

Acts 16:9-15  
Grateful and Gracious Lydia  
WRCOB 5.15.22

Last Sunday, during our Mother's Day celebration  
We looked at a woman's strength  
From the passage in Proverbs 31.

We recognized that even in Biblical times  
A woman's strength was not just as wife and mother

Her strength was found in her entrepreneurship.

She was and still is today  
A huge factor in the home and workplace.

An example of this is Lydia's story  
Found here in the Book of Acts.

Although she plays a minor character in Scripture.

Nonetheless, Lydia plays a significant role  
In helping us understand how hospitality  
An essential Christian trait  
Follows a grateful heart.

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Lydia is a wealthy business woman  
A dealer in purple cloth.

She buys and sell garments  
Dyed with tyrian purple from the Tyre region  
In present-day Lebanon.

The purple dye was created by boiling marine snails  
Creating a dark reddish-purple hue.

It was much sought after.

It is difficult, dirty and smelly work.

Lydia's clients are wealthy.

It is only the rich who could afford the expensive cloth.

She is originally from Thyatira in present-day Turkey.

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In today's passage

Paul, Silas, Timothy and Luke, the author of Acts  
All travel to Macedonia.

Macedonia is located in present day Greece.

Notice that Luke writes from a first-person perspective  
As if the writings were from a travel journal.

**We crossed over to Macedonia**  
**We set sail from Troas**  
**We stayed several days**

**We went to the river**  
**She invited *us* to her house, etc.**

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This is the second time Paul traveled through the area  
But the first that they traveled together.

They came to the Roman city of Philippi.

At the gate the city officials had posted a sign  
Prohibiting the worship of any unrecognized religion

Judaism was an unrecognized religion.

And so consequently, the Jewish inhabitants of Philippi  
Went outside the walls of the city to worship.

This particular small group of Jewish women  
Were the keepers of the faith in Philippi.

And so, when the Sabbath came  
Hearing that a group of women met down by the river

Paul, Silas, Timothy and Luke went and joined them.

They sat together, prayed together, worshipped together.

Paul, then, shared the story of Jesus.

One of those listening was Lydia.

After hearing the story of Jesus  
Lydia's heart was strangely moved

She responded to the gospel right then and there  
And asked to be baptized.

Following her own confession of faith and baptism  
She had all of her household baptized.

What followed that morning at the river  
Was a tremendous sense of gratitude.

Lydia graciously invited the four to stay at her home.

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Lydia is the first recorded European convert to Christianity.

Now please note, as you read through the Book of Acts  
Luke intentionally reveals the spread of the gospel  
Extending out in ever widening circles

Every chapter demonstrating  
That what began as a small movement  
In and around the region of Palestine

Grew ever wider to the furthest reaches of the globe!

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The text also states that Lydia was a “worshipper of God.”

In other words, she was not an ethnic Jew.

She was a convert to Judaism

A seeker who chose to be a Jew.

This is something else to note about the Book of Acts.

Luke was also very intentional about

Not only showing the geographic spread of the gospel

But very intentional showing

The demographical spread of the gospel.

Luke, in writing his book

Wants us, his listeners, to understand clearly

The Gospel of Jesus Christ

Cannot stay in one place

Will not stay with one ethnicity

It is moving and spreading and inviting

And welcoming and compelling.

To the Jew, and to the Greek

To the Roman and to the European

To the Ethiopian and to the African

To India and to the Asian.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ does not differentiate

Between the differing colors of people’s skin

Neither their ethnicity, culture, language

Age, social status, or wealth!

Again, and again and again throughout the Book of Acts  
Luke expresses that this whole wonderful gospel  
Message of Jesus Christ

Is not just a an extension to Judaism.

It is for the whole human race!

Galatians 3:28 NRSVue There is no longer Jew or Greek;  
there is no longer slave or free; there is no longer male and  
female, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

Praise be to God.

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In our passage today, Luke writes  
*She prevailed upon us.*

Other translations say urged or persuaded.

In other words, she wouldn't take no for an answer.

She persisted in her invitation until they consented.

She was so grateful.

And as an expression of her gratitude  
She needed extend hospitality to her guests.

