

Called to Act

Acts of Hope: Part 5 “Called to Act”

Rev. Cameron D St.Michael – May 22, 2022

6th Sunday of Easter

Readings: Acts 11:1-18

Reflection: Psalm 67

Greeting: Surely God is my salvation. I will trust and not be afraid. The Lord, the Lord is my strength and my song. He has become my salvation. Praise the Lord! (*Isaiah 12:2*)

Prayer: Almighty God, through your only Son you overcame death and opened to us the gate of everlasting life. Grant that we who celebrate our Lord’s resurrection, by the renewing of your Spirit, arise from the death of sin to the life of righteousness; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Reflection: Psalm 67

May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, that your way may be known upon earth, your saving power among all nations. Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you. Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth. Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you. The earth has yielded its increase; God, our God, has blessed us. May God continue to bless us; let all the ends of the earth revere him. (Psalm 67 NRSVue)*

We read the words of Psalm 67 and hear of praise and rejoicing. That God is praised for his treatment of the people. That God has blessed his people. What is a blessing that you can name in your life today? How can you praise God for that blessing? How can you share in your blessings with others? Do you show thankfulness for all that God has done for you? How do we share in the joy of our Risen Savior?

Prayer: O God, our sovereign, our banquet, and our crown: In the resurrection of your Son you have brought us into your palace. Train us to be heirs to your throne, that we may shield the needy. Help us with our doubts and fears and strengthen us in love as we come before you in prayer. May you guide us in all things; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. Alleluia.

Now let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Sermon:

Our scripture reading for today comes from the Common English Bible. Our reading for today comes from Acts chapter 16 verses 9 through 15.

A vision of a man from Macedonia came to Paul during the night. He stood urging Paul, "Come over to Macedonia and help us!" Immediately after he saw the vision, we prepared to leave for the province of Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to proclaim the good news to them.

We sailed from Troas straight for Samothrace and came to Neapolis the following day. From there we went to Philippi, a city of Macedonia's first district and a Roman colony. We stayed in that city several days. On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the riverbank, where we thought there might be a place for prayer. We sat down and began to talk with the women who had gathered. One of those women was Lydia, a Gentile God-worshipper from the city of Thyatira, a dealer in purple cloth. As she listened, the Lord enabled her to embrace Paul's message. Once she and her household were baptized, she urged, "Now that you have decided that I am a believer in the Lord, come and stay in my house." And she persuaded us. (Acts 16:9-15 CEB+)

This is the word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

This week we look at the way that Paul was called to act because of his belief in Christ. That where he's needed, he goes. We see that reflected in our reading for today. A vision comes to Paul saying that he should head over to Macedonia. Right after he sees the vision, he heads out. No hesitation, Paul heads out right away. Paul wasn't even sure exactly where he was need, just that he is needed somewhere in Macedonia. So, Paul begins to look for opportunity. He finds that opportunity on the Sabbath. They go out to the city gates, to the riverbank to look for people who may be at a place of prayer. Paul then does something that is a little different. It might have been seen as a little odd. Because Paul sits down and talks to the women that are there. The reason this is a little odd is because the women weren't the ones who would have power in that society. It was the men who were considered to be the head of the household. The men are the ones who hold the power. So, Paul going and talking to these women would be a little out of place. But Paul had the right idea because a Gentile woman named Lydia embraces Paul's message. After hearing what Paul had to say about Christ, she and her entire household are baptized in the name of the Lord.

This occurs because Paul went where he was called to be. But not only that, Paul spoke to the people who were there to listen. Even if it was a bunch of women down by the river. That may not seem all that out of the ordinary to us today. But when we think about society at the time of Paul, this can seem a little different. Women weren't exactly the people you wanted in your religion to make you look good. The men were the head of the household. Men were seen

as the ones you'd want if you wanted your religion to be influential in Roman circles. We see the same thing in the Bible with the history of Israel. When we have a list of who's descended from who it's almost universally a list of fathers to sons and fathers to sons and fathers to sons because in Jewish society the men were the ones that mattered for the family line. And so, it does say something about Paul in this instance. That Paul was going and speaking to these women by the river says something about who Paul wanted to reach. Paul is there speaking to a Gentile woman on top of everything. But it seems Paul knows that his message is for all people and shares his message with all because that's what he's been called to do. Paul is willing to circumvent people's expectations in order to be able to be a witness to all people. When he's not restricted by society's rules, he can proclaim the good news to anyone and everyone.

