

Scripture Reading:

Acts 21:1-17 “1 Now it came to pass, that when we had departed from them and set sail, running a straight course we came to Cos, the following day to Rhodes, and from there to Patara. 2 And finding a ship sailing over to Phoenicia, we went aboard & set sail. 3 When we had sighted Cyprus, we passed it on the left, sailed to Syria, and landed at Tyre; for there the ship was to unload her cargo. 4 And finding disciples, we stayed there seven days. They told Paul through the Spirit not to go up to Jerusalem. 5 When we had come to the end of those days, we departed and went on our way; and they all accompanied us, with wives and children, till we were out of the city. And we knelt down on the shore and prayed. 6 When we had taken our leave of one another, we boarded the ship, and they returned home. 7 And when we had finished our voyage from Tyre, we came to Po-tell-a-mus, greeted the brethren, and stayed with them one day. 8 On the next day we who were Paul's companions departed and came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him. 9 Now this man had four virgin daughters who prophesied. 10 And as we stayed many days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. 11 When he had come to us, he took Paul's belt, bound his own hands and feet, and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.' " 12 Now when we heard these things, both we and those from that place pleaded with him not to go up to Jerusalem. 13 Then Paul answered, "What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." 14 So when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, "The will of the Lord be done." 15 And after those days we packed and went up to Jerusalem. 16 Also some of the disciples from Caesarea went with us and brought with them a certain Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom we were to lodge. 17 And when we had come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.”

"Mnason the Disciple"

Well we are back in the Book of Acts: Lord willing we will complete our journey through the orderly account that Luke put together, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, for his friend Theophilus sometime this year!

- This has been an important journey and we should remember that Luke and Acts together comprise almost a third of the New Testament.

Luke began the second part of his account with these words from Acts 1:

“The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, 2 until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, 3 to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. 4 And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me; 5 for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." 6 Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" 7 And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."”

- The Gospel of Luke is the account of how Jesus came as the promised Messiah to save His people from their sins.

The Book of Acts is the account of how the Holy Spirit begins to fill the earth with the Kingdom of God making His disciples the witnesses that Jesus wanted in Jerusalem, all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

- The Book of Acts will close with Paul preaching the Kingdom in Rome and the work of taking the Good News to all the earth continues down to our day.

We picked back up this morning with the final journey that the Apostle Paul makes to Jerusalem from where the Holy Spirit will lead him to Rome. You will remember that we considered all the details of these journeys that Dr. Luke includes to affirm that we are reading a real historical account!

We saw how the Apostle Paul had set his course to visit Jerusalem despite all of the warnings that he received about the trouble that lay ahead. Next week we will consider in detail why Paul made this final journey and see the heart he had for his people the Jews, but this week I want to take a bit of time to consider someone who does not get a whole lot of attention.

- One of the early disciples named Mnason!

As I have often stressed, we must believe that the Holy Spirit knows where history is going and that He is going to bring glory to Jesus by filling the earth with His Kingdom!

It is proper to ask and ponder just how He carries out this great mission...

- He does so by using us!

We as those who are called by God, and are given the gift of faith so we are in Christ... WE are in a very real sense the hands and feet, the mouths and minds that carry forth the work of God in this world!

This is why I believe that Mnason is given the mention that he has here in our text...

Let me have the children try to help us see what I mean.

I am going to read this portion again and children you see if you can figure out why Mnason is important, what is it that he does that moves Luke to include him in this account...

“15 And after those days we packed and went up to Jerusalem. 16 Also some of the disciples from Caesarea went with us and brought with them a certain Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom we were to lodge. 17 And when we had come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.”

- So what role did Mnason play?
- That's right; they were going to stay in his home!

So with that in mind I want to take a look at what we know about Mnason and why his role was important.

- It will take us to the subject of vocation and perhaps even come close to defending rich or the 1% as they are being called today!
- That will be a big issue this year in politics so we should be ready to address it Biblically!

I am not going to go through a lot of detail on vocation, because if I did I would mostly be borrowing from the material put together by better men! *[mention the vocation sermons and encourage their use]*

There are several things we can know about Mnason from this brief mention that he gets in Luke's account.

- Obviously we know his name, which means remembering. He lives up to this name by being a faithful man.

We are told his birthplace: The island of Cyprus. The same island that was home to faithful Barnabas who established the Church at Antioch and traveled with the Apostle Paul on his first mission journey.

We are told that Mnason was an early disciple. Some think he was one of the seventy sent out by Jesus, others that he was among those saved at Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was poured out and still others believe that he was witnessed to and trained by Barnabas since they came from the same region. We have no way to know for sure.

