

The Bible is Entertaining!

“As Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, the people invited them to speak further about these things on the next Sabbath. When the congregation was dismissed, many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who talked with them and urged them to continue in the grace of God. On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and talked abusively against what Paul was saying. Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: “We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. For this is what the Lord has commanded us: ‘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 were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed. The word of the Lord spread through the whole region.”

We had a rummage sale at the parsonage the past two days. One item we put up for sale was an old entertainment center we had stored in the basement. It had a shelf for your television. This one also had shelves for a stereo, CD player, DVD player and for the old VCR. It also had a storage area for CDs and DVDs. These are things that “entertain” us.

When we think of entertainment, we usually think of things that are loud and fantastic. But that is not really true. Entertainment actually means to hold your attention. You are entertained whether you watch a loud, action movie at the theater with all the super loud speakers and large screen or whether you curl up in your chair with a book. Both grab your attention.

You know what else is entertaining? The Bible. Yes, the Bible has some action packed scenes like the flood, or David vs. Goliath. And church can be entertaining because of the music or kids singing. But the Bible is entertaining with choirs or without choirs, with videos or not. It captures our attention without Hollywood effects because of what it tells us and what it does to us.

I. The Bible is entertaining for what it says.

Luther wrote in his Catechism concerning the Third Commandment: *“We should fear and love God that we do not despise preaching and his word, but gladly hear and learn it.”* And our text is an example of both in our text.

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I remember when *Stars Wars* hit the theaters in the 1970’s. The line to the theater stretched outside and around three fourths of the building, and it was like that for months. *Star Wars* is a very entertaining movie, one of the most successful movies ever.

The Bible is entertaining, too. Paul and Barnabas just spoke at worship in the synagogue. If you want to read the whole sermon, read chapter 13. It focused on Jesus as the Christ who died and rose again and he concludes with this promise, ***“I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you.”***

As they left the synagogue, the people invited them to come back next week. In fact, many of them followed Paul and Barnabas around all week to hear more. More than that, when it came to church the following week, we are told that almost the entire town came to listen. *Stars Wars* had long lines, but most of the town was not in those lines. The Bible is more entertaining than *Star Wars*. Why?

“... many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who talked with them and urged them to continue in the grace of God.” They did this because they heard about the message of God’s grace. Go ahead. Stop paying your bills. When school starts, just don’t go, or if you do, don’t do any homework or study for any tests. Don’t go to work anymore. Ignore your family; it takes work to be a husband, wife, parent, even a child. Just stop. Don’t think about the next meal. Of course, you can’t. Without work, there is no food, no money. Without family, you will be lonely. School prepares you for the rest of your life. You have to eat or die.

The truth is, we are always forced to do something, and often we have to do it over and over and over again. I will never stop paying bills. Someone once said, we don’t own homes; homes own us and demand we give them constant attention. If I don’t fix the front door screen, gnats will continue to come in and bother us and that’s just one project.

If that is true physically, what about spiritually? Imagine if there was no Christ, and no cross. We will have to always work hard at being holy and perfect, and then it starts all over the next day. And then there is the guilt for the times we have not loved God or others. And then the fear knowing if we break one law, we are guilty of breaking all of it. We will stand before God and held accountable. How will we do?

That is why the Bible was so entertaining to those people in our text, and to us. Remember what Jesus promised earlier: ***“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”*** As a kid I thought this meant days off like

summer. No, Jesus offers us rest for our SOULS.

This is why God gave his people the Third Commandment, *“Remember the Sabbath Day by keeping it holy.”* On that Sabbath, there was no work, no harvesting, no planting, no shops were open, no gas stations, nothing. But don't work, don't even write out bills. Don't think about such things. This was a picture of the rest Christ gives. Just as you could forget about work and relax, Jesus will give us rest for our souls, but not just for one day. You didn't love your family or neighbor or God enough. Don't worry. Jesus died for your sins and you are forgiven; you will even rise from the dead to eternal life.

