

When Jesus Plants a Church

Acts 16:11-40

Intro

- 3D Movie

- “In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with *all that Jesus began to do and teach...*” Acts 1:1

Verse 11-12 “So, setting sail from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Samothrace, and the following day to Napolis, and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city some days”

- **context** - second missionary journey

- map

- with Timothy, Silas Luke

- was just directed by the Spirit where to go

- fruit
- opposition
- confidence - God has called us here (vs 10)

- they arrive in Philippi

- and this chapter - is the story of the founding of the church in Philippi
- remember we have a whole book of the Bible - it is Paul's letter to this church

- Philippi Facts

- named after Philip - the Father of Alexander the Great 356 BC
- Roman Colony - highest status of a Roman City, tax and military benefits
- 100 years before Paul showed up, there was a famous battle here
- if you remember your high school reading - Julius Caesar by Shakespeare - Brutus betrays his friend and murders Julius Caesar. And it was at the city of Philippi that Mark Antony gained revenge on Brutus and defeated him in battle

**now, Jesus establishes an entire church through this visit. and yet Luke gives us 3 stories about the founding of this church*

Verse 13 “And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the woman who had come together”

- no synagogue there
 - would require a minimum of 10 Jewish men
- when there was no Synagogue, there was often a “place of prayer”
 - smaller and more simple building, where people could still gather to pray
 - were built if possible by a River
 - for Jewish purification practices
 - also made it easy to locate if you were visiting

Verse 14-15 “One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purpose goods, who was a worshipper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. And after she was baptized, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, ‘If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.’ And she prevailed upon us”

- **Lydia**
 - a God fearer, likely a Gentile convert to Judaism from Thyatira, now living in Philippi
 - seller of purple goods - an expensive material. clearly a successful business woman
 - later, in verse 40, we read that the whole newly formed church would meet in her house

**notice a few important things*

Jesus still needs to save “good” people.

- as good and God-fearing as she was, she still needed to hear about Jesus.
 - her goodness was not enough
 - she too needed the blood of Jesus
 - Lydia is a reminder that no matter how much someone is pursuing God, they still need God to redeem them by the blood of Jesus
- there are many like Lydia in the world
 - specifically - Muslim world
 - one of the most incredible testimonies I've ever heard of this is in a book we sell in the bookstore here
 - Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus - couldn't more highly recommend this book
 - especially as the Lord is calling us as a church to engage with the Muslim world, as the majority of the unreached are Muslim - very helpful book

Only Jesus can open the heart.

- Lydia's salvation was more than her intellectually agreeing with the fact that she was a sinner who needed the blood of Jesus to cleanse her
 - verse 14 clearly tells us it was the Lord who opened her heart
 - church - our only hope is in the saving power of Jesus - who alone can take a heart of stone and make it alive
 - salvation is impossible - people cannot and will not open their own hearts - God alone can do that miracle
- **this should bring incredible FREEDOM to us as we try and share the gospel to those in our lives**
 - we are simply messengers, but the Lord is the one who makes the message real
 - **side note:** your time in the Word - you need supernatural help!
 - "Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law" Psalm 119:18

Verse 16-18 "As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling. She followed Paul and us, crying out, 'These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation.' And this she kept doing for many days. Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, 'I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.' And it came out that very hour"

- on the heels of an encouraging beginning to the church in Philippi, we read of this dark encounter with a demon possessed little girl
 - not only was she oppressed by a demon, she was physically oppressed as a slave
 - the demon in her gave her the ability to know things she otherwise wouldn't have known
 - and so she was used by her owners for a profit in fortune telling
- this type of darkness is real
 - we have those exploited economically in our community
 - we have those oppressed spiritually in our community
 - we have fortune tellers in this city, and the surrounding communities
- it's also interesting and even strange that this demon through this girl was proclaiming truth
 - yet we know that the enemy knows who Jesus is
 - remember - they were once angels of light, they were once with Jesus in heaven
 - James tells us "even the demons believe, and shudder!" James 2:19
 - take note of that word - shudder
 - spiritual warfare is real, and can be intimidating
 - but there is something even the darkness, even demons, even Satan himself is afraid of
 - the King of Kings
- and that King is on the move, driving out darkness
 - and through Paul, he confronts this spirit, and delivers her
 - "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her" and it came out that very hour" (vs 18)

Jesus delivers the oppressed.

- Jesus is still driving out darkness, and he does so through his people
 - when Jesus shows up in a city, people are set free, and oppressors are confronted
- Want to be honest here - I want to walk with Jesus, safely, and as comfortably as possible, till he comes back

- I honestly don't want to go out and confront oppression
 - spiritual, economic oppression
- but Jesus is showing us what his church should be engaged in
 - engaging and confronting the dark places, and people in our communities
- what are the dark places in our community?
 - what are the dark practices?
 - what if we went there, what if we prayed
 - what if we engaged the darkness with the gospel?
 - who could be rescued, what could be pushed back?
 - there are actual places in our community that are dark
 - we know there's darkness there
 - we know people are profiting off of evil

**when we do this, there is deliverance, and there is also opposition...*

Verse 19-20 "But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the rulers. And when they had brought them to the magistrates, they said, 'These men are Jews, and they are disturbing our city'"

Jesus stirs up opposition.

- when we confront darkness in our communities, we should expect to get pushed back
 - when the light comes into the world, darkness often reacts
 - this is why Jesus was killed
- if only it was always like it was with Lydia
 - people are seeking God, and just need to hear the gospel, and then they respond
- sometimes it gets messier than that
 - sometimes Jesus is rejected

**the reason Jesus is rejected in this case - is because*

Jesus confronts our love of money.

