

**Sermon Manuscript: Acts 16:6-10**  
***Take the Gospel to the World***  
7<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter – May 29, 2022

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*Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." After 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. [NIV]*

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What does it take to raise a child? When you stop to think about, there's a lot that goes into it. We can start with the financial cost. From birth to 18 the average cost is around \$250,000. That's a quarter million dollars. It's a tremendous amount of money until we divide it into more manageable pieces. If you divide it by 18 years and again by 365 days, it comes to a more comprehensible \$38 a day. That's still significant, but it's a manageable figure.

Of course, raising a child is more than just a matter of money. If you think of the tremendous responsibility it is and how much effort goes into it, it's a wonder anyone would take on the task. The only way that it is possible is because we don't take it on all at once. The work of a mother and father is a task that goes on one day at a time. It's not one big task but countless small ones. It's like the bricks that make up this church building. Each one weighs around 4 pounds. We can all lift one brick but none of us could ever hope to lift the entire structure at once. The many bricks that make up our church building weigh many tons.

The principle we learn here is sometimes expressed as "divide and conquer" or "many hands make light work." This is something we learn from Paul's experience in our lesson today. Jesus gave us as his people a tremendous task. He calls on us to **TAKE THE GOSPEL TO THE WORLD**. It might seem like an impossibly big job, but our Lord also shows us how it will get done.

### **1. We Know What to Do**

Paul was doing what the Lord Jesus had told him to be doing. A few weeks ago we heard the story of Paul's conversion to faith. On that day on the road to Damascus, Jesus called Paul to faith. Jesus showed Paul the tremendous magnitude of his sinfulness. Paul also saw the overwhelming price Christ had paid for that sin. As a result of his experience that day and what Jesus had said to him, Paul was absolutely

convinced that the good news had to be spread to the whole world. People everywhere needed to know what Paul now knew. Forgiveness through Christ and the hope of resurrection to eternal life had to be proclaimed everywhere.

Jesus had called Paul to be the missionary to the Gentiles. Paul eagerly wanted to proclaim the good news of Christ's gospel. This lesson today takes place on Paul's second missionary journey. He had already proclaimed the gospel in many places. But he had also been prevented from bringing the good news to other places where he intended to go.

Paul knew that he had to proclaim the promise of the gospel of Jesus. He knew what he had to do because of what Jesus had done. What Jesus had done was not only for Paul but for all people. Jesus had provided the perfect sinless substitute for every human being. Jesus had offered his life up on the altar of the cross for all the sinners of the world – for Paul, for you and for me. This sacrifice is so tremendous that we can spend the rest of our lives talking about it and still not comprehend it. Proclaiming this good news is what Paul did with his whole life after the road to Damascus. What Jesus did was the opposite of divide and conquer. He took the entire, dreadful, unimaginable task upon himself alone. No one helped him. He was completely forsaken to carry it himself. His people deserted him. His followers deserted him. His disciples fled. His own heavenly Father turned his back on him. Jesus was forsaken by everyone. After he had finished the task, carting off every last brick of our guilt, he rose victoriously from the grave to assure us all that it was done. The whole world needs to hear this. When Paul heard it, he was determined to tell as many people as possible.

Paul didn't just go because of what Jesus did. He also went because of what Jesus said. We've heard the same words from the Savior ourselves. *"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."* [Matthew 28:19-20] (Jesus) *said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned."* [Mark 16:15-16] *"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."* [Acts 1:8] *The Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel."* [Acts 9:15]

We know Jesus too. He's given us his Holy Spirit so we believe in his work for us. We have seen and heard about the mighty deed, which is all he did to pay the price to bring us from rebellious, damnable children to heirs of his forgiveness and glory. He paid a dearer and costlier price than any and all parents ever could. And it is because

his love for us is higher, longer, wider and deeper than any mother or father. How can we not be moved to tell this story? Think of the countless thousands – millions – who don't know the real story of Jesus! The only ones who can tell them are those of us who already believe. But we can't be everywhere for everybody. We know what to do, but how can it be done? We can take the gospel to the world because the Lord shows us where to do it.

