

## PREPARING AT HOME

May 27-June 2, 2019

*Focus reading:* Acts 16:16–34 (<http://bible.oremus.org/?ql=422600117>)

*Other lectionary readings:* Psalm 97; Revelation 22:12–14, 16–17, 20–21; John 17:20–26

*Theme:* Haunting Claims of Freedom

The theme of this week's reading, according to our curriculum writers, is freedom, and there is no shortage of people who can testify to that theme. It starts with a slave girl who is being exploited for profit. When she calls out, Paul and Silas respond to her tragic situation only as a way to end the annoyance. Even so, the girl is healed and freed. Her freedom comes at the expense of her tormentors, who exploit the judicial system to remove Paul and Silas' freedom. In the context of worship and prayer, an earthquake opens the prison doors and allows Paul and Silas to go free. Showing that the jailer, too, is held prisoner by imperial power, he sees suicide as his only option when he assumes that the prisoners have escaped. Hearing that the prisoners are still there, the jailer knows that he is witnessing something new and more powerful than the empire he serves. He, too, experiences liberation when he and his family are baptized. All of these characters are freed by God's power to live in God's realm, a realm that calls them to live according to a new reality. That which seems to have power over this realm is exposed as being powerless; while the real source of power is found in God's love and forgiveness. It is a liberating power that is so radically different from the imperial power of the world that it grabs people's attention. Worship and prayer are at the center, but we shouldn't be surprised when the ground starts to shake!

### PRAYERS AND SONGS

Paul and Silas prayed and sang hymns even when they were in prison. What are your favorites hymns or song of faith? Do you sing them only in church? At what other times could you sing these songs? When and where do you pray?

### FREEDOM

Who are the people who need to be freed today? People who were at March's Sensational Sunday may remember making cards that are being given to detainees (immigrants and asylum seekers) through the organization First Friends. Pray for the people who are receiving these cards. Pray for others who seek to be free from poverty, hunger, and illness.

### PRAYER

God of love,  
Sometimes it takes an earthquake for people to  
notice what you are doing in the world!  
We give thanks that nothing can stop  
the power of your truth and love.  
May we speak your truth and share your love  
that all might be free.  
Amen.

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