



Sermon Series: Acts

Sermon Title: This Hour Is for Him

Date: 8/16/2026

Acts 16:11-15

Big Idea: Make public worship essential to your life, not optional.

More and more people are stepping back from gathering with God's people for worship. Nearly half of American adults rarely or never attend a worship service in person, and for many, church attendance has become optional instead of expected. But when public worship becomes something we can skip whenever life gets busy, something deeper begins to fade too - our sense of God's holiness, our hunger for His Word, and our connection to His people. Acts 16 pulls back the curtain on an ordinary Sabbath gathering by a river in Philippi, and shows us why gathering with God's people still matters today.

Worship Takes Place Globally

Paul's journey through Troas, Samothrace, Neapolis, and Philippi reminds us that faith in Christ was never meant to be private or hidden away. The gospel travels along roads, crosses borders, and confronts people in public. That's still true today - God is worshiped in homes, offices, hospitals, and even online, where Scripture and testimony reach further than any building ever could. But technology is a messenger, not a replacement.

A video of the ocean can show you the waves, but it can't give you the sand between your toes or the smell of the salt air. In the same way, a song or sermon streamed to your phone can encourage you, but it can't replace gathering with the church in person. Wherever God's people gather, He is worthy of praise, and eternity will be experienced together, not streamed alone.

Worship Benefits from a Place

On the Sabbath, Paul and his companions went to the riverside, where they supposed there was a place of prayer. Philippi didn't have enough Jewish

residents for a synagogue, so believers gathered near water for prayer and ritual washing. Throughout Scripture, God has given His people set-apart places to worship - the tabernacle, the temple, the synagogue, and today, the local church. Gathering in a specific place, at a specific time, is a public witness that says, "This place belongs to God, and this hour is for Him."

If worship is left to compete with everything else on the calendar, it gets crowded out. It's also worth noticing who gathered at the riverside - women, whom Scripture affirms from the beginning as equally made in the image of God. Lydia and the others were there because worship draws people who are spiritually hungry, regardless of status or background.

Worship Opens Hearts

The Lord opened Lydia's heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. Lydia was a successful businesswoman, a dealer in purple cloth, wealthy and influential - yet she still needed Jesus. The setting was public, but the change was inward: Paul spoke, Lydia listened, and God did the work only He can do. No sermon or worship service can manufacture that kind of change. But when God's Word is faithfully preached, He uses it to wake up hearts and grow believers toward maturity. Public worship isn't a performance or a habit to check off; it's the place where God often chooses to meet people, expose them to truth, and bring them to life.

Public worship was never meant to be optional. It's where God meets His people, shapes them, and builds them - just as He did at a riverbank in Philippi. Life will always offer reasons to skip a Sunday: busy schedules, tiredness, or the sense that missing just once won't matter. But if we let worship compete with everything else, everything else will eventually win. This week, make the choice to treat public worship as essential, not optional - not just for what you receive, but for what your presence gives to others who need to see that God is worth it.

Discussion Questions

- 1. When has public worship helped you notice something in your own heart that you might have missed on your own?**
- 2. Paul and his companions traveled a long way to reach the people of Philippi. Who in your own life needs to hear about Jesus, and how could gathering together for worship help you carry that message?**
- 3. Why do you think God's people have always needed a set-apart time and place for worship? What competes with that time in your life right now?**
- 4. Lydia was influential and successful, yet she still needed the Lord to open her heart. What does that tell you about who worship is for?**
- 5. What's one practical step you can take this week to make public worship essential rather than optional?**