

November 15, 2015
Spreading the Good News
Acts 16:1-5, 8-15

1 Paul came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was Jewish and a believer but whose father was a Greek.

²The believers at Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him.

3 Paul wanted to take him along on the journey, so he circumcised him because of the Jews who lived in that area, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.

⁴As they traveled from town to town, they delivered the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for the people to obey.

5 So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers.

⁸So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas.

9 During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."

¹⁰After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

11 From Troas we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrace, and the next day we went on to Neapolis.

¹²From there we traveled to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia. And we stayed there several days.

13 On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there.

¹⁴One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message.

15 When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. "If you consider me a believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us.

Good Morning First Baptist Members and Friends! It is good to be in the house of the Lord. Before beginning the message for this morning I have some folks and ministries that I need to acknowledge:

- Evangelism Team for planning and implementing a soul stirring revival
- Hospitality Committee for the Harvest Dinner
- Christian Education Committee for continuing with the work of rethinking children and youth ministry in this church
- Weda, Claudette, and Brenda for teaching ABS this week
- Melissa Richards for volunteering to maintain the website for the church
- Family Representatives to ABCMC (Sandra, Lois and Carolyn)
- House Committee for working to get heat into this building
- Carolyn Wilson and her sorors for keeping the issue of prematurity in front of us

and finally each of you who texted, emailed or called to see if you could help your pastor as she wrestled with the stomach flu this past week. Thank you!

I thought it appropriate that I begin this morning with "thank you" for I want each of to be aware of all it takes to keep us moving forward from one Sunday to the next. In the 168 hours, between the time that we gather for praise and worship, the work of the church continues and it continues not because of the pastor, but because of the members of the body of Christ who are committed to the mission of the church.

This is also an appropriate beginning for a sermon that speaks to the benefit of hospitality within the Christian community. Our text this morning from Acts 16 continues the story of the spread of the gospel to the Gentiles. We have considered the retraining of Peter and his need to learn that God will clean those who seek him. We have looked at the power of prayer and also how God sends His angels to answer our prayer. We paused in our study of Acts to look at the gospel of Matthew and consider our responsibility to be light and salt to the world. And now we seek to identify what we can learn from a woman named Lydia. Listen again to vv 13-15 from The Message

13-14 On the Sabbath, we left the city and went down along the river where we had heard there was to be a prayer meeting. We took our place with the women who had gathered there and talked with them. One woman, Lydia, was from Thyatira and a dealer in expensive textiles, known to be a God-fearing woman. As she listened with intensity to what was being said, the Master gave her a trusting heart—and she believed! ¹⁵ After she was baptized, along with everyone in her household, she said in a surge of hospitality, “If you’re confident that I’m in this with you and believe in the Master truly, come home with me and be my guests.” We hesitated, but she wouldn’t take no for an answer.¹

Would you pray **with me and for me** as I raise a simple question?

WHO HAVE YOU PERSUADED TO COME TO YOUR HOME?

SHALL WE PRAY!

God of all that was, is and shall be; God that allows us to call you Father and Jesus our older brother; God who made us, numbered the hairs on our heads and knows us better than we know our selves we come to you seeking to be transformed into the people you have called us to be and the people we declare that we are. We believe that you hear us when we call and answer all prayer according to your will and your schedule; so we are asking to have our ears and hearts and minds and hands open to you during this teaching and preaching moment. Abba, I ask you to use me in your service and let the words and meditations of my heart be acceptable to you. Help me to live so that you can use me; anytime and anywhere, In the name of Jesus the Christ we pray. AMEN and AMEN.

WHO HAVE YOU PERSUADED TO COME TO YOUR HOME?

Chicago Urban League – social work ourselves but not the community

The first professional job I had outside of the walls of academia was with the Chicago Urban League. The job title was Education Specialist and my responsibilities included networking with various social agencies in the city around the issues of education for disadvantaged youth. I was playing in the

¹ <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%2016&version=NIV;MSG>

big leagues with the Community Renewal Society, U of I, RUSH Hospital, IMSA and many others. In addition to keeping abreast of educational initiatives I was to create and implement programs for the community, which included the Robert Taylor homes. During a staff meeting in which we expected as a staff to be praised for what we were doing we were given a tongue lashing by the VP for "social working" ourselves. **He correctly listed some of our shortcomings; in a nutshell our programs were not reaching those with the most need.** Students from Hyde Park and Kenwood and even as far as Evanston were showing up for tutoring, ACT/SAT prep, and forums. **But the children of Robert Taylor homes, the children with the greatest need did not feel welcome and did not come.**

WHO HAVE YOU PERSUADED TO COME TO YOUR HOME?

