

Acts 16: 9-15

During the night Paul had a vision: there stood a man of Macedonia pleading with him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." When he had seen the vision, we immediately tried to cross over to Macedonia, being convinced that God had called us to proclaim the good news to them. We set sail from Troas and took a straight course to Samothrace, the following day to Neapolis, and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city for some days. 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.

Teach us your way

AND WE WILL WALK IN YOUR TRUTH

Uncertainty is an uncomfortable position. But certainty is an absurd one.

Voltaire

... It is when you have left the tried and true, but have not yet been able to replace it with anything else. It is when you are between your old comfort zone and any possible new answer. If you are not trained in how to hold *anxiety*, how to live with ambiguity, how to entrust and wait, you will run...anything to flee this terrible cloud of unknowing.

Richard Rohr

Being me all your dreams you dreamer, being me all your heart melodies, that I may wrap them in a blue cloud cloth, away from the too rough fingers of the world.

Langston Hughes

Another vision!

The Biblical Plot Line, the life of Christ and the early Church is, as we said last week, driven and shaped by visions, dreams, revelations, epiphanies.

The Living God is seeking to call a living people, a living community, a living humanity, animated by the Spirit, open and sensitive and responsive to Divine prompts, Divine nudges, Divine enticements, Divine leading.

This is what a prayer life will engender--among other things. A prayer life is a way of inviting God closer so to speak-----or of deepening your sensitivity to the Divine, opening your eyes to the Divine, opening your heart... as was Lydia's experience in our text today, which describes her as a worshipper of God...she had a prayer life.

As did Paul of course----who had a vision in the night of a trip to Macedonia. In obedient openness to this vision, he and his companions make their way to Phillipi, where two marvelous things take place. The first church in Europe is established----with of course profound historical consequences. And, just as you might expect of the Spirit who tends to lead us outside the box of our own worldviews, and of cultural norms, this first church in Europe was founded in the home of a woman, a woman who by all indications is fairly well off, an independent person, a manufacturers rep for a purple cloth company-----Wildcat industries perhaps?

The Spirit intends life and wholeness for humanity if we are prayerfully open to it.

We've been shaped by a culture of scientific rationalism which, since the scientific revolution of the 1600's tended to dismiss visions, dreams, revelations and epiphanies... ..and the stories of these things in the Hebrew and Christian texts. Thomas Jefferson famously said that he appreciated Jesus' teaching on ethics and morals, but he couldn't buy into the stuff of mystery and miracle, the non-rational pieces of the Biblical story line. He was thoroughly a man of the Enlightenment.

Have I told you about the magazine article published in this country in the year 1900 which confidently suggested that by the year 2000 science and technology will have solved nearly all of humanity's most vexing problems? Such an outlook was not atypical of the era. Modern western culture, though, has given way to a postmodern global era in which Mystery is making a comeback both in the scientific community (many previously held certainties are not certainties anymore) and in the wider global context which is driving a growing understanding of humanity's challenges as spiritual challenges, psychological challenges, challenges related to human consciousness and a needed interior transformation which, sacred teachings of every great religion tell us, can only happen as we hold ourselves open to Mystery, to visions, dreams, revelations, epiphanies.

The space we occupy when we are holding ourselves open to Mystery is called liminal space. It's about being on or in a threshold, between what we know and don't know, between now and what's next. This is the space, liminal space, where we offer ourselves for transformation, where we welcome the Spirit to act.

We see in our text what can happen when people are holding themselves in liminal space, in openness to the Mystery of God's always life-giving intentions. Paul was learning how to do that, and Lydia was too. They each had a lively spirituality. When they found their way to each other, the ensuing conversation, presumably about Jesus, about God, Paul simply telling his story, or part of it, the story of how God had shone a light into his being, into his understanding, that simple conversation had global consequences.

Can you see what the Spirit is capable of here?

You and I have been drawn into a Living Relationship with a Living God so that we can experience, each in our own way, the light that Paul experienced, and then look for ways to share that light with others because we know the Spirit can do unimaginable things in all that, with all that.

I missed an opportunity for such a graced conversation this week. You may not blame me, but I passed up a chance to visit with a couple of young Mormon men who were wandering the park where I happened to be taking a short run. During my run around the small lake near our house I had spotted them attempting to speak with folks. I was the only one left for them to approach-----but I was in the middle of a run-----very winded, a few laps from finishing. They attempted a conversation but I really wanted to keep running so thanked them and ran on by. Oh the things I could have taught them! And maybe I would have learned something too. I do tip my hat to that particular practice of the Mormon Faith. Those young men were doing something like what Paul was up to. Looking for conversations and trusting the Spirit to be mysteriously present and active.

A few days later, I had another conversation with a friend about something that was causing him some grief. He shared. I listened and offered a word or two. I wasn't at all sure I had been helpful. Later he called and thanked me----something I had said had turned the issue around for him in a very fruitful way.

In such moments, one clearly senses that the Spirit has been at work, taking words from my mouth and putting them into the being of another in a life giving way that I could not have planned. My experience of that moment was wow-----awe and humility and joy....

