

PREPARING AT HOME

May 20-26, 2019

Focus reading: Acts 16:9–15 (<http://bible.oremus.org/?ql=422595276>)

Other lectionary readings: Psalm 67; Revelation 21:10, 22—22:5; John 14:23–29

Theme: The Power of Listening

Paul's encounter with Jesus on the Damascus Road transformed his life in ways that he could not have imagined in the moment. Paul had flourished under a patriarchal system that used coercion and violence to control the masses and to ensure that those in power, in both the religious and political realms, stayed in power. However, imperial power, as Paul would discover, has its limits. After his Damascus Road experience, Paul is transformed and led by God's Spirit, whose power is revealed through listening rather than coercion. After listening to a voice in a vision, Paul changes his plans and heads to Philippi in Macedonia. There he meets a group of women who meet by the riverside to pray. They, too, are listening to God's Spirit. Paul meets Lydia, a Gentile who worships God and is interested in the Jewish Scripture. She is the head of her own household, an independent woman who deals in luxurious purple cloth and therefore has considerable financial means. She listens to what God's Spirit has to teach her through Paul's words, but her listening is not passive. Like Paul, Lydia listens to God's Spirit and is transformed. She asks Paul to baptize her entire household and insists that Paul and his companions stay at her home. We later learn in verse 40 that Lydia continues to extend the gift of hospitality, as her home becomes the "home base" of the Philippian Christian community. As the Gospel is spread, images of imperial power, based in patriarchy and coercion, are being shattered by images of an inclusive, often female-led, kin-dom of listening.

A DEALER OF PURPLE CLOTH

Look for purple items in your home and in your closets. Do you have purple cloth? Explain that it would have been a luxury in that culture to have purple cloth. It was a sign of royalty and wealth. Encourage your child to imagine what Lydia was like and what life was like for her.

WHERE IN THE WORLD IS LYDIA?

Look at a map to see how far the news of Christ has traveled. Where is the Sea of Galilee, where Jesus taught? Where is Jerusalem, where Jesus died? Where is Macedonia, (the Balkan Peninsula), the place to which Paul was called? Where is Akhisar, (Turkey)? In miles, how far has the Gospel spread? Imagine what it was like to travel those distances with no planes, trains, or cars. Lydia's gift of hospitality was especially helpful, considering the absence of hotels! How can your family show hospitality?

PRAYER

God of love,
May we welcome others, even as you have welcomed us!
May we listen to others and to your Spirit speaking through them.
Amen.

Prospect Presbyterian Church, Maplewood, NJ, www.prospectchurch.org

Rita Boyer, rita@prospectchurch.org