## 2. The Lord Shows Us Where to Do It

Jesus told Paul where to go and preach the gospel by calling him. Jesus called Paul to faith first of all. As we have seen, this showed him what to do. This also enlisted him as an individual with particular abilities and talents. He knew the Old Testament and was a gifted teacher. The Lord used these things to get his good news out to the world. But in addition to the basics that are common to all who believe by faith, Jesus also called Paul to a particular mission. Paul was called to take the gospel to the Gentiles. Others had been sent to the Jews in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria. Others would take the gospel to other ends of the earth. But Paul was called to carry it along the road that eventually led to Rome. His work began when he was called to this work by the congregation in Antioch. His brothers and sisters in that congregation obeyed the Lord's command to send him out together with Barnabas. We read: *While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."* [Acts 13:2]

The Lord also called Paul to go to a particular place. In our lesson many places are listed that were passed over. Paul was prevented from going there at this time. These were sidestepped because the Lord wanted Paul in Macedonia. The Lord knew where the particular opportunities were and so directed Paul to go there. Lydia and the jailer among many others were waiting for Paul to come to Macedonia. This was God's plan.

When we consider how the Lord directed Paul, it's important for us to understand how the Lord calls us into his service. Paul was called "immediately." This means that the Lord spoke directly to him and told him what he wanted him to do. We're told Paul had a "vision." We don't know if Paul saw this man in a dream or he saw this call while awake. We only know that it was at night. But the call was very vivid and unmistakable. That's why Paul "got ready at once."

For us today, Jesus calls us "mediately." This means that Christians serve on behalf of other Christians who call them with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This is what the congregation at Antioch did when Paul was first sent out. This is what our congregation did when it has called its pastors and teachers. This is what we do whenever we ask people to serve for us in roles such as on the church council or as Sunday school teachers. These calls are different from each other. My call has a different group of

duties than our teachers' calls. The church council's responsibilities are different than the responsibilities of the school board. In this way the Lord directs us who serve as representatives of our fellow Christians to the tasks he has for us.

The calls of called workers have their origin in the calls of each of us as individual Christians. We all have been given the task to preach and teach the gospel to the whole world. But we all can't go everywhere. So we send others. But this doesn't mean that we cease to have a personal place and situation in which to serve. The Lord calls us all to be involved. Our Christianity can't be like a hitchhiker who says, "You buy the car, pay for its upkeep, insurance and gas. I'll ride. But if you get in an accident, I'll probably sue." The church hitchhiker says, "You do the work and provide for everything so I can have a pleasant church experience. I'll sit back and if I don't like it, I'll complain. But don't ask me to be responsible for it." How often haven't we been church hitchhikers? How badly don't we need Jesus' forgiveness!

Like Paul, the Lord has called each of us to faith and to do his work. Our motivation is the same as Paul's. Remember how much the Lord has forgiven us for our taking it all for granted. Let the gracious love of the Savior move each of us to look to do our part in the Great Commission of proclaiming Jesus. To paraphrase the famous quote from John Kennedy, we can't just ask what Jesus does for me. We must also ask what he would have us do for him.

The mission he gives us may seem to be too big. It is certainly too big for one person. To bring the gospel to the entire world or even to just a piece of it seems impossible if we only think of ourselves. Just our north-side neighborhood is a big job. To get it done we all need to be involved. We've all been called by the Lord to do our part. Some have been called to special work in certain areas. Some have been called through the gifts the Lord has given us. Some find themselves in circumstances where the Lord has placed great opportunities among friends or family for us to tell about Jesus. An excellent example of this is how believing parents teach their children to know, love and serve Jesus a little bit every day within the circle of the Christian home.

Each of us has been called to live and speak for Christ. We are all to serve as salt and light in the world to lead others to give glory to God – to believe in Christ by the Spirit's working. As Peter said: *You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.* [1 Peter 2:9] Let us declare those praises in the little, everyday ways that the Lord puts in front of us day by day. A great building is built in little steps. Children are grown into adults by little acts of parenting done every day. The Lord's gospel has gone out into the world one step at a time. May we always be part of the Lord's work and so declare his praises. Amen.