



new life fellowship

Sermon Title: Two Women at Philippi

Speaker: Sherin Swift, Pastor

Scripture: Acts 16:13-23

On the sabbath day we went outside the gate by the river, where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down and spoke to the women who had gathered there. A certain woman named Lydia, a worshiper of God, was listening to us; she was from the city of Thyatira and a dealer in purple cloth. The Lord opened her heart to listen eagerly to what was said by Paul. When she and her household were baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come and stay at my home." And she prevailed upon us.

One day, as we were going to the place of prayer, we met a slave-girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners a great deal of money by fortune-telling. While she followed Paul and us, she would cry out, "These men are slaves of the Most High God, who proclaim to you a way of salvation." She kept doing this for many days. But Paul, very much annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I order you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And it came out that very hour.

But when her owners saw that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the authorities. When they had brought them before the magistrates, they said, "These men are disturbing our city; they are Jews and are advocating customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to adopt or observe." The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates had them stripped of their clothing and ordered them to be beaten with rods. After they had given them a severe flogging, they threw them into prison and ordered the jailer to keep them securely.

Acts 16: 13-23 (NRSV)

Sermon Outline:

In this part of scripture, we see one of Paul's first encounters in Philippi and how he brings the Gospel to the Philippians. Paul is moving further and further away from Judaism and speaking to a non-Jewish population, putting himself in more danger. He clashes with the Roman powers when he disrupts their political, social and religious systems and pays a heavy price for the sake of the Gospel.

Paul encounters two women – Lydia and an enslaved girl. These two women are extremely different and are at polar ends both socially and economically. Lydia had full autonomy over herself, is a business woman and the head of a household. The enslaved girl has no autonomy over her body or agency over her life, and she is subject to a demonic spirit. Lydia has a level of power over her own life and lives of others; she is named, owns property, enjoys using her wealth and can respond to the Gospel. The enslaved girl is so low that she is not named, she is someone's property and is managed like property, she creates wealth for others and can't enjoy fruit of her labor, is unable to respond to Gospel.

Paul challenges us to look at these two women, look at their lives and the disruptions that God is causing and see how He is talking to us through them. The Gospel sends us to seek out people that we may not want to cross boundaries for. By any measure, we see two extremes in this scripture also find that there is no barrier that the Gospel cannot cross.

Paul waits for days to liberate the enslaved girl from the demonic spirit and ultimately from the work she has been forced to do. We are not told in the scripture if the enslaved girl's life gets better after she is liberated, Luke leaves us holding this mystery. The Gospel through Paul has freed her to make a choice, to be a follower of Christ. She is given the opportunity to respond to the Gospel in a meaningful way,

Do you find yourself like Lydia? Do you say all of the right things, are a person of prayer but feel as though God is calling you to do more? Where is God asking you to answer His call in new ways? Is God calling you to be more generous and share your resources for the Gospel?

Do find yourself like the enslaved girl? Maybe something has happened in your life where you feel weighed down and heavy, are you in a bad relationship or have a bad job? Do you know that the Gospel is an opportunity for freedom? The invitation that was given 2000 years ago is still available to you now. The Gospel offers you the opportunity to live with love and a new sense of purpose.

Do you find yourself like Paul? Have you received the gift of the Gospel to share with others? Do you feel that God is calling you to share the Gospel with others and be an agent for the Gospel?

How will you respond to the invitation of the Holy Spirit? Don't let this moment go by passively. Step into the disruption and know that God is with you and calling you into a new reality.

Sermon Summary:

This Sunday Pastor Sherin Swift leads in a sermon about the two women at Philippi. Today Pastor Sherin's sermon shows us how Paul's witness for the Gospel causes a stir as he interacts with two women at opposite ends of the social and economic spectrum.

Sermon Questions:

1. How does this scripture connect for you the topic that was discussed today? What words resonate with you? Why?
2. In your family of origin, what types of disruptions did you experience? How did these disruptions effect you personally versus your family as a whole?
3. During this unprecedented time that we are living in, what specific disruptions can you name: loss of a loved one, loss of employment and income, are you struggling with isolation?
4. How is Jesus disrupting your life today and what are the ways that He is meeting you in those disruptions? Are you able to see these disruptions as spiritual growth moments for yourself?
5. You are precious and valuable. How do you feel when you hear these words, knowing that Jesus is willing to make a way for you?