And finally we are told about the role that Mnason was to play in this important journey that Paul and the others were taking: **Host!**

- Now obviously we could use this to once again point out the importance of hospitality in the advance of the Kingdom!
- There are many commands to be hospitable and we should obey them no matter what our resources might be: *[mention Mrs. Laningham]*

However, the fact that Paul AND his traveling companions were able to stay with Mnason tells us a bit more about this man... We must remember that the Apostle was traveling with a group of at least seven men who were delivering the donations that had been gathered for the Saints in need there at Jerusalem.

There may have been others besides those that Luke names in chapter 20 and Dr. Luke was with Paul along with any others who continued to travel with him. My point is that Mnason did not have just a small apartment in Jerusalem!

- He was very likely a wealthy man with a large home there which could accommodate this large traveling group!

Now here is what we need to remember: The Holy Spirit is the same God who cared for the people of Israel in the wilderness for forty years: **[our history is important!]** Providing them a pillar of fire or smoke to follow, food & water for hundreds of thousands of people, along with shoes and clothes that never wore out...

- This history reminds us that He did NOT need Mnason's home to take care of this traveling group!
- BUT He did have them stay at Mnason's home!

This simple truth is what we must grasp if we are to properly understand wealth and the importance of our vocation!

- A better understanding of both is desperately needed in our day!

We must not be afraid of wealth but at the same time we should rightly fear wealth... That may sound confusing, but let me explain: The Apostle Paul gave young Timothy a stern warning about why we must rightly fear wealth:

“For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” I Timothy 6:10

Sadly down through most of church history many have taken this warning about greed and the love of money and shortened it to say that money is the root of all evil. This has led to vows of poverty and seeing money as **ONLY** filthy lucre. Remember those warnings that Jesus gave the Pharisees that we reviewed last week?

- It does you no good to wash the cups and plates if what is on the inside is still rotten.

IF you have a greedy and covetous heart, the solution is NOT making sure you never get around any money!

- It is the greed that needs to be confessed!
- It is the **LOVE** of money that is to be avoided.

The wisdom of the Proverbs reminds us that we are not to be focused only on gaining wealth: At Proverbs 15:16 we read, “Better is a little with the fear of the Lord, Than great treasure with trouble.”

Or Proverbs 16:8, “Better is a little with righteousness, Than vast revenues without justice.”

Perhaps it is King Agur who gives us the best balance in this important area: Proverbs 30:8b “Give me neither poverty nor riches-- Feed me with the food allotted to me; 9 Lest I be full and deny You, And say, "Who is Jehovah?" Or lest I be poor and steal, And profane the name of my God.”|

So we are to be satisfied with what we have and at the same time we should not fear the blessings that God may desire to give us! We should pray that God help us to avoid poverty and to have the wisdom to handle whatever riches we gain.

- This brings us back to our hospitable and likely very wealthy, disciple Mnason!

We are not told how Mnason gained his wealth or just how much he had: We are only told that he had a rather large home in Jerusalem and that he was more than willing to share what he had, even to put up someone as controversial as the Apostle Paul! *[we will see just how controversial he was in the coming weeks and this is something that Mnason and the others were clearly aware of.]*

There is no need to speculate as to what Mnason did for a living...

- If we were supposed to know Luke would have told us!
- What we do know is that he gained wealth and knew how to use it as a faithful disciple.

This is why I wanted to also touch on the subject of vocation before we leave Mnason and move on to Paul’s visit and trials in Jerusalem.

- Vocation is simply our calling, that which God would have us do!

It is how we become the hands and feet and mouths and minds that the Holy Spirit uses to fill the earth with the Kingdom of Jesus!

- First and foremost we must remember that God does not only use ministers or rich people.

We must not think that because we are not in what we call today “full-time Christian service” or do not have boats loads of money for someone in such service to use in the Kingdom, that what we do is of little use to God. Pastor Wilson does an excellent job of reminding us that we are ALL in full-time Christian service and how all that we do is done in Christ and for Christ.

There are famous preachers who have been used by God to bring many thousands to Jesus, like Billy Graham. There are others who may pastor small churches but take the opportunity to share Jesus with a tow truck driver after their car breaks down like Smokey Denna did this week.

- Both are doing Kingdom work!

You may have a VERY successful business man who is able to give millions toward Billy Graham crusades and you may have a man working at a lumber mill that gives his tithe to Smokey’s church.

- Both are doing Kingdom work!

