

Common Lies that plague our lives:

The check is in the mail.

(Well, internet banking has made that one less popular)

I'll start my diet tomorrow.

(No comment)

We service what we sell.

(I won't mention any of the places you are thinking about right now)

Give me your number and the doctor will call you right back.

(Right back, meaning, this evening or later this week)

Money cheerfully refunded.

(With lots and lots of paperwork, with the original receipt only, original box, with all tags still on the merchandise, with a 10% restocking fee, and with three forms of valid ID - for your protection)

One size fits all.

(Fits all what?)

This offer limited to the first 100 people who call in.

(Whew! I always seem to make it right under the wire)

Your luggage isn't lost, it's only misplaced.

(Its on its way to Hawaii)

Leave your resume and we'll keep it on file.

(File 86, that is)

I just need five minutes of your time.

(Its LONG five minutes though)

Your table will be ready in a few minutes.

(Now, watch me while I text my girlfriends without notifying anyone about you)

Let's have lunch sometime.

(These people, must never eat lunch)

It's not the money, it's the principle.

(And, the principle thing is - money)

And, finally, my favorite: The paint will dry by noon tomorrow.

(Noon is such a mazing hour of the day, isn't it?)

There are little lies, that annoy us, lies that make life more....complicated, and then there are big lies. These are lies that we assume are truth, these are lies that we believe as true, and as such, these lies can stop us from seeing the truth.

Here in our Scripture this morning, the people of [Lystra](#) have lived with a lie that they believe is absolutely true. This lie is so true to them that when the truth is presented right before their eyes - they see it for something else, it is as if they are blind to what it actually is.

There is a lie that plagued the people of Lystra: The lie is that they have a false view of how the spiritual world works. Could it be that these men and women's pagan view of how the spiritual works stops them from seeing the true God when His works were right in front of them? There is more to this than meets the eye, for the situation we are dealing with here this morning isn't only about a few lies small or large, there is a spiritual element behind the events we read about in our Scripture today.

These people of Lystra cannot see the true God, is it cultural, is linguistic, it is moral, or is it something deeper? Why can't these people see the evidence right in front of their faces? Let's take this passage apart and see why they cannot see.

What a difference location makes. Earlier we saw in Acts chapter 3. Peter speaks to a man who was clearly lame, and tells him to rise and walk in the name of Jesus Christ the man does and a multitude of people believe in Jesus Christ. Yet here in Lystra, Paul does essentially the same thing. A man lame from birth, he tells to rise up and walk, the man does, but instead of belief in Jesus, the people believe even more in their pagan ways.

They see the true God in action, but this only reinforces what they already believe.

Paul and Barnabas has traveled from [Pisidian Antioch](#) to the city of Lystra, approximately 100 miles apart. It is not known how the city of Lystra began, but it is known that in 6 BC Caesar Augustus made the city of Lystra into a Roman colony. Augustus brought veterans of the Roman army along with their families to the city along with his decree. These veterans represent the ruling class in the city with the commerce and education overseen by Greeks living there. The vast majority of the population is local Antonian people. These people are not the Barbarian [Gauls](#) we saw Pisidian Antioch, they are local people from Asia minor. These are local people who we see having the strong reaction to the miraculous healing of the lame man.

It is apparent that there was a very small Jewish population in Lystra, but there were not enough families to start a synagogue. Since the Jewish population is so small, it does not have much influence upon the city - if any at all. We see Paul does not go to the

synagogue first as he had done previously, because there is no synagogue. This is the first city in which, for all practical purposes, the population is completely pagan - the worldview of the OT, for the society at large, is completely absent.

Let's stop for a moment and realize what it means for a worldview to not encompass the OT. You see, the OT is foundational for your thought process, your reasoning process and your sense of morality, if you live here in America today, and this is true whether you are Christian or not. Our moral written code here in America today has its roots in OT commandments and OT thought. Those who claim you cannot legislate morality don't seem to get the fact that creating laws for or against something like theft or murder - is legislating morality, in fact, many laws that we have in place today enforce a moral code, they are - legislation on morality.

What if you lived in a society where the ten commandments did not exist?

You know, many people obey the ten commandments because there are laws that uphold the ten commandments: Theft, murder, abuse. If there were no laws saying that theft was punishable, would people think it was wrong? Not necessarily.

