



SERMON DISCUSSION GUIDE
FOR ALL SAINTS SMALL GROUPS

“Marks of Participation” | Rev. Tim Frickenschmidt | 11th Sunday after Pentecost (8/8/2021)

Acts 16:11-19, 23-32

16:11 So, setting sail from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Samothrace, and the following day to Neapolis, 12 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. 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 women who had come together. 14 One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. 15 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. 16 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. 17 She followed Paul and us, crying out, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation.” 18 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. 19 But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers.

23 And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely. 24 Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. 25 About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, 26 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. 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. 28 But Paul cried with a loud voice, “Do not harm yourself, for we are all here.” 29 And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas. 30 Then he brought them out and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” 31 And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.” 32 And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house.

Introduction Consider the book of Acts as a story that resets our expectations. Like the one-eyed Chihuahua in Tim’s story, it is a living obstacle that requires us to deviate from our previous path. And on a grand scale, humanities chosen path is changed in this story of the first church plant in Europe. How can we know that the path we are on is the right one? How can we know that we are participating – as individuals and as a church – in the mission God has given the church?

Two Marks

Consider the “core group” that Luke, Paul, Silas and the others had available for this church plant:

- A wealthy businesswoman who had everything
- A demon-possessed slave girl who had nothing
- A suicidal jailer who had lost everything

The diversity is astounding. These had nothing at all in common, and none had anything in common with Paul. But this is God’s “normal”. Consider: Acts 8 – Phillip and Simon, the Samaritan; Phillip and the Ethiopian Eunuch; Acts 9 – Ananias and Saul, the persecutor of Christians; Acts 10 – Peter and Cornelius, the Roman centurion; and now Paul to Macedonia. We can know that we are on the right path, because Jesus has come to us, who had nothing in common with him; and he now sends us out to proclaim good news to those with whom we have nothing in common.

Consider also the character of the church at Philippi. Unlike the “seven churches in Asia” (Rev.. 1-4), or the church at Corinth, Paul has nothing but commendation and encouragement for this church. The earthquake shook the foundations of the prison, but also the foundations of their very lives, such that the jailer could not even bear life before death. And through both the unjustified persecution and the natural disaster, Paul and the others were singing. The church founded here was characterized by dependence upon the Lord, true humility, fervent prayer, and a heart that sings praises to God in the midst of trouble. Living this way will both benefit us and be a beacon of hope to those around us.

Discuss:

- 1.) What fears keep us from going to those with whom we have nothing in common? And how can Paul’s example help us overcome those fears?
- 2.) Which member of the “core group” do you most identify with? How can their example help you become more hospitable or more open to receiving hospitality?
- 3.) What are the “earthquakes” that threaten your security? And how can you “sing” your way through them to the benefit of yourself and others?

Conclusion/Application

Consider Tim’s challenge – How will you and we welcome those 100 Latino converts into the All Saints family? We have to try!