In this we see that Paul is reaching out beyond the expected audience, and he is reaching out beyond society's expectations, and he is reaching out to share Christ. I think there's a great lesson to be learned in that because Paul was doing what he was called to do, to share the good news. To act for Christ to share that good news with anyone and everyone. Even when he wasn't sure where to go, he went and found people, learned about them, and told them about Jesus. And I think there's something in the simplicity of Paul's actions that can get lost in the mix. Sometimes Paul becomes a larger-than-life person in the church because we put Paul up there with all sorts of great orations and all these letters that he sent to all these churches. But here we have Paul speaking with some women outside the city gates and this is the Paul that I love. Because Paul's just out there doing his thing. Paul is sharing his joy in Christ with whoever will listen. Now at this point, Paul doesn't seem all that concerned if it's not the power players who are listening. Because Paul seems to be convinced truly and faithfully that Christ's message is for all. So, Paul, the faithful messenger is taking that message to all the people. And I think there's something for us to learn in that. Because Paul is willing to go wherever he needs to go, speaking to whoever he needs to speak to, even if he's not sure who he's supposed to be speaking to. Paul shares the good news of Jesus Christ with whoever listens. He is simply looking for people that need hope. People who are receptive. People who want to know there's something more to the world. People eager for a new life. People who want to have their hearts and lives changed. Paul goes and he shares with them.

And I think there is something truly touching about all of this. Thinking of Paul just hanging out sharing his personal experiences and telling others about the impact Christ has had on his life. And, you know, Lydia wasn't the only person there. But she's the only one we hear about who wants to be baptized. Which means Paul may have had a decent audience with only one person really taking it to heart. But that one person makes a difference. That one person makes all the difference. If we are ever feeling like we do not have the charisma, the resources, the gifts that Paul had as he traveled about sharing the good news, we can remember something simple. The most basic thing that Paul did was to talk about Jesus with people who would listen. It didn't take a special occasion. He just found people who might be

down by the river praying. He just looked for people who might want to hear about the new life he had found. That he simply wanted to tell people about the way that their hearts and lives could be changed through Christ. He wanted all to have that hope and that new life, so he shared. He was called to act, so he went, and he did. We can find inspiration in that. Knowing that it's not always going to be something big and flashy. It's not always going to be something that seems overwhelming. Sometimes it may just be looking around and sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with the people who are nearby. Maybe they don't all care. Maybe they don't all listen. But maybe one will care. Maybe one will listen. Maybe one will be called to act. And that one will speak to their household. And their household will speak to their neighbors. And their neighbors to other neighbors. And who knows where that ends. But we do know where it begins because it begins with one person hearing the call. One person following the call from our Savior. One person responding to that call by sharing the good news with others. That if we let the Holy Spirit guide us to where we need to be then all we have to do is speak the truth of the impact Christ has made in our lives. We can leave the rest in God's hands. So let us always remember that we are called to act on behalf of Christ. We are called to share our witness with those around us. That we are called to be an example of Christ's love and grace. Because even if we just reach one person that one act makes all the difference. Amen.

Prayer of Confession and Pardon: God, you are with us even when we turn away from you. Guide us back into your loving arms. Judge us not by the perfection of our actions but show us mercy and love. We have strayed like lost sheep from your ways, failing both in what we have done and what we have failed to do. Bring us back into your fold that you may guide us and lead us in all things. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy upon us and forgive us. May we walk in your love and trust your ways. Amen.

Almighty God have mercy upon you. May the Lord forgive all your sins and lift you up in love through Jesus Christ our Lord, and by the Holy Spirit keep you in life eternal. Amen.

Offering: If you are so moved to make an offering, you may send it to the church treasurer, or you may send it to the PO Box listed below. We are still the church, and the church still needs your support to keep doing all the important work that we do.

Lord's Prayer

Dismissal with Blessing: May we go forth reflecting God's love in our lives as we go forth in the peace of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Our Current Series – Acts of Hope

Our current series will be looking at the Acts of the Apostles during the Easter season, with each week bringing a new act for us to look at.

April 24th – Act of Witness – Acts 5:17-32

May 1st – Act of Change – Acts 9:1-20

May 8th – Motherly Act – Acts 9:36-43

May 15th – Act of Acceptance – Acts 11:1-18

May 22nd – Called to Act – Acts 16:9-15

May 29th – Unexpected Act – Acts 16:16-34

June 5th – Act of the Spirit – Acts 2:1-21

Prayer List

Rev Charliam Renner	Bishop Frank Beard	Our Conference	Our Healthcare Workers
Patti Corder and the Greenup Ambulance Crew		Angie Veach	Eric Veach
Ed & Verna Titus	Henry Catey	Jake Kiser	Cindy Cisney
Nancy Hoke	Don Wells	Tricia Adkins	Don Stewart
Ronnie Winstead	Dwight Parsons	Lauren Stewart	Phyllis Gable
Sage Martin	Dalton McFarland	Ruth Ann Finley	Jodie Bunch
Tom Finley	Laura Carlen	Judy McCellan	Rosie Chancellor
Susie Callahan	Kenny Holmes	Ted Marrs	Darrell Quick
Chuck Hogan	Brittany Gilbert	Mammoser Family	Family of Albert White
Gary Pearce	Neal Ryan Family	Jackie Potter	
Richard Durham	Kathy Hanks	Wayne Carrell	Gary & Mary Winterrowd
Leo Smith	Bonnie Hite	Sue & Bob Smyser	Larry Thompson
Greg Williams	Family of Eloise Buffenmeyer	Martha Roberts	Charlie & Charlotte Baxter
Paul Schulte			

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