See, we assume a sense of how things are, right and wrong, our reasoning, because we have a structure given to us to operate within. When the Hebrews received the Ten Commandments from Moses the notion of adultery being morally wrong was a new concept to them.

So we see that the local Lycaonian population is operating in a world that is completely different from the world we operate in, not only in a sense of modern vs ancient, but even more in how things work, both morally and spiritually.

Granted, the Romans and the Greeks have a deep sense of law and philosophy where a morality of right and wrong has been established, but just because there are Romans and Greeks does not mean they have communicated their philosophy to the local population. From the reaction they have to Paul and Barnabas it is apparent that they have not to any great degree.

Paul and Barnabas enter the city and see a man who is lame, his feet are somehow under developed so that he is not able to walk. So Paul does what we saw Peter doing several

chapters earlier, he commands the man to get up and walk. Understand that Paul does this, not on his own, but by guidance of the Holy Spirit.

So Paul essentially does the same thing that Peter does in Jerusalem in Acts chapter three, but with a greatly different reaction. In Jerusalem the healing miracle happens in the Temple complex. There in the Temple complex are people who know and understand the OT. They know a miracle of healing does not come from men, but from God, so they naturally attribute the healing of the lame man to God and then receive the explanation that Jesus is behind the healing.

Here in Lystra, the people who see the healing know nothing to the OT. They see the exact same type of miracle, but do not understand that such a healing can only come from God, so they attribute the healing to men, Barnabas and Paul. These people believe that Paul somehow has super powers - the power of a god.

The people in Jerusalem have an understanding of how God operates, these Lycaonians have no clue.

Remember, these people are not the Roman citizens. We can tell they are Lycaonian because their response in our text is not linguistically based in Greek, or Latin based, but in Lycaonian.

We can see that the healing is a real healing by the response of the people, they go crazy.

Roman writer [Ovid](#) tells a story of based in the Lystra region where an elderly couple Philemon and Baucis entertain [Jupiter](#) and [Mercury](#), (Jupiter and Mercury are the Roman equivalents of [Zeus](#) and [Hermes](#) that we see here in this text). Some biblical scholars assume that the people react in such an extreme way to Paul and Barnabas because of this legend. But, this is a Roman legend about gods with related, but different names, not a Lyconian story, and a story which there is no proof that the residents even heard of it, plus the text does not elude to the story at all. The reaction of the people really has more to do with something other than any legend people might try to attribute to it.

The reason Paul and Barnabas do not react immediately is that the people, who both understand and speak Greek, react in their first language, Lycaonian. Paul and Barnabas do not recognize the language so they do not know what is happening. The native population still spoke their local language, even though they would have had a command

of Greek. We see that their language is very different than anything Paul and Barnabas would have ever run into. It is a very different language than where they had just come from.

Paul and Barnabas figure out what is going on when the priests show up with bulls decorated for sacrifice. Verse 13 tells us that the temple was just outside the city, this would mean that the temple was at the city gates and since it was at the city gates, Zeus would be considered the protector of the city. They believe that Barnabas is their protector.

Paul and Barnabas tear their clothes as a Jewish sign of blasphemy (verse 14) - which the people do not appear understand, s for they are unaware of Jewish culture. This is when the Apostles speak to the crowds about the true God. Notice, they are not presenting the Gospel at all, but are attempting to explain that the people have misunderstood, they are not gods themselves, but are men who are messengers for God.

In previous verses it is seen that they do preach the Gospel and do have some people become Christians, it is not said who these new Christians are, Romans, Greeks, Jews or locals. My best guess is, the new converts are not local people. Apparently, these locals have great difficulty understanding the Gospel message.

Normally we have seen Paul and the other Apostles use illusions from the OT to help people understand Jesus, they use direct quotes from the OT as they prepare people to hear about Jesus, but here they are dealing with people who have no acquaintance who the real God is, the OT or Jewish culture, so the Apostles appeal to the natural revelation of God the creator. Still, they couch their words in language drawn from the OT. The language found here in verses 15-17 is very dependent on the Septuagint, though they are not talking about Hebrew history, their proclamation style is completely OT style. (See Ex 20:11, Esther 4:17, Jer 2:5; 8:19)

These pagans do not understand the unity of God as one being nor do they understand the character of God. Notice, that they do not think the Apostles have a magical ability, but that they are divine. This is probably because the Apostles do not speak a spell or an incantation as a witch would, they use the spoken word spoken with authority. Since they are not magic, it is obvious to the local people that they are divine - because this is the way they see the world, remember these people have no reference to the OT.

