to hear the gospel you see it's clear that like in the parable of the prodigal son the Jews become like the older brother who would be far less likely to welcome in an adopted brother the Gentiles when his own prodigal brother returns bothered him and like in the parable at this point the Gentiles are rejoicing they're having the party they're being welcomed into the kingdom and they're rejoicing about it but the older brother's still outside still at angry that such a people would be allowed in I mean it's one thing for the prodigal to go out he was a real son it's one thing for him to go out and recklessly squander his inheritance but for non-Jews who don't know God who haven't been living according to the law after everything they've done after everything I've done that I would be welcomed in to the kingdom well they just can't stand that thought so they're still outside still angry refusing to come in refusing to come into the kingdom because they're angry at God welcoming others in see these ones who initially welcomed Paul and Barnabas now drive them out of town see some people some people just want to keep God to themselves some people want to just keep the synagogue to themselves and keep it their thing and some people want to just keep forgiveness to themselves and I can understand why it's sometimes

I mean if you're facing someone who's done some real harm to you how on earth are you going to forgive them and how are you going to accept a God who forgives them this is the story of Jonah isn't it Jonah cannot wrap his head around why God would forgive such a people as the Ninevites I mean they were terrible they were a terrible people but God does not find pleasure in the death of the wicked but that they would turn their lives around repent and find life I'm not saying that because I think that I'm not saying all this because I think that that's what this church is like but rather because this type of jealousy is what we see in our passage and it can happen to anyone and I'm not saying that again because this is a particular problem in this church or even a church that I know I'm saying it because it's a particular problem in this passage this is just where we are in Acts and I know that all of you pray and hope for the church to continue to grow and I know that you all have been very welcoming even to someone like me but if more and more and more people came in we need to know that none of us are immune from these kind of feelings none of us are immune from becoming people who begin to inadvertently work against growth because we think there are too many people and it would be a negative thing so two things two things are clear throughout the entire book of Acts the Holy Spirit never thinks that too many people is a negative thing the Holy Spirit never thinks that too many people is a negative thing

[ 33 : 23 ] Jesus wants as many people in his kingdom as welcome the Holy Spirit adds people not just little bits here and there but in abundance the Holy Spirit never thinks too many people is a negative thing but point number two as more people are added to the church more baggage is added to the church more logistics are required more grace and forgiveness is required more problems enter the church out of the fact that there are more people this is just true in Acts you see it at every point when more people are added to the church three thousand people are added five thousand more and more people suddenly there's a problem here that we didn't have before oh the Hellenist widows are getting more than the Jewish widows what's this about are the Jewish widows more than the Hellenist widows sorry again more and more problems because there are more and more people so on the one hand the Holy Spirit never thinks that more people is a problem on the other hand it's a reality we must accept that more people is going to mean more problems it's going to mean it's more uncomfortable and that it's going to be more work we must never see the second thing as being a reason to prevent the first thing we must be realistic that a church with more people may well be more difficult than a church with fewer people just like a bus that is full is less comfortable than a bus that only has a few people on it notice how the

Jews and the synagogue at first were very welcoming they were very open to the word they encouraged the ministry of Paul and Barnabas they begged them to come back to say more and they urged them to continue in the grace of God but then when the whole city comes out to hear the gospel this is what happened to the Jews who were the regulars in the synagogue and this is the same dangers that anyone faces when Jesus adds more people number one they became jealous of all these people coming in and then number two they began to view more people and different people as a bad thing and then number three they began to oppose the ministry that was bringing in more people these are the dangers that even we face even if we don't do any of these things even if we think we never would these are the dangers that everyone faces when Jesus brings unexpected growth or unexpected people into the kingdom and last week in our passage we see someone who was astounded someone who was astounded at the word of the Lord this week in our passage we see that after the teaching on the



Sabbath day in the synagogue just one day one church service the whole city hears about it and almost everyone comes out the next week again this theme that they're astounded by the word of the Lord and they want to come out to hear it and I'm not saying that my own teaching should astound anyone no but if the Bible moves you if you're moved by the word of the Lord if you're moved by answered prayer or joyful singing or sharing fellowship if any of that moves you don't be shy to share with people when they ask you how was your weekend tell them of the hope that you have in Christ tell them of something that you've learned about the Lord tell them of prayer that was answered in your life you see if it's if it's a good thing if it's good for us to be a place where we always remember the grace of God towards us and say even me then it's also good for us to see others with the same thought of and even you when we think even me even I can be accepted into the kingdom this is like the younger brother who when an adopted son comes in would say yes and even you the father would welcome even me and even you you see we must be in that place if we are always remembering even me we must be in that place where we're ready to say and even you and we've seen we have seen me and you we have seen and know the grace of God and so we welcome anyone who likewise trusts in Jesus for forgiveness and salvation welcome anyone who wants to hear the good news even if it means things will be a little different even if it means things will be a little more crowded even if it means things will be a little more uncomfortable because there are more people around the table to say even me you see God doesn't love us or love anyone because we are particularly lovable it's because of who God is it's because in the parable who the father is a God who loves sacrificially a God who loves graciously who loves generously a God who loves astoundingly more than we can possibly imagine welcomes even us in and anyone in who will believe in his son let me pray heavenly father we thank you that we can even call you father it is only because you adopt us as your sons through our faith in Jesus you even give us faith in Jesus you reveal to us who Jesus is that he is your son and our savior and that in him we have forgiveness of our sins and eternal life and because of you we have come to know that Jesus is our lord because of that we have been welcomed as children of God and we thank you it is only by your grace and your love and your generosity and kindness towards us that we can even call you father and so we do we call you our father because you are we are your children we thank you for

Jesus who has made it so even us who were not who were not even part of your chosen nation in the first place even us who were far away far off who didn't have your promises who didn't have your word and your law and your covenant even to us because of your people because of your son we have come to know you as our father and be welcomed into your kingdom and we pray for Israel we pray for that nation whom you called out many many years ago we pray for them that they would turn and know that they would believe and know that Jesus is their Messiah please lord open their eyes and hearts we thank you that many are we thank you that many individual Jews are coming to know Jesus as their lord but we pray for the whole nation that they would turn and finally accept you and know that you are their god and find life and forgiveness in the name of

Jesus Christ your son but lord even us we give you thanks and even in this town we give you thanks and we pray that you would help us to proclaim Jesus we would help that you would help us by your spirit to say that god has welcomed even me into his kingdom and that you would help us by your spirit to say that god would welcome even you if you believe in Jesus so help us to do that and help us to rejoice and to be glad that you have done this in Jesus name amen well let us sing and rejoice now