Her heart was opened to receive Christ

And then her home was opened to receive his ministers.

And we, in turn, remember what Christ said  
**“For I was a stranger and you took me in.”**

Hospitality is near to the heart of the Gospel.

It is an essential characteristic for a Christian

It is an emotional response

Originating out of a spirit of gratitude.

Timothy and Titus both considered hospitality

A requirement for the pastor.

But it doesn't end there.

Paul writes of it to the church in Rome.

**Romans 12:13b NLT Always be eager to practice hospitality.**

The author of Hebrew reminds us of it.

**Hebrews 13:2 CEV Be sure to welcome strangers into your home. By doing this, some people have welcomed angels as guests, without even knowing it.**

And Peter too.

**1 Peter 4:9 NRSVue Be hospitable to one another without complaining.**

With a grateful heart from her new-found faith

Lydia invited her new-found guests into her home.

We are called to do the same.

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So, what does hospitality look like today?

Does it mean constantly inviting people over for meals?

For some, yes, it may mean that.

But it is also a lifestyle  
That strikes at the core  
Of what some call the loneliness pandemic.

Our society hungers for community!

People feel this terrible need to belong.

And our world is not providing neither.

As the derivative forms of hospitality suggests  
Hospitality is more than inviting someone over for dinner.

Here are some related words to hospitality.

- Hospice—a place for the sick and dying
- Hostel—a place of refuge
- Hotel—a place to sleep
- Hospital—a place of healing
- Host—someone who cares for physical needs

Each word suggests aspects of hospitality

I see several ways we can be hospitable in today's world.

- **We are to be a welcoming presence.** We are to be kind and friendly to everyone we meet. It is the opposite of the commercial. [https://youtu.be/CELZcKNoB\\_g](https://youtu.be/CELZcKNoB_g) Offer your name and ask for theirs. At the very least, you will have better service. At the very best, you gain a friend. Jesus welcomed strangers and outcasts, extended a word of encouragement. We are too.
- **Remember hospitality works both ways.** In the Hebrews passage by showing hospitality one might

entertain an angel. Blessings happen on both sides of the encounter.

- **Actively engage others**, not by inviting them to church at first. That's a big turn off. Probably the last thing you want to do. And don't engage people only by text or email but do a face-to-face. Meet for coffee. Join them at the playground with your children. Invite them to a nonconfrontational event. I've had opportunities for hospitality by being at the playground with Zherina striking up a conversation with another parent.
- **Invite them over or take them out to eat.** Much of Jesus' teachings took place around the table. Food and fellowship, food and fellowship. That's good stuff!! I know buying lunch for someone is a bit costly. But it won't be forgotten.
- **Pay attention.** I know many keep ear buds in while they walk, run, or exercise. But they miss all kinds of opportunities to engage people. We need to bear in mind that people around us, at work, school, church, and our neighborhoods may be hurting. Be attentive, show kindness to others. An uplifting word or kind action may change someone's life forever.
- **Be a Refuge** whatever that might look like. Be a good listener, an advocate, a safe haven.

Hospitality to all people is Christianity's signpost.

It is a sign that points to the Master of Hospitality, Jesus.

If it's not, it should be.

Community and a sense of belonging  
Are such losses in our society today.

A feeling of isolation is at pandemic levels!

It is a mental health crisis!

When we offer hospitality

The Christian community can be the answer  
To so many of the world's problems.

It begins with you and with me.

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Max Lucado writes in his book, *Out Live Your Life*

*Long before the church had pulpits and baptisteries, she had kitchens and dinner tables. Even a casual reading of the New Testament unveils the house as the primary tool of the church.*

Lucado says hospitality opens the door to community.

*It's no accident that hospitality and hospital come from the same Latin word, for they both lead to the same result: healing.*

*When you open your door to someone, you are sending this message: "You matter to me and to God." You may think you are saying, "Come over for a visit." But what your guest hears is, "I'm worth the effort."*

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We now know four things about Lydia:

Her name

Her occupation

Her hometown

And her faith.

But let's be sure to remember her gracious hospitality.

And may we be remembered for that as well.