- **these men rejected Jesus because, as it says in verse 19 they “saw that their hope of gain was gone”**
- some of the obstacles to the gospel are spiritual
- some of the biggest obstacles are economic
- there are multiple full blown riots in the book of Acts because of how the gospel directly confronts unjust economic practices
- church - let us let Jesus in even to our wallets - let us not take lightly the warning that you cannot serve both God and money

Verse 21-24 “They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice.’ The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods. And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely. Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fasted their feet in the stocks”

- **I have a really hard time when I’m mistreated**
 - not many things get to me like feeling mistreated, misrepresented
 - if my wife and I in an argument - my reaction is almost always to defend myself
- what is THE MOST difficult for me is when I feel mistreated as I’m trying to serve someone else
 - when I worked in a coffee shop - and someone was rude - man, that was honestly the hardest part of my job
- these men were driving out darkness in a community - and yet the community turns on them
 - they help deliver this little girl from spiritual chains, and then find themselves beaten and in chains as a result
- we may not all get beaten with rods every day for Jesus
 - but often relationships with those in our life certainly feels like it
 - often our workplaces feel like we are getting walked on

- often parenting, marriage, friendships - all have moments when we feel attacked, mistreated, even abused
- and we must remember something that you will not hear anywhere else - we follow a man with holes in his hands, feet and side
 - we follow a crucified Lord
 - we may or we may not suffer for evangelism, for prayer, for fighting darkness today
 - but we all have countless opportunities to suffer for and like Jesus every day
- I'm not saying we don't address abuse
 - we will later see Paul call out the government for their injustice
 - we do stop abuse, and we call the authorities to stop abuse
- and yet, hear me - Paul and Silas suffered abuse for Jesus
 - sometimes following Jesus will lead to mistreatment by others
 - they suffered as Jesus suffered
 - and Paul and Silas did not grab those rods and swing back
 - they took the abuse, and in doing so - they were a living witness to Jesus on the cross

**and yet, in this prison, we reach a turning point in this tragic event - we see Jesus using this injustice as a means to continue to build his church*

Verse 25-26 "About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bonds were unfastened."

- "It is wonderful that in such pain, with lacerated backs and aching limbs, Paul and Silas at about midnight were praying and singing hymns to God. Not groans but songs came from their mouths. Instead of cursing men, they blessed God. No wonder the other prisoners were listening to them" John Stott, *The Message of Acts* 267

- **the most powerful act of resistance to darkness is worship**
 - when the enemy hears the name of Jesus proclaimed, he flees
- **the most healing act in suffering is worship**

- when we lift our eyes above our wounds to Jesus, we are healed and sustained
- **the most effective tool in evangelism is worship**
 - when people see us trust Jesus when we are suffering, they are compelled to learn more
- God heard their prayers and their worship, and he poured out his power on that jail cell - shook the earth, and set them free

Verse 27 “When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped”

- this man is so desperate, he believes death is his only hope, his only escape
 - I know some in this room have been in this place
 - you may be here now
 - the thought that taking your own life will bring the relief you are desiring

**hear this story, see this man!*

Verse 28-34 “But Paul cried with a loud voice, ‘Do not harm yourself, for we are all here.’ And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them out and said, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ And they said, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.’ And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family. Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God”

Jesus replaces depression with joy.

- from despair to joy within a moment
 - the power word of God

- the power news of Jesus
 - there is hope for you
 - if you feel so desperate...no hope...
 - taking your own life feels like the best place of relief...
- **Jesus turned this jailor, into a host**
 - he opened up their home
 - he washes their wounds
 - and in return, he is baptized and his sins are washed away
- notice this theme of hospitality and community in this church
 - Lydia brought Paul and his companions to her home
 - this jailer opened up his home
 - these were but baby Christians, and yet they were practicing hospitality
 - want to encourage us church to press into community and hospitality, into home groups and inviting others into your life

Verse 35-40 “But when it was day, the magistrates sent the police, saying, ‘Let those men go.’ And the jailer reported these words to Paul, saying, ‘The magistrates have sent to let you go. Therefore come out now and go in peace.’ But Paul said to them, ‘They have beaten us publicly, uncondemned, men who are Roman citizens, and have thrown us into prison; and do they now throw us out secretly? No! Let them come themselves and take us out.’ The police reported the words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Roman citizens. So they came and apologized to them. And they took them out and asked them to leave the city. So they went out of the prison and visited Lydia. And when they had seen the brothers, they encouraged them and departed”

- publicly, uncondemned
 - wanted to establish credibility in the community for the gospel, for the new church
 - were not justly sentenced, rather the government was unjust
 - the church should be in good standing in the city - it is for the city

Jesus builds with messy materials.

- Jesus' core team for this new church was composed of a wealthy business woman, a previously demon possessed girl, and a post-suicidal Jailer
 - those who never would have been in the same room together, are unified around Jesus
- these three are so different from one another - economically, socially, ethnically
- and that's the point
- Jesus is building a church that is unified around him, and him alone
- no testimony is the same
 - some of us may have been raised in God-fearing and respectable homes
 - some of us may have been raised in spiritually confused and dark homes
 - some of us may have turned to Jesus out of a crisis in our lives
- the point is - only Jesus is enough to unify the group of people in this room
 - we are as different as these 3
 - and yet we have been sought out by a wonderful savior

Gospel

- Jesus has pursued us, sought us out, and opened our hearts to hear the truth of the gospel
- Jesus has delivered us from our oppression from our own sin and the enemy
- Jesus meets us in our worst moments of despair, and lifts us and grants us joy
- Jesus has brought us into his family