

Thought for the Day 13th May 2020 – Acts 13: 4-12

Sergius Paulus was the Proconsul in Cyprus and he was an intelligent man. So when he heard of Paul, Barnabas and John doing their tour of the synagogues of the island, stirring up interest by proclaiming the word of God, he decided to have them in to give an account of themselves. Was this decision an act of the Holy Spirit?

Being an intelligent man, Sergius Paulus had one of the opponents of the itinerant missionaries there on hand, the magician Elymas also known as Bar-Jesus. It's good to get different views isn't it?

Sergius Paulus wasn't disappointed. Elymas and Paul slugged it out in front of him and the confrontation ended with Paul looking intently at Elymas and striking him blind with a sort of curse. Amazing! So, obviously, when Sergius Paulus saw what had happened he believed. Also, he was astonished at the teaching about the Lord. (13:12)

We are reminded here that we proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God through our actions as well as our words and sometimes our actions are more eloquent. Every human being is called to align themselves with the purposes of the Kingdom of God and the good news of the Gospel is that, through the sacrifice Christ made on the cross, they can be so aligned.

In the midst of the pandemic the people of this community are watching what we are doing as much as they are listening to what we are saying. And all of us are called to act in a way that proclaims the Kingdom; that shows people who are watching what the Kingdom is like and what the Kingdom can do.

The author of the Acts of the Apostles was sure that it was the Holy Spirit that sent Paul and Barnabas and John to Cyprus. It also made sense. Barnabas was from Cyprus so he must have been able to take them to places to stay and secure introductions to the synagogues of the island. So the Holy Spirit coincided happily with common sense.

But surely nobody foresaw that they would be granted an audience with a man like Sergius Paulus or that Paul would win a showdown with a magician. Here the Holy Spirit was taking the apostles to unexpected places.

Through prayerful openness to the Holy Spirit, we too can discern the difference between what the Holy Spirit is directing us to do and what is merely the course of action directed by our vanity, cowardice or greed. In prayer we will be reminded that it is not only in our lives that the Holy Spirit is active. And so we will find that the Holy Spirit takes us to some places that make sense to us and also to some places and into some situations that are completely unexpected.

The church needs this prayerful openness right now more than usual. Come, Holy Spirit!

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O Lord, from whom all good things come: grant to us your humble servants, that by your holy inspiration we may think those things that are good, and by your merciful guiding may perform the same through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.