ACTIONS AND WORDS

Posted on February 18, 2020 by Eddie

Barnabas took Mark and disappeared from Luke's narrative, but he entered our future marking the path for those who would be the disciples of Jesus. That path requires trust - sometimes, often times, almost every time - of those who are marked by failure in relationship.
Category: Observations

Over the years, I've written a fair bit about Barnabas, so it's no surprise that I've chosen to pick another quote from the excellent *Â A Theological Commentary on ActsÂ by Willie James Jennings*. This time it covers the dispute between Paul and Barnabas at the end of Acts 15.

> *Mark had failed Paul and Barnabas. We do not know the details, but we know enough to know this familiar terrain. It is the jagged edges of working with people who areuneven in their termprement, capacities, or consistency precisely in the moments that we cannot afford that unevenness. Mark and abandoned the mission. This was an a act of apostasy (ton apostanta, v.38).For Paul, this was a nonnegotiable, a line that could not be crossed. If discipleship is a choice then companionship is as well. If discipleship is not a choice for those who have been chosen by God, then companionship may also not be a choice. One may be forced to work with those whom God has given, Trust, however, will always be a choice. Paul did not trust Makr, but Barnabas was willing to move forward with him. We are not sure why Barnabas was willing. It could be that he was related to Mark and imagined him inside of kinship care. It could also be due to another reason that we know so well, a reason that draws us close to the character of Barnabas in Luke's narrative.*
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> *Barnabas's voice has always been complicated in the narrative because it is seemingly always bound to Paul's voice, inseperable from his actions. Barnabas is, however, more than co-traveler with Paul. Barnabas always seems to be ahead of Paul, drawing Paul to where he should be. It was Barnabas who was there at the Apostle's feet (Acts 4:36-37), giving his possessions and thereby showing us how it should be doe. It was barnabas who took a dangling Saul up to Jerusalem so he might be accepted by the Apostles (Acts 9:27). It was Barnabas who set Paul's hands to the right plow in Antioch, making him a co-laborer in the new work among Gentiles (Acts 11:25). Barnabas was a bridge for Paul from the old to the new. If the Apostles had named him as "son of encouragement," then Luke's narrative names him risk-taker, because Barnabas seemed to always make heavy wager on people.*
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> *Now was no different. Mark should have come with them. This is Barnabas's wager. As is the case in the other appearances of Barnabas in the text, we do not have his own words. We never have Barnabas's words. It is as though Barnabas's actions speak for him, and now Mark stands between Barnabas and Paul, each reading Mark from a different and completely true angle. These perspectives on Markcould not be reconciled and neither could Paul and Barnabas. There is no tragedy here, simply the truth that the risks of ministry are inseperable from the risks of relationship. Yet it seems that Barnabas was still ahead of Paul, trying to bring him where he needed to be in that inescapable struggle of trusting those who have or might or will fail us. Barnabas took Mark and disappeared from Luke's narrative, but he entered our future marking the path for those who would be the disciples of Jesus. That*

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> *p. 150-151*