Acts 17:2-3, 11 As his custom was, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. “This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ,” he said….Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.

I know I have told you this before but it is always worth repeating. During the season of Easter the Old Testament readings are switched to readings from the book of Acts. This is done because of the historical nature of the Book of Acts. It is that book which traces the earliest beginnings of the Christian Church and shows how the Apostles fulfilled the command of God to spread the message of Jesus, the Savior of the world. And point blank God told them: Go to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and all the rest of the world. So the book of Acts is really the continuing history of God working in the world for the saving of mankind.

In our text for today, Acts 17 we jump ahead a number of years to Paul’s Second Missionary journey. Actually, we are jumping ahead by some twenty years. The Church, despite persecution is firmly established in Jerusalem and Judea. The Church has good roots already in Samaria and its area. And with the appointment of Paul as Apostle to the gentiles, the message of Jesus is now beginning to be established in the rest of the world. Some four years earlier, during the First Missionary journey, the message of Jesus had an impact on the known Roman world. Today our text gives us a greater insight into the realities of spreading this message of Jesus.

Why do I say that? Because our text today shows us just how this missionary work of Jesus was carried out. The narrative is simple, the results are of God and the world is opposed. Let’s jump in and consider our words under the theme: **MARVEL IN JESUS.**

So here it is. Here is a record of how the message of Jesus and the wonder of eternal life was spread to the world. There are always some interesting things to take note of. For instance, did you note how our text simply spoke of these missionaries “passing through Amphipolis and Apollonia.” Fact is, we have no record of any preaching or teaching of Jesus that went on at these two cities along the route. What is interesting to note is that it seems the missionaries are looking for something specific. It seems they are looking for established Jewish synagogues, a place where God’s Word was known and where people were already gathered. That becomes all the more evident when the missionaries arrive in Thessalonica. There, there was a Jewish synagogue. There Paul continued his custom of beginning his teaching of Jesus among the Jewish population. Even though Paul had been appointed the missionary to the gentiles, Paul was definitely influenced by the command of Jesus to first go to the Jews and then reach out to the rest of the world.

What do they do in this synagogue? I so appreciate these words. Our text tells us, **“and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. ‘This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ.’”** Isn’t that simple and awesome? These missionaries don’t go in to wow, in other words they don’t go in with miracles and wonders, proving their being from God. They don’t go in to please or to win peoples’ favor, to entertain or to promote themselves. They absolutely do not go in with swords, threats and screaming damnation to you if you don’t follow! They go in with the Word of God. Actually, the real beauty of this is that they go in to discuss, study and reason from the Scripture. The Jewish people already had God’s Word. These missionaries go in and on the basis of God’s Word, the Old Testament, began to show and prove the work and marvel of Christ.

Now, what do they teach of the Christ? It is not about healings, slaying in the spirit, emotional gooble-dee-gook or appeals to your needs. It is about what Scripture says. How the Scripture, yes, the Old testament, prophesied, pointed to, proclaimed and revealed that the Christ of God was going to be someone who had to suffer, die and then rise from the dead! What is interesting about this text is that it does seem to imply that first the missionaries pointed out these truths of the Christ and only once these truths were seen and grasped did they then begin speaking of Jesus as the one who is the Christ. Let’s make a few observations here.

First observation is that the Old Testament and what is says of the Christ is clearly there to be seen by any who wish to notice it. It is true, that many Jewish people did not know this of the Christ simply because the Jewish faith had long ago abandoned the salvation that was to come from the Christ in favor of a salvation that came from obedience to the law and the rituals of the law. Few men were as well equipped as Paul to point out these truths. To point out the futility of works in saving and to point out the truth of the Christ revealed in God’s Word.

Second, did you note that the suffering, death and resurrection of the Christ is the heart and core of what is reasoned about? Did you note that Jesus is proclaimed as the very one who did suffer, die and rise from the dead? I can’t help but think of the marvel here. In order to teach this and not be laughed out of the place one thing has to be assumed and true! It has to be assumed that here, in Thessalonica, some twenty years after the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus these Jewish people could still recall the history: the stories and rumors concerning the death of this Jesus and concerning his resurrection from the dead. Because if these things did not exist, then Paul and his buddies would simply have been laughed out of town, rejected as liars and fools, and turned away from as total buffoons who couldn’t be trusted in anything. Think about that. These claims could not have been made unless the people and the world had some basis for accepting this as truth!

