

Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> Reflection

## **Acts 14:8-20**

### **Paul and Barnabas in Lystra and Derbe**

In Lystra there was a man sitting who could not use his feet and had never walked, for he had been crippled from birth. He listened to Paul as he was speaking. And Paul, looking at him intently and seeing that he had faith to be healed, said in a loud voice, 'Stand upright on your feet.' And the man sprang up and began to walk. When the crowds saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, 'The gods have come down to us in human form!' Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates; he and the crowds wanted to offer sacrifice. When the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their clothes and rushed out into the crowd, shouting, 'Friends, why are you doing this? We are mortals just like you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. In past generations he allowed all the nations to follow their own ways; yet he has not left himself without a witness in doing good—giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, and filling you with food and your hearts with joy.' Even with these words, they scarcely restrained the crowds from offering sacrifice to them.

But Jews came there from Antioch and Iconium and won over the crowds. Then they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead. But when the disciples surrounded him, he got up and went into the city. The next day he went on with Barnabas to Derbe.

At the end of the month we celebrate Pentecost.

A couple of weeks ago I think I wrote about speaking the language of the people in our community when reflecting upon Pentecost. Here we find Paul and Barnabas in a thoroughly Gentile community; there was no Jewish heritage on which they could build in telling the story of Jesus. The local people, on seeing the healing of the man who had never walked, thought that Paul and Barnabas were gods and treated them as such. Paul and Barnabas wanted to get across the message to the people as to not only their own being mortal but of the truth of Jesus. They had to find a starting point for their communication; they most certainly had the crowd's attention. They began with the creation that the people of Lystra could see all around them.

Starting from where people are is always a good point to begin but we must also make sure people can follow the flow of the message.

We all know stories about "how do you get to...?" "Well I wouldn't start from here.." I remember when living in Bradford I was given the direction – "you go passed where the old Ambulance Station used to be." The person knew I was new to the area but was so used to using that term they did not realise how unhelpful it was.

In Stourbridge you "turn right at the Fish" or "you go to the Stewpony"; to those in the know it is fine but to the outsider it means nothing. How often is our Church language alien to the outsider?

Much has been made of the number of people in our communities at this time of "crisis" seeking answers about life. People following church services on line when they would not have set foot in a church in recent times if ever.

This time of isolation has caused many to ask questions and we are in a position of knowing where people "are" for we have shared in the same experience, from it we can speak of our faith in Jesus but we must do so in language that guides them to the truth and does not get them lost and confused en route by our language.

To Ponder; -

- Are there people that you avoid talking to about your faith as you think they won't understand? Whose problem is that?
- How willing are we, as a church and individual, to adapt how we speak of God so that we might reach different audiences and generations in this time of living differently? What could you/we do differently?