There was a faithful mother who raised Billy Graham to have a BIG heart for the lost and there was a faithful mother who raised the man who faithfully did the janitorial work that was required for a massive crusade.

- Both were doing Kingdom work!

Jesus reminded His disciples that they should not look to the “leadership” models used by the world where the important people lord it over the peons and want LOTS of attention & credit.

- They were to follow His example of quietly being a servant to all!

This is why the Apostle Paul warned us about looking down on the less attractive parts of His Church...

- The body God has put together!

I Corinthians 12: 20 But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. 21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." 22 No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. 23 And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unrepresentable parts have greater modesty, 24 but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, 25 that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. 26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. 27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.”

IF we think Biblically, then the most important vocation is going to most likely be the vocation that has the most said about it in the Scriptures...

- May I suggest that it would be the Proverbs woman, who is described for almost an entire chapter!

Adam understood the importance of the woman’s role when he gave his wife the name Eve after the fall, meaning mother of all life. Even the secular world understands this principle when they often say “The hand that rocks the cradle is the power that rules the world.”

There was one very important woman in Mnason’s life and likely two... We know that he had a faithful mother who cared for him, raised him, fed him, changed all those diapers [with no help from Proctor & Gamble] & gave him the training & education he needed. As a successful man, he likely had a good helpmeet who not only continued to care for him in many basic ways, but also gave him wisdom and support.

- I am pretty sure that neither Mnason’s mother nor his wife were upset when Luke did not mention them in his orderly account.

I am also pretty sure they would have been rightly proud of the fact that their son or husband was duly mentioned!

- None of us will ever have our names mentioned in the Scriptures!

In fact, it is very likely that most of us will serve quietly and get little or no public credit for the things we do in our homes or workplaces.

- This certainly does NOT mean that what we do is not important for the Kingdom!
- Again Pastor Wilson shows how we change each of those diapers, or do any of our daily tasks, in Christ and for Christ.

Every part or pill that we count, every weld that we make or tree that we trim, every piece of tape that we mud or line that we stripe, every whistle that we blow or program that we write, every lamp that we wire or board that we fix, every patient that we care for, every passenger we deliver or every line that we draw, every dollar we count or tank that we fill, every signal we send or call that we make, every person we teach or cup that we brew is done in Christ and for Christ.

Pastor Tuuri uses the wisdom of the Proverbs to show how we are ALL to be diligent in our vocations [including the children]. I hope you will all avail yourself of his wisdom so that we might see the truth we see in the first chapter of Zechariah’s prophecy brought forth in our day, remembering that the Bible declares that we as the Bride of Christ are the New Jerusalem.

Zechariah 1:16

“Therefore thus says Jehovah: "I am returning to Jerusalem with mercy; My house shall be built in it," says Jehovah of hosts, "And a surveyor's line shall be stretched out over Jerusalem." ' 17 "Again proclaim, saying, 'Thus says Jehovah of hosts: "My cities shall again spread out through prosperity; Jehovah will again comfort Zion, And will again choose Jerusalem." ' " 18 Then I raised my eyes and looked, and there were four horns [*the power of great empires or nations*]. 19 And I said to the angel who talked with me, "What are these?" So he answered me, "These are the horns that have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem." 20 Then Jehovah showed me four craftsmen. 21 And I said, "What are these coming to do?" So he said, "These are the horns that scattered Judah, so that no one could lift up his head; but the craftsmen are coming to terrify them, to cast out the horns of the nations that lifted up their horn against the land of Judah to scatter it."

If we have eyes to see, we can see clearly in places like Psalms 2 and 110, in Daniel chapter two, in the Great Commission, in Paul's great resurrection chapter in his first epistle to the church at Corinth, and others...

- **That all the nations of the earth are going to be given to Jesus!**

Just as the Holy Spirit used the residence of Mnason to house Paul and his companions to advance the Kingdom, so he will also use the labor of our hands...

WE are His craftsmen who are ordained to bring down the great power of worldly nations!

We do so by walking in the good works we were created to walk in...

- **Those simple daily tasks we are called upon to do!**
- **We should do so in the power of the Holy Spirit as witnesses for Jesus to all the ends of the earth!**
- **May it be so in ALL of our lives this week and for the remainder of our days!**

Communion Meditation: Genesis 18:

[the Lord passes by and is bidden to stay]

6 “So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah and said, "Quickly, make ready three measures of fine meal; knead it and make cakes." 7 And Abraham ran to the herd, took a tender and good calf, gave it to a young man, and he hastened to prepare it. 8 So he took butter and milk and the calf which he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree as they ate.”