If anything speaks to the truth and wonder of God it is this rather simple and yet in your face fact. God’s Word had predicted, revealed and pointed to the Christ of God. That this Christ, who was to be the Son of God and God himself, was to suffer, yes, suffer at the hands of the people he was promised to and because of their rejection of his wonder, he was going to be put to death. Hung on a tree, Scripture had proclaimed. Killed with the wicked, buried with the rich. But this Christ would once again see the light of life, and the will of the Lord would prosper in his hands. Prophecy after prophecy that is fulfilled in Jesus, the Christ.

Now I realize in this world there are those who try be revisionist of history. There are those who try to tell you the Jewish holocaust in WWII did not really happen or that we never really did land on the moon in the sixties. The problem all these people have is that there are still people alive who witnessed, lived through or had direct knowledge of those who lived through this and so the revision of history is clearly and easily rejected as false and silly. Yet notice this does not happen when it comes to Jesus and what He did. It does not happen because there are still so many who know that the events are true! True, the Jews of Thessalonica get jealous because they are losing so many members of their synagogue, but not once, even in the period’s secular history, do you find anything to declare the history of Jesus a total lie and fabrication!

Notice what happens in Berea when the disciples get there. The same pattern is followed isn’t it? The synagogue is visited and God’s Word and its study become the focal point. Did you see how the Bereans’ are complimented? Our text declares: **“Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.”** I must confess that for many years I did not grasp the awe of that verse. In truth, the Thessalonians studied Scripture. They used Scripture to see if what Paul was saying was true. So why are the Bereans’ called **“more noble?’** It is because the great eagerness that the message of Jesus brought caused the Bereans’ to study, **every day!** Not just getting together on the Sabbath. Not just once a week to reason and weigh the message of Jesus. But every day! They thought the message so important, so life shattering or really, so life giving, that every day they gathered to contemplate and marvel at this message of Jesus.

Tell me, what is so offensive about Jesus? Why is it so hard for the world to admit sin and see the need of a Savior? Why is it so hard for people to hear of the love of God and how that love was so great that God sent his son to be the perfect sacrifice for sin? To me, the message of Jesus is so wonderful and uplifting, so positive and sure because it is the message that God in love has done everything necessary to save souls. I don’t have to do anything, Jesus has done it all. I don’t have to be anything, God will, through his Holy Spirit, make me His child and heir of eternal life so I will give God honor and glory. All credit, all glory, all honor go to God for his gift of salvation in Jesus.

Yet the world doesn’t want to hear about a Savior from sin. The world would rather hear do this and don’t do that. Bring this to your god and he will be happy with you. Live your life to your best and in the next life you can work all the more at improving until you too become a god! Such work righteous ideas. The world would rather hear them than hear of Jesus.

Now what do you suppose the world’s reaction to this preaching of God’s truth was? Some people moved by God’s Holy Spirit believed. But the unbelievers? Listen to what they do. **“But the Jews were jealous; so they rounded up some bad characters from the marketplace, formed a mob and started a riot in the city. They rushed to Jason’s house in search of Paul and Silas in order to bring them out to the crowd. But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some other brothers before the city officials, shouting: ‘These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here, and Jason has welcomed them into his house. They are all defying Caesar’s decrees, saying that there is another king, one called Jesus.’** That’s what happened in Thessalonica. They were forced to leave.

Verse 13 records this about Berea, **“When the Jews in Thessalonica learned that Paul was preaching the word of God at Berea, they went there too, agitating the crowds and stirring them up.”** Again Paul and Silas were forced to leave.

Notice what the world does? It rounds up bad characters and gets them to start trouble. Then when the trouble is full blown, they blame the Christians and then lie about what the Christians have been doing. Here is this trouble that erupts and the Christians have done nothing but preach God’s truth yet it is the Christians who end up looking bad and being run out.

The world has been at this for centuries. In our country the greatest example of such mockery took place with the Scope’s Monkey trial. Those who knew the law and how the law worked put on this trial over things that never even took place and now that trial is pointed to as the premier example of how blind and hate filled Christians are. It wasn’t long after that that evolution began to be taught as the real truth of life. Christian’s had been out smarted by the world again. The battle continues. God says discipline the child, psychologists’ say, “That’s evil.” Psychologists’ win. God says call sin “sin”. The world says, “That’s not politically correct.” The world wins. Or so it seems.

In truth, it is Jesus who will win. Jesus is the Lord of Lords and the King of Kings. Jesus has won our salvation and brought us the gift of eternal life. In Jesus are all the answers. In Jesus are the solutions. In Jesus there is eternal life and salvation for all who believe. This is the truth. It is God’s truth. It is eternal truth. It is a truth that we have to fight for and stand upon, a truth well worth while despite the fight it is. May we marvel at the word and the truth of Jesus it is! Amen.