

⁴⁴ *On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord.* ⁴⁵ *When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and talked abusively against what Paul was saying.*

⁴⁶ *Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: “We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles.* ⁴⁷ *For this is what the Lord has commanded us:*

*“ I have made you a light for the Gentiles,
that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.”*

⁴⁸ *When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed.*

⁴⁹ *The word of the Lord spread through the whole region.* ⁵⁰ *But the Jews incited the God-fearing women of high standing and the leading men of the city. They stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region.* ⁵¹ *So they shook the dust from their feet in protest against them and went to Iconium.* ⁵² *And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.* (NIV84)

RISE AND SHINE!!

My guess is that many of you have not had the privilege of being at Camp Luther during Camp week in the summer. But if you could be, you'd wake up not to a rooster call, not to a bugle serenade, but to something that sounds a bit like this: ***“Rise and shine! And give God the glory, glory! Rise and shine and give God the glory-glory! Rise and Shine and give God the glory-glory, children of the Lord!!”***

You're probably familiar with that song. If not, parents, maybe here's a suggestion for getting those sleepy teenagers out of bed in the morning!! Rise and Shine!! A good reminder for us all in the morning! Now that the sun is up when many of us arise, it's a little bit easier to rise and shine. We can be like the sun! We can rise and we can shine!

In a sense, that's what we hear God telling Paul and Barnabas in our text for this morning. He wanted them to rise and shine—to be a light for the Gentiles (or non-Jews). He wanted them to get up and imitate the Son. Not the one in the sky, but to imitate the Son of God and shine with mercy and love and compassion. And God wanted them to get moving, not to stay in Pisidian Antioch for more than a short time, but to go up and out of that place to shine the light of the Gospel to many places and many people – that the Son might warm their lives as well!

Today we'll see that is exactly what God calls us to do! To **Rise and Shine**. God calls us to imitate the Son, his Son as we shine the light of his love, the light of our faith for others to see! It's my hope and prayer that we leave this place today eager to **Rise and Shine and Give God the Glory** in our lives.

I. Rescued by the Light

Acts 13:44-52

Adrian was out hiking in the woods with his kids. And they were having a great time. They had so much fun, in fact, that Adrian completely lost track of the time. Before he knew it, it was time to head back or they would be caught out here in the dark. He gathered up the kids and got them moving right away.

But Adrian, being unfamiliar with these woods, took a wrong turn and went down another path. Then trying to correct himself he added a second wrong turn. And soon, before he knew it, a deep darkness settled in the woods. And he had failed to bring a flashlight.

What was he going to do? The kids were getting tired and now scared. And if he were being honest, he was a bit scared too. Would they spend their night out here—and without a tent? How would they ever get back to the car?

Even though Adrian knew that it would panic the kids, he couldn't help it. He was starting to panic himself. So he let out an angry and frightened cry of frustration! Aaaaaaargh!!!

And later he would thank God that he did. Because after a few more minutes of panic, he heard a cry back. "Hello? Is someone out there?" And then Adrian saw the light. Another hiker was still on the trails. But he had a flashlight! Maybe he knew the way out of these woods!

Sure enough Adrian met a man named Aaron who approached him and said, "Everything okay? Anyone hurt? Good. Get a little turned around out here? Need some help? There's only one path that goes back to the road. Come on. I'll show you."

What relief Adrian felt! He'd been rescued by someone with a light!

In a way, Adrian's story is similar to our own. We were once lost in the darkness. Spiritually lost, groping around in the darkness, trying to make sense of life, trying to make sense of the pain and the panic and the frustrations that we faced. We were so hopelessly lost that we were doomed to spend not just a night, but an eternity in hopeless darkness.

And though that's not where we live anymore, we so easily and quickly go back there. We wander back towards the darkness of sin so quickly, thinking we'll be better off there or have more fun there. We follow our own way and ignore the one who tells us that he is the Way!! We know the Light! We have the Light. But we leave him behind so often. We fail to take the Light with us as we walk and then we are surprised at how often the darkness traps us! We know we are better off with the Light, but sometimes we like to live in darkness. It's sad, but it's the truth about how our sinful nature longs to live and how powerless we are to stop it from controlling us!

But the Light is persistent. Even when we try to keep him from shining, he comes to enlighten us! Even when we try to walk away, Jesus pursues us. And though we deserve the Light to expose our dark deeds and bring down the punishment of the law, it's a gospel light that he brings!

Isaiah prophesied about Jesus (in Isaiah 9:2), "***The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.***" And when Jesus came,

he said of himself, ***“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”*** (John 8:12)

“Rise and shine and give God the glory!” That’s exactly what Jesus did. For you for me for the world! He rose up from his throne in heaven and took instead the lowliest of places on earth. He was willing to be born, to suffer, even to die, to glorify the Father and to carry out his plan! He shone with the light of grace and love in everything he thought and said and did. He earned forgiveness for the times that we turn the light off. For all those times that we hid the light, Jesus shone! He shone with the light of love. And never did he shine more brightly than those hours when the sun didn’t shine. Never was his love on brighter display than when he sat in our place – in darkness. When he hung in our place, in darkness! He was willing to die in the dark so that we could live. He was willing to become our dark sins, so that they could be forgiven forever. That’s how much love he had for you. That’s how much his love was willing to shine.

