



The Westminster Pulpit

Sermons Preached at Westminster Presbyterian Church
3900 West End Avenue Nashville, Tennessee 37205-1899

“What are you doing here?” **Sermon on Acts 16:9-15**

Donovan A. Drake

Sixth Sunday of Easter
May 22, 2022

Acts 16:9-15

⁹ During the night Paul had a vision: there stood a man of Macedonia pleading with him and saying, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” ¹⁰ When he had seen the vision, we immediately tried to cross over to Macedonia, being convinced that God had called us to proclaim the good news to them.

¹¹ We therefore set sail from Troas and took a straight course to Samothrace, 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 for some days. ¹³ On the Sabbath day we went outside the gate by the river, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had gathered there. ¹⁴ A certain woman named Lydia, a worshiper of God, was listening to us; she was from the city of Thyatira and a dealer in purple cloth. The Lord opened her heart to listen eagerly to what was said by Paul. ¹⁵ When she and her household were baptized, she urged us, saying, “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come and stay at my home.” And she prevailed upon us.

Chris Lovingood has a vision for the people of Ukraine, where he sees refugees, and hears their cry, "Come help us."

Sarah Wilkinson, a member of our congregation, has a vision that the blanket or baby cap she's knitting will be a sign of love for a young mother who needs to know there's love. She has a vision of people who plead, "Come help us."

Rudy Kalis goes to death row with a Bible, ears to listen, and a vision to see those people who have fallen way short of the glory of God. "Come help us."

So, let's not scratch our heads and wonder, "what do you mean, Paul had a vision about a man pleading to him saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." The mighty acts of God are happening now, and not just long ago and far away.

In the last days it will be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams.

When the rains fell on Waverly, this congregation, in the midst of Covid, raised nearly \$300,000 because of a vision of people who pleaded, "Come help us." And since that time, Joe Gaines and his team have made who knows how many trips to do just that. On June 16, 17 and 18, there will be 30 new houses built in Waverly, Tennessee. They have a need; we have a vision. Can you see it? Can you hear the people pleading, "Come help us!"?

The Word of God is not rare in these days. For we are people whose ears are open to the people who cry for help. That's where it begins, don't you think? Help! Needing help comes in all shapes and sizes.

Help, my home is going down stream.
Help, my dad is going into a memory care unit, and I just need to know you care.
Help, I miss my husband and I can't pull out of it.
Help, I've got this problem at work, and I can't sleep.
Help... I need to know someone cares.

How do you decide whom to help?

Paul has a vision of a man in Macedonia saying, "Come help us." Paul is laser-focused, nothing is going to slow him down. But you know how the story goes.

The other day I received a photograph on a text. Our crew going to Waverly had stopped at the McDonalds exit. For one reason or another they stop, no need to go into detail. The journey of course is to get to Waverly because as I said, they have this vision of people who plead. "Please help us!" But the picture is of Joe Gaines and

others with a jack and wrench changing the flat tire of someone there in the parking lot. Was that in the vision?

Come to Macedonia and help us! Who is us? Paul gets on a boat that lands him on a path to his vision, the vision of the man from Macedonia who cried out, "Come help us." Paul is on the path, and the path leads to a river, and there at river, women who know something more about God and that our lives are prayerful lives. Women who went down to the river to pray. There at the river, a certain woman by the name of Lydia hears the Word of God that came from the mouth of Paul, and the Lord opens her heart. Was Lydia looking for that on that day?

Sometimes you receive help that you don't know you need. Jesus says it this way, "The kingdom of heaven is like stumbling on a treasure in a field." You didn't know what you were lacking until you found it, and then you sell all that you have to get it. Some people call that "falling in love." "I didn't know what I was missing until I found you."

"Come to Macedonia and help us." Lydia was baptized. Opened her home to Paul, who may have needed help finding a room for the night. Help comes in all shapes and sizes.

Jesus went looking for it, I suppose. In that passage that Heidi read to you, Jesus found his way down to the Sheep Gate pool. Why do you think he went there? I think he went to help. Something magical happened there. All the people who were broken in one way or another were there. Help. The word on the street was that when the waters bubbled up, the first one into the pool would be healed.

Jesus finds a man who has been there a very long time. He asks him, "Do you want to be made well?" And his reply is, "I have no one." The definition of loneliness.

"I have no one to call. I have no one who calls. I have no one who cares. I have no one to put me into the pool when the waters bubble up."

Why is he there? He's never going to make it into the water. He can't move and he has no one. "Do you want to be made well?" "I can't be made well. I have no one. I have no one." I think you can be the healthiest person living, the fastest runner, the strongest lifter, the wealthiest you have ever been, but if you have all that, yet have no one, well...

Why is he there? He's never going to make it in the water. And if he did, and the waters somehow magically healed him, he'd still have no one.

"Do you want to be made well?" "I don't have..."

"Do you want to be made well?" "Well, the waters... they bubble up..."

"Do you want to be made well?" "I have no one."

“Do you want to be made well?”

Do you know who asked that question?

This week, we had an oddly spiritual Session meeting. What I received was a gift of the Spirit, that God is alive and well. And I asked the Session members, and now perhaps you, to think of the answer to this question: Why are you here? Why is Westminster here? What are you doing here?

I asked myself that question, and the answer that came to my mind in the meeting was that I have been blessed. Sometimes you can forget. The last few years have been tough with covid, politics, and meanness. And you forget that God is still there on his throne.

I knew exactly why I was here, and I hadn't felt that way in a long time. I am here to testify that the light of Christ is here, shining through you. You are my help. You are amazing because you sustain me every day of my life with the big things, the little things, the house that you built, the prayer, the call, the message, the love.

Paul had a vision that there was a man who needed help.

Copyright©Donovan A. Drake 2022