The Apostles do not excuse the behavior of the people, outright. What do they tell the people? They tell them that their gods are useless and that they are to turn from them to the living God. They also infer that this living God has been with them for all time since he is the creator. We see in Romans 1:19-20, Paul insisting that if men and women had paid heed to the works of creation they would have in them found tokens of God's everlasting power and divinity.

This speech and the one Paul gives in Athens later in the book of Acts, point out that until the full revelation of God came to the gentiles, he overlooked their errors that arose from their ignorance of his will. This overlooking is due to the patience of God, not the indifference of God.

Still, the people are not convinced, and are only held back from offering worship to the two disciples.

Here is where we need to step back from this whole situation and examine the problem of spiritual evil in our world.

Today, many Christians operate in a spiritual vacuum. The vacuum they operate in is a vacuum on merely a human level of operations. If we only had better advertising, or if we only had better programs, or maybe if we had a better model of organization - then - then we would be able to easily reach people for Jesus Christ. Now, all those things I mentioned are true, but all those things I mentioned are only a part of the answer.

See, we are not simply a small business here at First Presbyterian. We deal with the natural realm, but, as we talked about last couple of weeks, we also deal in the spiritual realm as well. The answers to what we seek are not only physical in nature, but also spiritual in nature. To address one and not the other is a big mistake.

Back to the people of Lystra. Is this a hobby of the Lyconians, this worship of Zeus? Is going to the temple of Zeus to worship equivalent to going to a Rotary meeting? No of course not. Remember, we saw a couple of weeks ago that on the island of Cyprus in the city of Paphos that the people were held in spiritual bondage by the local cult, here today, we see the same with the people of Lystra. They are in spiritual darkness because they do not know who the real God is, yet these people of Lystra are also in spiritual darkness because they serve the pagan god Zeus. This serving of Zeus is what holds them in spiritual bondage.

They were certainly sincere in their worship, these people of Lystra were certainly sincere in serving Zeus, but friends the road to hell is paved with sincerity.

See, it is more than being uninformed, or misinformed, these people, they are, as we saw on the island of Cyprus, these people are serving another spirit, and that spirit is not of God. It is more than not knowing the right thing to do, it is more than not knowing the truth, they are being spiritually held back by the forces of evil.

Understand that when the people offer worship to Zeus, they are not offering worship to empty space - while it is true that Zeus is just a legend, there is always a spirit behind these cults, and since that spirit is turning people away from worship of the true God, we can conclude that the spirit is not of God, and by extension the cult of Zeus, is not of God. If the cult of Zeus were of God, then why do these people need to turn to Jesus Christ? There would be no point. It would be a waste of time for the Apostles to be there. (See sermon from two weeks ago "Blind Bar Jesus" about the reality of evil we deal with)

Yes, there is a language difficulty, yes as I described there is a cultural difficulty, yes as I described there is an ignorance of biblically based morality - all that is true, but the real problem is spiritual: These people are held captive by not only false belief, but also by the spirit of darkness that they serve.

This is why they turn so fast from wanting to worship Paul and Barnabas to wanting to murder them. There's no mystery here about why the tables turn so fast. It is not misinformation that drives the people of Lystra, it is spiritual darkness that pushes them to drive the Gospel out of their city.

The people of the city of Lystra choose to believe a lie. It is not a little lie like, "The paint will dry by noon tomorrow." It is a big lie, one that shrouds them in spiritual darkness. They chose to believe a lie, but there is more than a lie going on here.

Now, for us, we saw a couple of weeks ago that there is an evil spiritual reality against us that we don't fully understand, and that it is against this spiritual evil that is our real fight, not just on a human level. Today we add to that reality that we are against a spiritual evil that will not only try to come against us, but will also blind others to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

## True Lies

Act 14:8-19

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As we continue through the book of Acts we will see how the Apostles dealt with this evil spiritual reality, and we will see in detail how we can deal with it as well.

For now, understand that this spiritual evil not only attempts to come against us as Christians when we serve Jesus Christ, but it also actively blinds others to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.