And of course, the bright Easter Day was coming! His radiance was on full display as the angels took his place at the tomb, posted there to announce the bright and glorious truth, “He’s not Here! He’s Risen!!”

How fitting that those bright and glorious angels were the first messengers of the Easter story! They were the first to announce to the world that Jesus had Risen! And then they instructed those who met them – Go! Go and Tell!!

And the angels’ instructions were carried out! The Marys told the disciples, they told everyone they could. Even after Jesus rose and appeared to many, the story continued to spread! Even after, especially after, Jesus ascended into heaven, more and more heard. The disciples and the followers of Jesus shone the light to everyone they could!

And that’s what we find Paul and Barnabas doing in this morning’s text.

⁴⁷ For this is what the Lord has commanded us:

***“ I have made you a light for the Gentiles,
that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.”***

Paul and Barnabas proclaimed that Light! They shone it so that others could see the light of truth and the glory of God! They spread the Word and shone the light to different places, to the next generation. And on down the line it shines, until it dawned on you and shone in your heart. You’ve been rescued from darkness by the Light of Jesus.

And now filled with joy and light and love, we can seek to give God the glory in our lives! And one such way to do just that is to be a Paul and Barnabas. We can take that light that shines in our heart and we can shine it for others to see and hear. We can be those that ***bring salvation to the ends of the earth.***

II. Rescue with the Light

Acts 13:44-52

Aaron was out hiking in the woods. And he was having a great time. He was enjoying his hike so much fun, in fact, that Aaron completely lost track of the time. Before he knew it, it was already getting dark! It was definitely time to head back to the car. Thankfully he brought his powerful mag light. Otherwise he might get caught out here in the dark. He gathered up his gear and got moving right away.

But as he was hiking in the dark, shining the light on the path in front of him, he heard a strange noise. It wasn't an animal. It sounded more human. It sounded sort of like an angry and frightened cry of frustration! Aaaaaargh!!!

What to do? He was already late and wouldn't be home when he told his wife he would be. If he went in the direction of the cry he'd be even later. But, still, what if someone was hurt or in trouble. He shined his light down a different path and went in search of the cry.

And later, he would thank God that he did make that decision, because it wasn't long until he found them—a man named Adrian and his two kids, terribly lost and scared in the dark. What relief he saw on the man's face and on the face of those poor kids! He would lead them to the road and to their car. He would help rescue them.

In a way, Aaron's story is similar to our own. We have the light. We know how to navigate through this life with the light. But we're not content to be only concerned about ourselves. We use the light that we have to help rescue others.

God gives us the same call that he gave Paul and Barnabas – ***to be a light to the Gentiles, to bring salvation to the ends of the earth!*** That means that as we walk through life, we need to have the Light with us! We need to live with the Light so that we can shine it to help others. God calls on us to share that light, to live that light. To let it shine!!

It's interesting that what Jesus calls himself, he calls us as well!! Jesus says ***I am the Light of the World! Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life*** (John 8:12).

But Jesus also says to his followers ***“You are the light of the world... let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven”*** (Matthew 5:14,16).

We are called upon to shine. To be a light like Jesus was the light! We can't save the world like Jesus did, but we can tell the world that Jesus has already done it! We can tell lost souls to stop trying to save themselves because Jesus has already won! We as little lights can point people to the Light that they really need, to free them from darkness and sin and death!

Will that be an easy thing to do? Sometimes gospel proclamation comes easily! Sometimes people pursue us and pepper us with questions and we can't help but share Jesus. But will it always be that easy? Should we wait until people are knocking on our doors to share the Savior!! No way!! Paul was commanded ***to bring salvation*** not just to offer it to those that came to him!

So let's do it! Let's **Rise and Shine!** Let's be like Paul and Barnabas and bring salvation to our families, to our neighborhoods, to our cities, to our world!!! We don't have to travel the world to shine the light, but we can support those who do so in our place. We don't have to singlehandedly open a world mission in Africa, but our offerings can help to do just that! WE can walk together and do just

Acts 13:44-52

that and we can be a Light shiner right where we are!! We can start by raising our kids to walk in the Light! We can lead by example and let the light of gospel love shine right here at church! But let's not stop there! Let's make sure that our friends, our neighbors and everyone we meet can see the Light of Jesus in our lives. Let's pray that God give us easy opportunities to share his love and that he give us strength and wisdom to see opportunities that even in the difficult times and ways we might be able and willing to **Rise and Shine!!**

So, it's not just a catchy "get out of bed song." It's our motto: Rise and Shine and give God the glory-glory!! We give him the glory for shining the light of the Gospel in our lives and rescuing us. And we give him the glory as we shine that light in the lives of others. So my friends, Rise and shine! And give God the glory-glory, children of the Lord! Amen.