

**Fourth Sunday of Easter – C – 2019**  
**Acts 13.14,43-52///Rev. 7.9,14-17///John 10.27-30**

→in all our lives' there are defining moments that happen....obvious or subtle turning points that make all the difference in the direction or outcome of who we are or might become.

→a baptism or confirmation, a first date with an eventual mate, the choice of a career, the birth of children, the challenge of bankruptcy or a health crisis....or the decision to get involved or stand on the sidelines...

→are all moments that can determine the course of our very lives....

→likewise, in every athletic or political or military contest there are defining moments....times when the momentum shifts, when strategy proves to be genius or foolish....when a single act or word becomes the hinge upon which swings the final outcome.

[→just last week's Kentucky Derby...had one such moment]

→[and] likewise in our country's history there have also been defining moments [as well]....moments we memorialize on our calendars....

July 4, 1776.....December 7, 1941....September 11, 2001.....

→and [finally] in the history of the Church....there have also been defining moments...turning points....that have changed the course of human history....

the birth of Jesus, and the death and resurrection of Jesus are the most obvious

.....but today we also hear about two defining moments

→history changing moments....that are recalled for us in our first reading from Acts and in our Gospel reading from John.

→in the first reading...Paul and Barnabas are sent out as missionaries to spread the Gospel....

→they begin their mission by preaching the Good News to the Jewish people...to proclaim that **in Jesus** the hopes and prophecies of the Old Testament had found their fulfillment.

→*their plan* was to establish Christian churches among the Jewish people in every town and place they went too....yet what happens

→as we hear...the great majority of the Jewish congregations resisted Paul's message and in fact, in many instances they instigated persecution against Paul and Barnabas... that the people either ran them out of town or threw them into prison.

→to the point...where Paul and Barnabas change their strategy and..... following the prompting of the Holy Spirit....announce boldly to the Jewish opposition....

*"We had to speak the word of God to you first....and since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, so now we turn to the Gentiles..."*

→a turning, defining moment in the history of the Church....

PAUSE

→and then in today's Gospel...we hear the short episode of the Jesus as the Good Shepherd....

→*"my sheep hear my voice...I know them...and they follow me...I have given them eternal life...and they shall never perish."*

→another turning, defining moment in the history of the Church

PAUSE

→in 1861 Charles Dickens wrote a novel entitled **Great Expectations**

---it has become a timeless classic

→[and] since its writing, many movies and plays and theatrical productions have been made and seen by millions of people...PAUSE

→for the past couple of weeks, our scripture readings have also been dealing with "great expectations"...the disciples...when they signed on to follow Jesus...had "great expectations" that he would be the Messiah

→they had great expectations about this person named Jesus

→yet...their great expectations were dashed and destroyed by the death of Jesus

→and in the past couple of weeks...[as the story has moved along] ----those dashed hopes have been turned back into great expectations by the resurrection of Jesus...a turning point in the life of the disciples

PAUSE

→all of us also have great expectations....turning points in our life....PAUSE

→God has given us the gift of confidence and faith to enable us to do wonderful and marvelous things

→whether it is to parallel park on the first try, or climb a tall mountain, pass a test, get a job, be a good parent, or live a good life...we have all been given the opportunity to do whatever we want and more importantly we have the talents and the gifts to achieve anything

→and....sometimes we seize the opportunities and at other times...we miss them...in fact.....sometimes we miss golden opportunities to do or accomplish something.....and then [usually].....with regret...we realize what we missed

PAUSE

--in today's first reading, Paul and Barnabas are given the opportunity to spread the gospel message and they seize it...and in the gospel today.....Jesus, as the Good Shepherd urges us to also seize the opportunities that have been given to us.....turning points.....

→to believe and live his message

→that is what Easter is all about....that is what our faith is all about...and that is what we as believers have been called to do....

PAUSE

→once again, we have an opportunity before us.....just think what our lives would be like if we never seized the opportunities that are before us....

→we wouldn't have the jobs, and homes, and families and lives and blessings that we have...had we not taken advantage of what God has given us...PAUSE

→and today.....we have another opportunity...to make a difference in the lives of people by our faith....by our actions....by our words.....

→we have an opportunity like Paul and Barnabas...and like so many others in the history of the church.....to bring and show the message of Christ to one another...the opportunity to care for others as Christ the Good shepherd cares for us.

→we have the opportunity **every day** to make believers out of those who doubt provide guidance to those confused, and give witness to those who struggle simply by the way we speak and live.

→and that is the Good News we celebrate each time we gather here to pray and worship

→the opportunity.....to become "shepherds" for the body of Christ....

the opportunity to create "turning points in the lives of others....

the opportunity to live more fully the Gospel message.

the opportunity...to be a beacon of hope to one another...