Imagine what this means for you? You don't have to take a 100 question test to see if God will let you into heaven. We want to live God-pleasing lives, yet, when we lay our head on the pillow remembering how we failed here or there, we can sleep well knowing there is forgiveness of sins. Salvation isn't something that comes after a long, hard life like retirement; it is yours NOW. Each day is a Sabbath rest. There is no doubt about the resurrection, eternal life. That is why the Bible is so entertaining, more so than Star Wars.

II. The Bible is entertaining for what it does.

But not everyone found the Bible so entertaining. ***“When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and talked abusively against what Paul was saying. Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: “We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles.”***

Some didn't like what they saw or heard. The Greek language does not distinguish between “jealous” or “zealous.” Jealous means you envy someone. Zealous means you are emotionally driven by something. I don't think these Jews were jealous that so many came to hear Paul. They were zealous. After centuries of being God's chosen people, after a lifetime of being faithful followers, it was hard for them to share God's kingdom with a bunch of outsiders. But their zeal blinded them and it led them to not only stop hearing God's Word, they spoke out against it. In reality, they turned down eternal life.

Friends, this text is being repeated each and every Sunday. Sometimes we actually get excited about church and the Bible. Other times we don't. Often we find ourselves bouncing from one to the other. The truth is, if we are not excited for next Sunday's worship service right after church today, something is wrong. If we don't want to follow God and his Bible every day, something is wrong. If God and his Word is a chore, then something is wrong. If one hour a week with God is enough, something is wrong.

Maybe it is like the Jews in our text. We think God owes us something. Maybe we get jealous that we deserve more than what God is doing after a lifetime of believing. Maybe we got mad at someone at church, and as a result we stay away. But do you see what happens? Our zeal, our anger, all such things really keep us from hearing the gospel and in a round about way, we begin to reject eternal life.

But the big one I see is competition to what is most important in our lives. When Jesus told us not worry about what we eat or drink or wear, I like the word he uses. It means really to be distracted. Truthfully we must eat, we must buy clothing, we must work hard, we must pay bills. These things are all important. The problem comes when we make these things as important as the Bible, or better, that forgiveness, eternal life, the Bible is only as important as food or job. Distraction. Suddenly what happens to us eternally is less important than a Snickers bar.

The key is repentance, the daily, even more than once a day admission of the truth that we are sinners who need a Savior. I found reading the owner's manual from a car more entertaining than watching the NBA finals game. I curled up with it alone in the living room and I read it. Why? Because I needed to. A light started flashing on the dashboard of our van and I wasn't sure what it stood for. Reading that owner's manual was more entertaining than the NBA finals because I had a need and the manual fulfilled that need. That light meant the van was due for an oil change.

The Bible becomes more entertaining than NBA finals, Star Wars, everything else when we humbly acknowledge it gives us what we need more than anything else. It then grabs our attention, it entertains us, as it shows our sins, but then it shows our Savior.

“When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed. The word of the Lord spread through the whole region.” The Bible will grab you. It changes you. It saves you. You believe because of it. Spend tons of time on bills and work and sports and everything, but don't let them distract you from what you need the most. Seek first his kingdom and all this other stuff will fall into place. INJ Amen.

General Prayer, June 28th, 2015

Dearest Lord, please help us to desire the things you want us to think and do, and thus order our lives around you and your Word. Let us rejoice only in what leads to you and grieve at what leads us away from you. Forgive us, then, for the many times we were distracted, filled with worry, or neglected your Word and thus counting ourselves unworthy of eternal life. We know you do in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, whose blood washes clean and fitting for heaven. Help us to be watchful so we are not distracted, but which seek you first and your righteousness above us. Thus bless us with faith, contentment, joy, peace and rest in Christ.

Be with our Pioneers who are away at the Boundary waters, and our Ladies who are attending the Lutheran Missionary retreat this weekend. Grant them a safe journey (there and) back again. May the Pioneers grow in fellowship with one another and the Ladies with all those who help make our world missions possible.