

Something Beautiful (Acts 11:1-30)

A politically explosive, racially divided, cultural center. Antioch was a city of wealth, power and popularity, known for its immorality and polytheism. This is where a group of unnamed men brought the good news of Jesus. What formed is *something beautiful* - a community that pushed against racial divide, cultural norms, hatred, idolatry and division with the love and grace of Jesus.

1. Something NEW (Acts 11:1-18)

Peter retells the story with a few important details added we didn't hear before.

V14 *"he will bring you a message through which you and all, your household will be saved."*

V16 *"Then I remember what the Lord (Jesus) said..."* – this is all about recognizing the sign of the promise! (John 3:5; Ezekiel 36:25-27) = The promise of renewal, restoration, relationship and more!

Peter's conclusion? V17! *"Who was I to stand in God's way?!"*

Something + Jesus = salvation is a little concoction of our own making!

Grace is God's unmerited favor. Undeserved. Unearned.

2. Something DIFFERENT (Acts 11:19-26)

Unknown people doing significant things. Ordinary people with extraordinary news!

Obedient to Jesus right where they are.

= A new church, made up of predominantly non-Jews located in the city of Antioch (capitol city of Roman province of Syria), the third largest city of the day (next to Rome and Alexandria) – half a million people.

They were *living* in a politically explosive, racially divided, immoral and polytheistic time.

This is where the gospel was brought and where it thrived!

Barnabas didn't focus on their weaknesses! Instead he had faith in God's ability to change people.

He chose to focus on what God had done / could do!

V23 Barnabas ENCOURAGED them *"to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts"*

Steadfastness is the main idea here = having resolve, a purpose; devotion connected to your heart (the center of who you are). 1 Corinthians 15:58

V24 Barnabas goes looking for the man who helped kill his friend Stephen! No room for bitterness or hate – refused to be defined by their past. They walked *together* now.

First called "Christians" in Antioch. Their name revealed their allegiance.

3. Something BEAUTIFUL (Acts 11:27-30)

In the face of cultural tension and their own uncertain future they GAVE and SENT!

Across geographical and ethnic boundaries, they displayed unity / care / love.

The church in Antioch was a diverse, sacrificial and mission minded church.

Started by anonymous followers of Jesus / pioneers who believed the good news of Jesus was for EVERYONE in a time when others weren't so sure.

QUESTIONS

1. What controversy is Peter walking into when he travels back to Jerusalem? How does he address it? How does Peter's response to criticism teach us how to face criticism?
2. Unknown, ordinary people with extraordinary news started the church in Antioch. Significance is often associated with fame and popularity. How do these "unnamed pioneers" challenge that?
3. What did Barnabas see when he arrived at the church in Antioch? How did he encourage them? Why is this kind of encouragement so critical? Acts 11:22; consider 1 Corinthians 15:58
4. Who has encouraged you in *your* faith? Who has God used to help you use your gifts? Share how the Lord used that person / how they encouraged you.
5. How can we grow in seeing God's grace and encouraging others? What will it require?
6. Why do you think Barnabas' character is highlighted so much?
7. The church in Antioch thrived in the midst of a culture of division, tension, immorality and idolatry. What set them apart? How does the name "Christian" speak to that?
8. What does their gift to the church in Jerusalem reveal about their faith and character?