

Sermon Summary | Sunday 21st June 2026 | Acts 11.19–30

Acts 11.19–30 gives us a hopeful picture of the church under pressure. The passage begins with believers scattered by persecution and ends with a new church sending relief to other Christians in need. Humanly speaking, the church looks fragile. It is not wealthy or powerful, and it has no public approval or security. Yet the gospel spreads, people turn to Christ, believers are strengthened, and practical generosity grows. The key sentence is this: “The hand of the Lord was with them.” The church lives and grows because the risen Lord Jesus is at work.

First, the Lord grows his church through scattered witnesses. The gospel comes to Antioch through believers who have been scattered because of persecution. Stephen has been killed, Christians have been forced from their homes, and yet the Lord uses even this scattering to carry the gospel further. This does not mean persecution is good. It is evil and painful. But persecution cannot stop the risen Christ. What looks like the church being broken apart becomes, in the Lord’s hands, the gospel being taken to new places. Some unnamed believers begin speaking across boundaries, preaching “the Lord Jesus” to Greek-speaking Gentiles. They are not famous apostles, but ordinary Christians speaking ordinary words about an extraordinary Saviour. They speak, and the Lord works. That is humbling, because the power is not in us. It is also encouraging, because the power is not in us.

Second, the Lord strengthens his church through faithful encouragement. When news of Antioch reaches Jerusalem, the church sends Barnabas. He sees the grace of God and is glad. He is not suspicious or threatened by what God is doing somewhere unexpected. He rejoices, and then he exhorts the believers to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose. New believers need more than a warm welcome. They need encouragement to keep going. It is very easy to drift slowly: a little less prayer, a little more distance from church, a little more compromise left unchallenged. God uses encouragement to keep his people faithful. Barnabas also brings Saul, and together they teach the church for a whole year. Healthy church life means people are not merely gathered, but grounded; not merely welcomed, but taught; not merely started, but helped to continue.

Third, the Lord moves his church to generous action. When Agabus foretells a famine, the disciples in Antioch decide to send relief to the believers in Judea. Their generosity is practical: they do not merely feel sad, but send help. It is shared: each gives according to ability. It is also family love: Gentile believers send help to Jewish believers because, in Christ, they are brothers and sisters. Grace does not only save individuals; it creates a generous people. Christian giving is not a performance for the wealthy, but part of ordinary discipleship. The question is not, “Can I give what someone else gives?” but, “What faithful part can I play with what the Lord has entrusted to me?”

This passage shows us that the church is not built by our strength. The Lord uses faithful witnesses, steady encouragement, deep teaching, and generous love. If we are exploring faith, the call is to turn to the Lord Jesus. If we are weary or drifting, the call is to remain faithful to him with steadfast purpose. And as a church, we are called to trust the hand of the Lord: to speak of Jesus, encourage one another, and give according to our ability. When the Lord’s hand is with his people, grace bears fruit.

Questions for personal reflection

1. Where might the Lord be calling me to speak simply and faithfully of Jesus, rather than waiting for perfect confidence or perfect circumstances?
2. How can I help someone else remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose — through encouragement, prayer, teaching, generosity, or practical care?