And gratitude for the mysterious ways of God's moving, the affirming reminders of God's presence.

HE IS RISEN!

NORTH OAK CHRISTIAN CHURCH-DISCIPLS OF CHRIST

May 26, 2019

In Jesus' Name, Greetings!

Music for Gathering

Resurrection Bells

We arise today through a mighty strength
GOD'S POWER TO GUIDE US, GOD'S MIGHT TO UPHOLD US
God's eyes to watch over us, God's ear to hear us
GOD'S WORD TO GIVE US SPEECH, GOD'S HAND TO GUARD US
GOD'S WAY BEFORE US, GOD'S SHIELD TO SHELTER US

Lighting of the Candles

"O my God, and my rest from all pains, how entranced I am!" Teresa of Avila

635 Faith of Our Fathers

We Welcome One Another as Christ

677 Let There be Peace on Earth

The Morning Prayer and Musical Response

Silence

"God is always working obscurely within us." Gerald May

Celebrating Graduation

Children's Circle

All children thru 5th grade are welcome to come forward. A small outreach offering will be collected for our money jar. Following this time of sharing and prayer, children may attend their very own "Worship and Wonder" time together in our classroom annex. Child care is offered for infants and toddlers but they are also welcome in the sanctuary.

Prayer for Illumination

Living Word, do not keep silence

TEACH US TO WALK IN THE LIGHT, AMEN.

THE LESSON ACTS 16: 9-15

The Meditation "The Mysterious Ways of God's Moving" Rev. Rob Carr

Eternal God, we give you thanks for every blessed memory and all enduring hopes; for the ties that bind us to the unseen world; for all the heroic dead who encompass us like a cloud of witnesses. We pray that we who have entered into the heritage of their heroism and self-sacrifice may so honor their memory, and so preserve and further their high purposes, that the nation which they defended may stand in all coming years for righteousness and peace; through Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours. Amen.

Silent and spoken personal prayers of thanksgiving confession, intercession

The Offering

**Praise God from Whom all blessings flow, Praise God all creatures here below
Praise God above ye heavenly host, Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost**

CELEBRATION OF HOLY COMMUNION

We are Disciples of Christ, a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world.
As part of the one body of Christ, we welcome all to the Lord's Table as God has welcomed us.

414 Eat This Bread 3X

Welcome to the Table

Jesus said: I am the bread of life, whoever comes to me will never go hungry
AND WHOEVER TRUSTS IN ME WILL NEVER BE THIRSTY
All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away

The Words of Institution

For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of the One who sent me
AND THIS IS THE WILL OF THE ONE WHO SENT ME
That I shall lose none of those he has given me, but raise them up at the last day
GOD WHO IN LOVE CREATES US, WHO IN LOVE ENFOLDS US, WHO IN LOVE SUSTAINS US
COME FILL OUR LIVES ANEW

The Communion Prayer

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever, amen.

Following the Lord's Prayer, please come forward by rows to receive the loaf and the cup.

The cup is non-alcoholic by choice of the congregation

Gluten free crackers are available on the table for those who prefer this option

Children also celebrate communion weekly as part of "Worship and Wonder"

"Creation Will Be At Peace" NOCC Choir

TO OUR GUESTS-----WELCOME!

SHAPED BY GOD'S WORD AND GRACED AT CHRIST'S TABLE

WE WALK HUMBLY, LOVE DEEPLY, LIVE SIMPLY, AND SERVE JOYFULLY

We are delighted to include you today. Your presence and participation is a gift to us all. We hope you experience among us the warm spirit of our family of faith and the gracious touch of Christ upon your life. Refreshments and welcoming conversation are available after worship in the Community Room just down the hall. More information about NOCC and the Disciples of Christ is available via

Facebook and these websites

www.nocckc.org www.kcdisciples.org www.disciples.org

OUR LIFE TOGETHER

THIS WEEK

Today 1145AM Bell Practice
Monday 6PM Troop 900
Tuesday 945AM Men's Bible Group
Tuesday 1230PM Women's Bible Group
Tuesday 6PM Pack 900
Saturday 745AM Men's Breakfast
Saturday All Day—Troop 900 Fundraiser

NEXT SUNDAY---PICNIC FOLLOWING WORSHIP!

UPCOMING

KCMO MAYORAL FORUM AT NORTHLAND CATHEDRAL
SATURDAY JUNE 8 12NOON

WELCOME

GREATER KANSAS CITY DISCIPLES WOMEN'S MINISTRY TO NOCC

On June 27, Disciples women from our area will be gathering beginning at 6PM (check in) for a dinner and program beginning at 630PM.

The keynote speaker is Dawn R Steiner, MD, Medical Director for UHWC (University of Health Women's Care) in Lee's Summit. Dr. Steiner is board certified by the American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology and also certified in daVinci robotic surgery. Sounds like this could be interesting!! All ladies and gents are welcome to attend! Looking for NOCC volunteers to help with hosting the "dining experience" and hope you'll stay for the program too!

Great food, music, and wonderful fellowship with our area Disciples!!

Contact Debbie Herrick for more information!