

Company's Coming



“Company’s Coming”

Sixth Sunday of Easter
Saturday & Sunday, May 25-26, 2019

All Services
The Reverend Dr. Jack M. Horner, Jr.
Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
Camp Hill, Pennsylvania

Acts 16:9-15; Psalm 67; John 14:23-29

Grace and peace be to you from our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Amen.

For those of you who know me well, you know that Linda and I love it here. We love this congregation, we love the people, we love the variety of ministries that we support whether locally within our congregation or within our area, or even internationally, in a variety of different places. We love it so much that we finally are settling down and we're building a home. We're very excited about that and on Tuesday we break ground over in Mechanicsburg and we're very excited for what the future will bring in this next phase of our life. It's nice after six years living a variety of places to finally think anyway, that we're settling down, we're settling down.

Of course, recently that whole idea was challenged. Two weeks ago, Linda and I went to a conference of pastors of large Lutheran churches and the main speaker was Pastor Adam Hamilton, who is the pastor of the largest Methodist church in the United States, The Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kansas, just outside of Kansas City. And as he talked as a pastor, he was talking to us about how do you grow? How do you improve? How do you challenge yourself if you think you're the best? That question really hit me. Because, quite frankly, when I think about our church I think, WOW, I think we're the best! And I have had so many conversations with members of our congregation that have also said the very same thing to me.

How do you challenge yourself? How do you challenge yourself if you think you're the best? How do we inspire each other to worship, connect and serve if we already believe we're the best at what we do? Are we just, settled?

The book of Acts is written by the evangelist Luke. It's really his second act to the gospel, and it's the history of the early church. One of the main characters in the Book of Acts is the Apostle Paul. It contains the story of many of his journeys sharing the faith of Jesus Christ throughout what then was known as the known world.

In the section before our reading that we had today Paul is ministering in modern day Turkey and things are going great. Luke writes that the “churches were strengthened in the faith and increased in numbers daily.” And boy, I'll tell you, for a pastor that's what you want to hear as a description for your ministry. They're strengthened in the faith and they are increasing numbers daily. It doesn't get much better than that. And he decides that he is going to move into some new areas in Turkey. But then it happens. . .

he gets this spiritual roadblock. The Spirit comes to him and says "no I don't want you to go there, I don't want you to do that. Twice, twice he tries to go into an area and yet he has this conviction that God doesn't want him to go. Nothing seems right about it. And then he has the dream that you heard in our reading today. This vision, a man from Macedonia pleading with him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."

Macedonia is located in Greece across the sea from where he was.

This vision, this Spirit encourages him to go another way. Now notice, Paul stays true to his purpose, he goes to Macedonia to continue the work of sharing the gospel with those who have not heard, but he's just going in a different place than where God wanted him to be.

Luke writes that they were convinced that God called us to proclaim the good news to them, and Paul and his entourage immediately go to do that work. And they come to a place called Philippi. Philippi is the first major city on the border region in the region of Macedonia. And it's basically like the Arlington, Virginia or the San Diego, California of the Roman Empire. It's the place where Roman soldiers go to retire. They were promised a little bit of land and they could set up shop, set up homes, and so it is a very large Roman military community.

Now normally he would go to the local synagogue to be able to find fellow Jews to be able to tell them about this Jewish rabbi who is the Messiah. But Philippi doesn't have a synagogue and he knows that if you go to the next best place, for Jews if there was no synagogue they would try to find a quiet place, often in nature, some times in the woods often near a stream or a river, and that's what he does.

There he meets some women who have gathered in that place to pray and he engages them in conversation about Jesus, and he meets a woman named Lydia. Lydia was a dealer in purple cloth and probably quite wealthy because purple cloth was very, very expensive. It was the color of the Roman elite, and purple dye was very difficult to produce, it actually came from the juice found in a particular type of shellfish and you needed a lot of those little suckers to be able to make just a little bit of that purple dye.

Paul shares his faith with them and Luke records that Lydia opened her heart to listen eagerly to what Paul had to say, and the result was her whole household was baptized, not just Lydia, not just Lydia's family, but all of their servants and all those that were a part of her extended household. And then she invites them, she insists that they come, and they stay with her. Generosity and hospitality come from an unexpected place. Remember Paul's vision was a dream of a man of Macedonia, and instead it ends up being a woman of Thyatira living in Macedonia.

One of our members, Ron Katzman, who gave the funds for this beautiful stained-glass window we have, actually they included Lydia in the stained glass. She is in the purple coat carrying a Bible on the right-hand side there. Isn't that cool, isn't that wonderful? Brothers and sisters vision changes everything. With vision, like Paul had, life has direction and the purpose becomes clear.

I remember when I first accepted that kind of call to ministry how I understood that direction in my life and what was going to be happening, everyday was a new adventure. With vision people can tackle the impossible and they can accomplish great things. Vision pushes us beyond what's safe, beyond what's secure, beyond what is simply settled.

The artist Michelangelo said, "The greatest danger for most of us is not that we aim too high and we miss it, but that we aim too low and we reach it."

Holy vision inspires us. The word *Spirit* is in that inspiration. It comes from God and reminds us of everything that Jesus taught us. Vision energizes us, it gets us excited about our present, it gets us excited about the future, and it also focuses our energies, our resources, our decisions that we want to make. Vision is God's preferred future for you and for me, and because of that we need not fear! God's peace is with us through the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

So, what dreams inspire you? What's your vision for Trinity?

Brothers and sisters let it be a worthwhile dream, don't settle for anything less.

My vision for Trinity is three-fold.

First **every member a servant** - you have unique gifts and talents for the building up of the body of Christ, and the greatest gift is love, the foundation of every servant. Jesus made that clear when he said to us, "love your neighbor." Dr. Albert Schweitzer said, "I don't know what your destiny will be, but one thing I do know: the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who have sought and found how to serve."

Secondly, **every neighbor a friend** - hospitality is central to a vital church. We must always be asking ourselves, who is my neighbor, and what does it mean to be a friend to that neighbor? Being a friend means being authentic, not seeking them out because you want something from them but being in relationship with them. Accepting them who they are and encouraging them to be the best version of themselves that they can be. A friend doesn't abandon them. And like Lydia when she had made friends with Paul, in this encounter with the gospel her heart was opened, generosity and hospitality are unleashed.

And Thirdly, **every person growing** - in faith and in love, in hospitality and generosity, in thankfulness and service. I pray that Trinity will become a community of growers.

Maybe that's why Jesus uses so many words, so many connection words to describe our relationship with him and with the church. He talks about the church as a body, as a family, as a flock, as a vine and branches.

We are growing in the Spirit of God, company's coming, Jesus promises his Holy Spirit to you and to me and to all who believe.

Are you open to allowing the Holy Spirit to transform you? Your heart, your desires, your faith?

Brothers and sisters don't settle for anything less. Accepting the Spirit means following God's preferred future for you. Changing direction if necessary, to fulfill God's mission in your life. You become a servant, a friend, growing to full potential.

And when you invite and welcome the spirit of Christ, people are touched, friends are made, and the church, your church is enriched. Amen.

In the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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