

October 2, 2016

Scripture: Acts 13:1-5

All Nations Heritage Sunday

1. Old Testament People Of God

- Favoritism? Just focused on the Jewish people?
- Chosen to be a blessing to the nations (Genesis 12:1-3, Etc.). **See map**
- A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church And The Biblical Story

2. Acts 2: “The Birth Of The Church?”

- The nations have come to Jerusalem to celebrate Pentecost. **See map.**
- As they hear the message in their own language (Acts 2) God is fulfilling His intention to bless the nations of the world through his plan of redemption
- God is gathering the nations into His kingdom, family and church community

3. Acts 13

- Less than 20 years after Pentecost
- Antioch: not a Jewish city (the Christian faith has moved beyond Jerusalem and Judea)
- The 5 mentioned leaders and teachers in the church at Antioch are a international group:
 - o Barnabas (Jew from Cyprus)
 - o Simeon called Niger (Africa)
 - o Lucius of Cyrene (north Africa)
 - o Manaen (brought up in Galilee)
 - o Saul (from Tarsus; Jew, Roman citizen)

What is most obvious is the ethnic diversity of the leadership of this church...The remarkable diversity of the backgrounds and origins of these leaders was ‘appropriate to the cosmopolitan context of Antioch’. (David Peterson, The Acts Of The Apostles, pp. 374-375)

“The church today, and in every generation, must make sure the door is wide enough open to let in people of every ethnic group, every type of family, every geographical region, every sort of moral (or immoral) background. But it must also make sure that the defining characteristic of the membership for this multi-ethnic family remains firmly stated and adhered to: the faith that Jesus is Lord and that God raised him from the dead. Keeping this balance, and doing so in the right spirit, remains a major task facing Christians in the twenty-first century” (NT Wright, Paul for Everyone: Romans Part 1).

4. Nelson Ave Today

- Not the Nelson Ave of 50, 25, 15, 10, 5? years ago.
- God is gathering the nations here.
- How do we respond?:
 - i. Acknowledge what is happening
 - ii. Embrace it, thank God for it. See this as God’s plan for His church.
 - iii. Giving people a place at the table
 - iv. Opening our hearts to each other
 - v. Seeking to understanding those from other cultures (“...not so much to be understood as to understand...”—prayer of St Francis).