**Son of Encouragement**

**The Word**

Read together Acts 11:19-30

**The Big Idea**

Barnabas exemplifies a life of humble devotion to God, encouraging others, celebrating evidence of God’s work in their lives, advocating for them, and calling them further up and further in. We each should consider how we might encourage one another.

**Questions for Discussion**

1. Joseph received the nickname “Barnabas” for the encouraging effect he had on others. What’s a nickname you would most wish to exemplify?

2. We looked at several vignettes from Barnabas’ life. What about his life was most encouraging, helpful, or inspiring to you?

3. Barnabas’ own example of sacrificial giving to God inspired others to be generous. The statement was made on Sunday: “The way you pursue God and the decisions you make for him will shape my view of what is ‘normal’ for Christians to be and do.” Where have you seen that play out (for better or worse) in the church?

4. Whether with the Antioch Christians, Saul, or John Mark, Barnabas consistently saw evidence of God’s grace in people’s lives, celebrated it, defended it, and encouraged it to grow. How might celebrating and encouraging the good in others become a more natural reflex for you? What gets in the way of that?

5. Scripture says, “Let us consider how we may spur one another on towards love and good deeds . . . and encourage one another” (Hebrews 10:24-25). Take a moment of silence to actually “consider” how you might be a more faithful encourager. What comes to mind?

**Sermon Outline**

I. Introduction

 A. Joseph was nicknamed “Barnabas” (4:36) because of his role as an encourager

 B. If friends gave you a nickname, what would it be?

C. We are all in need of encouragement. Life is tough, and we need someone to come alongside and instill courage in us.

D. Today we’ll look at four vignettes from Barnabas’ life that paint a portrait of an encourager.

II. Barnabas encourages by his own example of faith (Acts 4:32-37)

A. The grace of God in his life leads him to make a radical and extravagant sacrifice to God that helps inspire others to live generously

B. One of the best ways we encourage others is simply by our own passionate devotion to God.

1. How you live in your relationship with God normalizes what I think the Christian life should look like

2. If you are not generous but still go to church and read the Bible, I’ll normalize that as what Christianity looks like.

3. If you are passionate and generous in your relationship with God, I’ll normalize that. ENCOURAGE US: By your own passionate devotion to Jesus

III. Barnabas encourages by being a bridge builder (9:23-30)

A. When Saul comes to Jerusalem, the disciples are understandably skeptical and fearful of him

B. Barnabas bridges the gap, vouches for Saul, and speaks to the work of God in Saul’s life

IV. Barnabas encourages by celebrating God’s grace in others (11:19-30)

A. In a boundary-breaking moment in church history filled with unknowns as Gentiles receive the gospel in Antioch, Barnabas recognizes God’s grace at work, celebrates it, and encourages it to grow.

B. Barnabas recognizes his own limitations and the grace God has given to Paul, and he searches for him in Tarsus to bring him back to help lead the ministry in Antioch

 1. From this point on Paul’s ministry increases and eclipses Barnabas’ ministry

2. Barnabas is more interested in God’s kingdom expanding than he is concerned with the building of his own kingdom.

V. Barnabas encourages by standing up for his brother in Christ (15:36-41)

A. Barnabas and Paul have a sharp disagreement over John Mark having left them during their previous missionary journey

B. Barnabas doesn’t back down but remains firm in his convictions and support of an imperfect person

C. Just as Barnabas vouched for Paul, he is now vouching for John Mark

1. As Paul says in 1 Cor 13: “Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes”

2. As Paul says in Phil 4: “Whatever is pure, lovely, noble, admirable . . .”

3. It seems that Barnabas is always looking for the best in people and seeking to defend that and support it.