If you are a fan of 1970’s country music, you probably remember a song by Willie Nelson entitled, “Always On My Mind.” The lyrics are rather interesting. The first stanza goes like this:

Maybe I didn’t love you Quite as often as I could have And maybe I didn’t treat you Quite as good as I should have If I made you feel second best Girl I’m sorry I was blind

But you were always on my mind...You were always on my mind

In other words, “Maybe I didn’t treat you very well, maybe I wasn’t very nice, maybe I didn’t do much for you...BUT, I was THINKING about you!” As if that somehow makes everything OK! The message of “Always On My Mind” is not a very encouraging one.

Fortunately we are not here this morning to listen to a message from a 70’s country music song.

We are here to listen to a message from God’s Word. Unlike Mr. Nelson’s song, what you will hear from God this morning IS encouraging. God’s Word will assure you that, “You Are Always On God’s Mind.”

I. He made sure you heard the good news of forgiveness through Jesus

You have always been on God’s mind. We talked about that two weeks ago when St. Paul reminded us that God was planning your salvation before the world was even created. And we learned that God has worked throughout history to make sure that you learned about what He has done for you.

Each of our three bible lessons for today tells us about an episode in history in which God was carrying out His plan to save YOU. In our first lesson we heard God the Father telling God the Son, “It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth.” In other words, “I am such a great and loving God that I am not only going to rescue my people, Israel, from their sins, I am going to rescue ALL PEOPLE from their sins.” That includes YOU.

Some seven hundred fifty years later God kept that promise when He sent His one and only Son to take on human flesh. As that Son was walking beside the Jordan River John the Baptist declared, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” The sins of THE WORLD! That includes YOU.

So, God was thinking of you as He planned your salvation before the world was created. He was thinking of you in seven hundred fifty B.C. when He promised that He would rescue ALL people from their sins. He was thinking of you when John the Baptist declared that Jesus would take away the sins OF THE WORLD.

AND, God was thinking of you when two missionaries named Paul and Barnabas were preaching in the city of Pisidion Antioch in the middle part of the first century A.D. Paul and Barnabas began their work in Antioch the way they always did. They went first to the local synagogue to tell the Jewish people of the city that the promised Messiah had come. Here is how Paul concluded his message, 38
“Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. 39 Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses.”

God’s Old Testament law included all sorts of sacrifices and eating regulations and rules for how the Jewish people were to live their lives. One of the lessons God wanted to teach His people with those laws was that they were not ABLE to obey His laws perfectly. He wanted them to see that they needed someone to save them from their sins since they could not save themselves.

God’s Old Testament laws were a little like a modern day stress test. Some of you are familiar with this test. It tests how healthy your heart is. You run on a treadmill and they monitor your heart as you run. If you aren’t able to complete the stress test it shows that something is wrong and you need help.

God’s Old Testament laws, His “stress test”, showed that EVERY person failed. NO ONE was able complete it. That is why Paul said, “…you could not be justified…by the law of Moses.” But, through Jesus they could. As Paul said, “I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses.”

Unfortunately, many of the Jewish people to whom Paul preached did NOT believe the good news about Jesus. They threw away the gift of forgiveness that was given them. Our text tells us, “On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord” (v. 44). The city was all abuzz about the message these men brought! EVERYONE wanted to hear more! But, “When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and talked abusively against what Paul was saying” (v. 45). Some of the Jewish listeners didn’t like what Paul was preaching. It conflicted with their beliefs. So, they shouted back at Paul and Barnabas. Things were getting heated. Paul and Barnabas did not back down, “Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: ‘We had to speak the word of God to you first. (Now listen to this) Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles’” (v. 46). What a thing to say! Paul and Barnabas were telling their opponents, “Look, Jesus is your Savior from sin. He earned eternal life for you. But, you don’t want it. You don’t want Him. So, since you are rejecting Him, we are going to tell the Gentiles, the non-Jewish people, about the Savior.”

“OK, Pastor, that’s kind of an interesting story. What does it have to do with me? What does it have to do with me being on God’s mind?” Well, YOU are a Gentile. Most of us are, at least. When Paul and Barnabas began preaching the Good News of forgiveness to the Gentiles it was part of God’s plan to save you and me. God was thinking about YOU on that Saturday in Pisidian Antioch nearly two thousand years ago!

God made sure the good news about Jesus traveled to Asia Minor and Greece and Italy. Over the centuries it spread to Central and Northern Europe. It made its way across the Atlantic to the United States. And all along the way, over all of those centuries God was thinking of YOU. All the while He was thinking, “I must get the gospel to….” And He did. That is why you are here. He brought you the good news of Jesus and He planted faith in your heart.

II. Don’t despise the good news of forgiveness through Jesus

That’s why your faith is so precious. That’s why it is so important to protect. There is a strong warning in our lesson this morning. Look at what happened to those who rejected Paul’s message. They had God’s Word. They knew of God’s promises. But, they despised God’s Word and promises. THAT was a most serious sin. It was serious because it resulted in the loss of eternal life.

The sin of despising God’s Word is alive and well among us today. Ask yourself some questions: Are the buttons on your remote control worn so that you can no longer read the numbers while your Bible looks as pristine as the day you received it? Does God hear a near constant clicking of your computer keyboard but He never hears the turning of a page of Scripture in your home? Will you rearrange your schedule and overcome every obstacle to attend a game or a party but only attend worship when your
schedule happens to be clear? Do you find that you have no problem getting up early to make a tee
time or to find the best deals the day after Thanksgiving, but you just can’t get out of bed to make a
9:15 bible class on Sunday morning? Brothers and sisters, the seriousness of these sins is revealed
when we contrast our attitude with God’s attitude. He is always thinking of us. We often have little
time for Him.
Yet He continues to think of us and love us. Remember what Paul and Barnabas said they were going
to bring to the ends of the earth – salvation! God rescued us from the very sins we just mentioned,
and so many more. We have free and full forgiveness in Christ. We have eternal life through the
resurrection of Jesus from the dead. It’s no wonder that, “When the Gentiles heard this, they were
glad and honored the word of the Lord” (v. 48). They were glad for the same reason we are glad! They
honored the Word of the Lord for the same reason we do! We can’t get enough of it! This world and
our own sins beat us down day after day after day. We need to hear God’s Word with all of its
promises day after day after day. It reminds us that God is thinking of us, that we are always on His
mind.

I once saw a comedian discussing greeting cards and how men’s attitude toward cards is
different from women’s attitude toward cards. He said he realized this when he once gave his
girlfriend a card and it wasn’t a special occasion – no birthday, no anniversary – he just gave her a card
out of the blue. She started weeping. “Do you know what this means!?” she asked. “Apparently not,”
he replied. “It means you were thinking of me!”

The Bible says that Jesus is our bridegroom and we are His bride. What a joy and what a thrill
that we have received, not just a greeting card, but an entire love letter (the Bible) that assures us that
we are ALWAYS on His mind. Amen.