Circles of Influence

I chose an undergraduate institution that did not have sororities and I had limited exposure to them during my undergraduate years. But I did have a circle of influence. A group of women from various socio economic backgrounds who were bound together around the liberal politics of the 1960's; the music of folk singers and Motown; a need to wear our jeans to class and a belief that we held within our power the ability to change the world. But like a sorority we only made ourselves available to those who were liked minded. We were black and white; urban and suburban; actively religious and not so much religious **but no foreign student; no English as a second language student; no student outwardly fighting self image and self worth issues was invited to hang.** It was not conscious on my part and I don't think it was conscious on the part of my circle – it just was what it was.

WHO HAVE YOU PERSUADED TO COME TO YOUR HOME?

Other Faith Traditions

Growing up in a traditional African American National Baptist church I had limited exposure from birth to age 15 of other religious traditions. I don't have a memory of being told Baptist were the only folks going to heaven. But with the wisdom of hindsight it was pretty clear that Jews who were rapidly fleeing the neighborhood and selling us their property; the Catholics who had a relationship with the CPS that allowed their children to go to catechism every Wednesday afternoon and the Jehovah Witness who brought their publications to our homes were not the people we were suppose to be hanging with. Yet it was also clear that we were Missionary Baptist, and therefore part of our mission was to bring others to Christ. But I still am unclear how we were to do that if we were not suppose to dance, smoke, drink, play bingo or hanging out with those who do. How were we to be missionary, evangelistic if we did not associate with those who needed the gospel?

WHO HAVE YOU PERSUADED TO COME TO YOUR HOUSE?

The Biblical Story in Outline

- the women were praying by the water in their faith tradition
- could not pray in the local church – needed 10 men
- Lydia was an influential woman but she desired more – not wealth but a relationship with God
- Lydia showed hospitality
- Lydia evangelize her household
- Lydia shared what she had been blessed to receive

4 Lessons from Lydia in Outline

GET OUTSIDE OF THE USUAL AND NORMAL AND “ALWAYS BEEN DONE THAT WAY”

- we need to leave the comfort of our church and go to open space
- if they are not coming to us how can we go to them
- who are the them in Park Forest that need us

OPEN OURSELVES TO OTHER POINTS OF VIEW

- we need to be open to another point of view and use it as a conversation starter not a conversation ender
- investigating how others arrived at their point of view

CONSIDER THE MESSAGE AND NOT THE MESSENGER

- we need to realize the messenger may not look like us
- the messenger may break the social customs, traditions, mores
- sometimes we are the receiver and sometimes we are the messenger

REMEMBER WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE HAVE BEEN CALLED TO DO

I cannot preach like Peter and I cannot pray like Paul but I can share the love of Jesus and that He died for all.

As a body of believers we cannot isolate ourselves from other believers or non-believers and live out the Great Commission.

In the end we will be asked did you

- ✓ feed the hungry
- ✓ clothe the naked
- ✓ carry your friend to Jesus

- ✓ invite the children to come to me
- ✓ take care of the widows and the orphans
- ✓ respect the teacher, preachers and leaders among you

- ✓ love yourself and your neighbor
- ✓ give of your time, tithes and talents in love
- ✓ lift the savior up for men to see

WHO HAVE YOU PERSUADED TO COME TO YOUR HOUSE?

1 How to reach the masses, men of every birth,
For an answer, Jesus gave the key:
"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth,
Will draw all men unto Me."

Refrain:

Lift Him up, lift Him up;
Still He speaks from eternity:
"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth,
Will draw all men unto Me."

2 Oh! the world is hungry for the Living Bread,
Lift the Savior up for them to see;
Trust Him, and do not doubt the words that He said,
"I'll draw all men unto Me." [Refrain]

3 Don't exalt the preacher, don't exalt the pew,
Preach the Gospel simple, full, and free;
Prove Him and you will find that promise is true,
"I'll draw all men unto Me." [Refrain]

4 Lift Him up by living as a Christian ought,
Let the world in you the Savior see;
Then men will gladly follow Him Who once taught,
"I'll draw all men unto Me." [Refrain]

Evening Light Songs, 1987 (Timeless Truths)²

² http://www.hymnary.org/text/how_to_reach_the_masses